# Master's Project Process and FAQ

To receive a Master's degree, the Adler Graduate School requires that you successfully complete all coursework associated with your chosen track and write a Master's Project. **Please read this process thoroughly. The information in these guidelines explain the Master's Project writing process and related Master's Project completion requirements.**

**What is a Master's Project?**

In most cases, the Master's Project is a carefully argued scholarly paper of approximately 11,000 – 13,000 words (roughly 45 pages). There are several options to consider for your Master's Project. The project options will be described in a separate section of this document. Regardless of which option you select, the project should present an original argument that is carefully documented from primary and secondary sources. The Master's Project must have a substantive research question, a focus that falls within your program track, and be able to incorporate Adlerian concepts. The Master's Project must demonstrate a benefit to the field and appropriate academic rigor. The Master's Project must be written under the guidance of a Chairperson. The Master's Project, as the final academic exercise in completing the master's degree, gives the student an opportunity to demonstrate expertise in the chosen research area.

**Can I use personal or professional experiences in my Master's Project?**

The motivation for choosing your topic can stem from your personal or professional experiences and aspirations. However, these experiences and aspirations should only be used as an impetus for your project and not the material for your Master's Project.  Therefore, the use of personal stories or personal information is not appropriate for the scope of the Master's Project. However, should you aspire to use professional stories and experiences in your MP, you must submit your Master's Project Proposal to a full review and obtain approval for inclusion by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

**Is there more than one choice of format for the Master's Project?**

Yes. At Adler Graduate School there are three choices of format for Master's Projects.  The formats include:

- **Traditional Literature Review** o  40-50 pages of text, not including cover page, abstract, table of contents, references, or appendices.
    - o  30 or more supporting resources, 70% of which are peer-reviewed journal articles.

- **Literature Review and Experiential Product or Professional Presentation** o Minimum 15 page traditional literature review, not including cover page, abstract, table of contents, or reference page(s), and appendices.

  - o 30 or more supporting resources, 70% of which are peer-reviewed journal articles. o Product Examples:
    - manuscript for a play;
    - curriculum for a group or classroom;
    - a grant or business proposal;
    - a book submitted for publication.
  - o Presentation Examples:
    - Presentation of a topic to work peers or a community group;
      - Presentation of an Art Exhibit
    - Presentation of a topic at a conference.

    \*\*Presentations may not be delivered to non-professional members of the general public because these members may constitute a protected class under the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board.

  - o In either format choice, the appendices will include professionally created presentation slides (PowerPoint ® or other format such as Prezi), handouts, marketing materials, and presentation evaluations. Please note: presentations must be arranged in a community setting, not completed at Adler Graduate School. The student is responsible for arranging the media materials required for the presentation (i.e., computer, projector, screen, etc.) as these resources are not available for loan from AGS.
  - o In either format choice, the student will add to the literature review a discussion section (reflection of the product or presentation) and conclusion section. The completed Master's Project including literature review, discussion, conclusion, and appendices will total approximately 40-50 pages of documentation.
  - o Any presentation(s) will need to be digitally video recorded or converted to digital video format for archiving.
  - o It is strongly suggested that students seek feedback from the groups to which they present.

**Can I do research with human participants?**

No. Students at Adler Graduate School are not allowed to do research that includes human subjects. All research must include data already collected in projects that received IRB approval at the institution of origin.

**When should I start thinking about the Master's Project?**

It is never too soon to think about your Master's Project! You should be thinking about your Master's Project, if only abstractly, from your first enrollment at the Adler Graduate School. You will be encouraged to explore topics of interest in both *AGS 601: Introduction to Graduate Writing* and *AGS 500: Principles of Research*. At the latest, you will need to have a clear idea of your topic in order to pass *AGS 602: Developing the Master's Project Proposal*. During this course you will also identify your committee members (Chairperson and Reader) and submit your proposal for approval.

**Who can be my Chairperson and what is her or his role in the Master's Project?**

There is a list of AGS faculty members who can be your Master's Project Chairperson, although individual faculty are not required to advise students in regard to his or her Master's Projects, many of our faculty are eager to serve in the role of Chairperson. It is the student's responsibility to find a Chairperson. Your Chairperson will provide specific guidance in regard to your topic and will help you develop your argument, outline, and final product. Most students choose faculty members with whom they have worked in courses and who have some expertise in your proposed topic. Master's Project Chairpersons must be approved by the Program Director, who will also review and approve the Master's Project topic.

**Who can be my Reader and what role does the Reader play?**

Any AGS faculty can be asked to be a Reader on your Master's Project committee. A list of approved readers is also available on the AGS Website. Similar to identifying a Chairperson, the Reader should have some expertise that contributes to your project in a significant way, or the Reader may provide an additional expertise separate from your Chairperson. For example, your Reader may have in-depth Adlerian expertise or some clinical expertise different from your Chairperson. In most cases, at least one of the two members of your project committee must be an active faculty member teaching in the department or track Pyou are completing. Typically, the Reader becomes involved in the process when you have completed a "ReaderReady" draft with your Chairperson.

**What is the process and protocol for completing the Master's Project?**

In *AGS 602: Developing the Master's Project Proposal*, you will conduct an initial inquiry into your topic, prepare a 1-3 paragraph proposal (200-400 words), develop a preliminary annotated bibliography (approximately ten to fifteen peer-reviewed journal articles or seminal resources), and provide a brief outline of your proposed project before approaching a possible Chairperson. The documents you prepare will help you to convince your future Chairperson of the value, relevance, and interest to the field of your proposed project. Once a faculty member has agreed to serve as your Chairperson, the two of you will discuss your anticipated completion date and agree on a timetable for meetings and submission of drafts. It is the student's responsibility to keep the Chairperson apprised periodically of their progress.

After you have refined your topic and your Chairperson has agreed to work with you, complete the *Master's Project Proposal Form.* There are a number of required signatures on this form. Firstly, submit your proposal and supporting documents to your Program Director for approval of your topic and Chairperson. Secondly, get the signature of your Chairperson and Reader. Finally, submit your form and documentation to [MPproposals@alfredadler.edu](mailto:MPproposals@alfredadler.edu) to receive final approval from the Director of Student Success Services. Once all signatures are in place, you and your committee and Program Director will be notified via email when your topic has been approved by Director of Student Success Services. Do not start writing the Master's Project or working on your presentation until you have final approval from the Office of Academic Affairs.

**Once my Master's Project is approved, how often do I meet with my Chairperson?**

Students and Chairpersons need to meet at least three or four times although, in many cases, the chair will want to meet much more. Some Chairperson's require a face-to-face meeting (or Skype) and other Chairperson's are open to email or phone conferencing. Please ask your Chairperson about her or his preference, the frequency of meeting, and also share your preferences and anticipated timeline with them.

**How long will this process take?**

The timeline will vary depending on the topic, scope of the project, and the life circumstances for the student (i.e., full-time or part-time job, family, class work, etc.). When determining your timeline to completion, keep in mind that your Chairperson must have enough time to read and evaluate your work before returning it to you with comments, and that you must have time to incorporate those comments. Whether it is an early draft or the final copy, do not expect your Chairperson to return your Master's Project in a day or two. It is common for a Chairperson to need at least 10 business days to review and comment on your draft. Please note: it is

appropriate to ask your Chairperson when you can expect comments, but be sure not to pressure her or him to respond sooner than 10 business days.

Prepare yourself for the possibility that your Chairperson will request substantial changes in the first draft of your Master's Project. Do not expect that your first or even second draft will require only minor corrections, or that the proposed final version you submit will be approved without further changes. In fact, in some rare cases, when a project has moved from the original agreed upon scope to a different project, a Chairperson may ask you to start again from a different perspective.

It is equally important to keep in mind that your Reader will likely have additional recommendations that will need to be considered and incorporated. Just as with the Chairperson, your Reader requires up to 10 business days to review, comment, and return your draft.

It is the student's responsibility to see that the final copy of the Master's Project is free from spelling, grammatical, and APA writing style errors (i.e., colloquialisms, jargon, etc.). Once you and your Chairperson reach agreement on your final project, your Chairperson will submit your work to [FinalMastersProjects@alfredadler.edu](mailto:FinalMastersProjects@alfredadler.edu) for a final review prior to scheduling your oral exam.  Similar to submitting a draft to your Chairperson or Reader, the review committee will need time to read and evaluate your paper. You and your Chairperson can anticipate a response within 1 week (5 business days) granting permission to proceed with the Oral exam.

Typically, the full process from the start of *AGS 602* to completed project is 9 to 12 months.

**How long can I take to work on my Master's Project?**

You will have 12 months from the start of the term when you enroll in *AGS 602: Developing the Master's Project* to complete all work on your project (all drafts, Writing Center, and Oral Exam complete).  If your process becomes extended beyond 12 months, you will be assessed a continuation fee equal to 1 credit and given 1 term to complete the work. The continuation fee will be assessed for each additional term needed to complete the project.

If you pass your Master's Project 12 month expiration date with no communication with your Chairperson, Program Director or the Registrar's office, and have not been enrolled in other academic activities during that time, you may be withdrawn as an active student.  In order to continue to work on your Master's Project, you will need to reapply to AGS, be accepted, and enrolled in a 1 credit continuation course before returning to work on your Master's Project.

**Are there particular Master's Project formatting requirements?**

Yes.  AGS Master's Projects must conform to the following guidelines:
- There must be a cover page.
- All projects will include an abstract, table of contents, reference page, and appropriate appendices.
- All sources for quotations and paraphrased material must be documented in alignment with the *American Psychological Association Publication Manual, Sixth Edition* standards.
- The Master's Project must be typed and printed on standard paper, with 1 inch all around margins, Times New Roman font, size 12.
- All additional materials such as PowerPoint ® slides or other presentation format (i.e., Prezi), handouts, and marketing materials must be prepared as professionally as possible. Video recordings must be digitized or recorded in a digital format for archiving.

**Can I use materials from a book or article, like surveys, assessments, or printed activities?**

If you use information (e.g., tests, tables, figures, handouts in entirety) that is copyright protected, steps must be taken to protect the intellectual property rights of others, including obtaining necessary copyright permissions. You can discuss the use of such materials with your Chairperson, Program Director, the Library and Media Specialist or *AGS 602* instructor. Please remember that using surveys or any other materials with people requires approval from the Institutional Review Board.

**When does the Writing Center get involved in my project?**

The Chairperson is your primary advisor, so it will be important to ask the chair to advise you on when and how to use the Writing Center.

**What is the Oral Exam?**

The Oral Exam is the final step to completion of your Master's Project.  Once you have completed this work, you are a "Master" of your topic!  Your committee (Chairperson and Reader) and sometimes your Program Director schedule time to review your work, discuss your experiences encountered in your process, and review the application of your work to the field and to advancing Adlerian psychology.  The meeting is generally 90 minutes in length.  The Oral Exam is considered a professional meeting, so the student should dress in a manner appropriate to a presentation or job interview.

**What are the steps to completing the Master's Project?**

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| | Enroll in and complete *AGS 601: Introduction to Graduate Writing and the Master's Project* | 2$^{nd}$ or 3$^{rd}$ course at AGS |
| | Enroll in and complete *AGS 500: Principles of Research* | Between 5$^{th}$ and 8$^{th}$ course at AGS; End of first year. |
| | Enroll in *AGS 602: Developing the Master's Project* | 1 year prior to planned graduation. |
| | Complete **Master's Project Proposal Form** and submit for all signatures. | In AGS 602 Required to *Pass* course. |
| | *The dates below will be determined in collaboration with your chairperson* | |
| | Student works with Chairperson to develop a "Reader‑Ready" draft<br>- This will be many drafts to get to "Reader-Ready"<br>- Chair may refer student to Writing Center for preidentified writing support during this period. | 3-6 months |
| | Upon Chairperson's approval, submit the "Reader‑Ready" draft to the Reader. | 2 weeks (10 business days) |
| | Upon receipt of feedback from the Reader, student and Chairperson discuss the feedback and make appropriate revisions. | 1 week (5 business days) |
| | Student submits final draft to Chairperson for review. | 1 week (5 business days) |
| | Upon approval, Chair, Student, and Reader schedule oral exam (no sooner than two weeks). Notify Program Director of oral exam date. | |
| | Chair submits final draft to FinalMastersProjects@alfredadler.edu. | 2 weeks (10 business days) |
| | Upon receipt of edits from Final Master's Projects Review, student and Chairperson discuss feedback and make appropriate revisions. | 1 week (5 business days0 |
| | Student, Chairperson, and Reader conduct 90 minute oral exam. | |
| | Upon completion of oral exam and Chairperson and Reader's final approval, submit the final copy of all materials to the Media Center Coordinator for cataloging (if applicable). | |