Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Admission Applications

Graduate Programs Committee
Department of Computer Science & Software Engineering
Auburn University

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1. What’s the GRE requirement?

   Answer: We require prospective students to have a combined GRE score (V+Q) > 300, with a verbal score of at least 150, a quantitative score of at least 150, and a written score of at least 3.

2. What’s the TOEFL requirement?

   Answer: Minimal TOEFL score is 79. If your TOEFL score is below 79, you should retake the TOEFL test. If you have received the degree from a recognized institution in the U.S. or Canada, your TOEFL requirement will be waived. Universities in Quebec (i.e., French-Canadian institutions) would not qualify for the exemption.

3. What’s the IELTS score requirement?

   Answer: We also accept IELTS scores. The minimal IELTS score is 6.5. If your IELTS score is below 6.5, you should retake the IELTS test. If you have received the degree from a recognized institution in the U.S. or Canada, your IELTS requirement will be waived. Universities in Quebec (e.g., French-Canadian institutions) would not qualify for the exemption.

4. Can I have my TOEFL requirement waived?

   Answer: If you are an international student, your TOEFL requirement can’t be waived. If you are a domestic student, you don’t need to take the TOEFL test. If you have received the degree from a recognized institution in the U.S. or Canada, you will be exempted from the TOEFL requirement. However, universities in Quebec (i.e., French-Canadian institutions) would not qualify for the exemption.
5. Can I have my GRE requirement waived?

Answer: If you apply to on-campus graduate programs, your GRE requirement can’t be waived. In case you are an online student pursuing an online degree, you will be exempted from the GRE requirement.

6. Can I still apply to the CSSE graduate program with my low GRE scores?

Answer: We don’t automatically discard applications that fail to meet the GRE requirement. We take a "whole person" approach to evaluating applications to our graduate program. Instead of just looking at a single test score (or grade point average), we take into account all the information that you provide us: GRE scores, transcripts, recommendations, etc. If one measure is below our minimum, we expect other items to be commensurately high enough to balance it.

7. Will you review my application before the deadline without my official GRE score report?

Answer: If you apply for our on-campus graduate programs, your application will not be reviewed by the graduate committee without official GRE scores. I recommend you to have your GRE scores ready prior to your application. Please note that the GRE score requirement is exempted for prospective students who apply to the online graduate programs.

8. Where should I mail my official transcript and recommendation letters?

Answer: Your Official transcripts should be sent to the Graduate School using the following address:

The Graduate School
106 Hargis Hall
Auburn University, AL 36849-5122

You may either mail your recommendation letters to the above address or have your recommendation uploaded through the ApplyYourself system.

9. Can I be admitted to the CSSE graduate program using an unofficial transcript?

Answer: No. An applicant may not be admitted (and immigration documents requested) without the official transcript. Nevertheless, we may review the unofficial transcript for the initial recommendation. To avoid issues with time, it is better if you can submit your official materials as soon as possible.
10. Can I apply with any missing item?

**Answer:** You may start applying to our graduate programs with a few missing items. Important application items should include:

- GRE Scores
- TOEFL or IELTS Scores (International Students)
- Official Transcripts
- Personal Statement
- Resume
- Recommendation Letters

Please note that due to any missing item in your application package, we will be unable to review your application. After all the required items are submitted to the ApplyYourself system, we will review your application.

11. What are the requirements (e.g., format and purpose) of a personal statement?

**Answer:** The statement of purpose is a way for you to let us know why you want to come to Auburn University, to highlight any special achievements or skills you have, or to explain areas of your application which might appear to be irregular. Your personal statement gives you a chance to tell us anything you want us to know.

In addition, a well written personal statement tells the CSSE graduate committee that you have the capacity to write coherently and think logically. Your personal statement should include an introduction, a body, and a concluding paragraph. Your essay should also demonstrate your motivation and capacity to succeed in our graduate program of computer science and software engineering.

12. What should I do if I can’t have my recommendation letters uploaded to the ApplyYourself system?

**Answer:** Please have the recommenders email address changed to their personal emails to see if that works for them. If this does not work, the Director of Graduate Programs - Dr. Qin - can take the letters via email and upload them. Please keep in mind that it is always preferred to have the recommenders do this themselves.

13. Can I apply to the graduate programs through Emails?

**Answer:** No, you can’t. You should submit all the documents online to Auburn University’s Graduate School. Your email attachments will NOT be reviewed by the graduate committee. You will NOT be admitted through this email communication.

14. What are application deadlines?
**Answer:** Application packets must be complete by Feb. 15 to receive priority consideration for funding for the fall semester. May 15 is the latest an application can be accepted and still provide enough time for processing at the university level. The corresponding dates for the spring semester are Aug. 15 and Sept. 15. Please note that applications are accepted and evaluated after these deadlines; however, this may delay the desired starting semester.

**Prerequisite Background**

**15. Is it mandatory to have a Master’s degree in CS to be eligible for admission into the Ph.D. program?**

**Answer:** No. It is not mandatory to have a MSc. Degree prior to your application to the Ph.D. program. You may apply to the Ph.D. program without the Master’s degree in computer science. However, you have to demonstrate strong evidence that you will be a successful doctoral student in the computer science and software engineering program. Such evidence includes, but not limited to, high undergraduate GPA, high TOEF/GRE scores, excellent recommendation letters, B.Sc. degree in computer science or software engineering, and IT working experience. Prior to your application, you are strongly recommended to contact a CSSE professor who is willing to be your major professor (i.e., advisor or chair of your supervisory committee).

**16. Can I apply to the CSSE program programs without the B.Sc. degree in Computer Science or Software Engineering?**

**Answer:** We welcome students into our program who have earned degrees in other disciplines; however, to be admitted to the program, we expect students to have roughly the equivalent of a baccalaureate degree in computer science. In other words, you must have some minimum prerequisite skills to be admitted to one of our graduate programs.

Depending on your overall academic performance, we could possibly work an admission if you have at least four of the six prerequisites (see also the minimum requirements below). We require prospective students to have demonstrated knowledge in the following areas:

- C, C++, or Java
- Data structures
- Analysis of algorithms
- Discrete structures
- Operating systems
- Computer organization
- Software design

The details on Graduate prerequisites can be found here:
If you have taken the above core computer science courses at the undergraduate level, there will be a strong likelihood to have you admitted to our graduate programs. If you are a domestic student and you have taken some of the above computer science courses, your admission would be conditional on your taking the remaining prerequisites in your first semester of graduate studies.

**Application Status**

17. **Can you check my application status for me?**

**Answer:** Thank you for applying for the M.S. program in our department at Auburn University. It will take approximately four weeks for the graduate committee to make a decision on your application. Then, the graduate school will send a notification to you. You also can check your application status on the ApplyYourself system.

18. **When will you make my admission decision?**

**Answer:** After you complete your application, the Graduate Admission Committee, of which I am the chair, will review the materials and make an admission decision. We make admission recommendations by the end of each month.

19. **Can my intended graduate program be changed to Ph.D. after being admitted into the M.Sc. program?**

**Answer:** Yes, you can. There are two options to change your intended graduate program. Option 1: You initially join our department as a Master’s student. If your advisor (a.k.a., major professor) endorses your application for the Ph.D. program, you can file a curriculum change form. Please download the curriculum change form below.

- Curriculum Change Form (Domestic Students):
  [https://web.auburn.edu/alpha/CurriculumChangeDomestic.aspx](https://web.auburn.edu/alpha/CurriculumChangeDomestic.aspx)
- Curriculum Change Form (International Students):
  [https://web.auburn.edu/alpha/CurriculumChangeIntl.aspx](https://web.auburn.edu/alpha/CurriculumChangeIntl.aspx)

Option 2: You contact the graduate school to change your application from Master’s to the Ph.D. program. Please be aware of a potential risk in this option - your Ph.D. application may be declined.

20. **Can I modify in the ApplyYourself system my application from the Master’s program to the Ph.D. program?**

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Answer: You can’t change the intended graduate program by yourselves in the ApplyYourself system. However, you may contact the Graduate School and ask the graduate program to be changed on your application.

21. I am a current CSSE Master’s student. How can I apply for the Ph.D. program?

Answer: There are two cases in which current CSSE Master’s students may apply to the Ph.D. program.

Case 1: Without any CSSE professor’s endorsement, you must directly apply to the Ph.D. program through the ApplyYourself system. Your application fee will be waived, because you are a current Auburn graduate student. You may need to contact the graduate school to seek the application fee waiver. After you have submit your application, please inform Dr. Qin, who will process your application in a timely manner.

Case 2: If your advisor (a.k.a., major professor) endorses your application for the Ph.D. study, then you will simply file the curriculum change form by adding the Ph.D. program into your curriculum. Please be advised that you shouldn’t replace the M.Sc. program with the Ph.D. program. Rather, you add the Ph.D. program into your graduate study, meaning that you will receive both the M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees from our department.

Please find the curriculum change form here:
- Curriculum Change Form (Domestic Students): https://web.auburn.edu/alpha/CurriculumChangeDomestic.aspx

Graduate Assistantships

22. How can I apply for a graduate teaching assistantship (GTA)?

Answer: All new students, both domestic and international, are automatically considered to be candidates for graduate teaching assistant (GTA) positions. There is no special process to apply for GTAs. There are no set requirements for financial support; a large number of students with excellent qualifications apply each year for a limited number of positions. GPAs, standardized test scores (e.g., GRE and TOEFL), technical background and programming skills are collectively considered. While a position may become available at any time throughout a semester, we make decisions for GTA positions for fall and spring semesters in March and November, respectively.

23. How does the CSSE department offer graduate teaching assistantships or GTAs?

Answer: If you received the Master’s degree in Computer Science or Software Engineering, you should apply to the Ph.D. program rather than the M.Sc. program. We
give Ph.D. students higher priorities than M.Sc. students when it comes to GTA assignments.

Our department prioritizes the award of Teaching/Graduate Assistantships to incoming graduate students as follows (in decreasing order of priority):

1. Students, admitted to the doctoral program, hold a Master’s (thesis) degree in CS, SE or a related field
2. Students, admitted to the doctoral program, hold a Master’s (non-thesis) degree in CS, SE or a related field
3. Students, admitted to the doctoral program, hold a Bachelor’s degree in CS, SE or a related field
4. Students, admitted to the master’s program, hold a Bachelor’s degree in CS, SE or a related field

Note that this applies only to the award of assistantships. All qualified students will be considered for admission to our graduate program leading to MS or PhD degrees.

In case you haven’t received the M.Sc. degree in Computer Science or Software Engineering, I suggest you to be admitted as a Master's student in the first semester. If you enjoy conducting research and you have research capability, then you may apply for the Ph.D. study by submitting a curriculum change form provided that your advisor endorses your application.

24. What is the tuition fellowship for international students?

**Answer:** If you are awarded graduate teaching assistantship or research assistantship, the Auburn graduate school will offer you the tuition fellowship. In other words, your tuition fee is waived regardless of in-state tuition or out-state tuition.

25. What fees are not covered by my tuition fellowship?

**Answer:** Some fees like engineering fee and graduation fee won’t be covered by the tuition fellowship.

After Being Admitted into the CSSE Graduate Program

26. How to defer my admission to a later term?

**Answer:** Requests to defer an offer of admission will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Your request may be granted for reasons such as illness, military service, religious service, and the like. You must seek an approval from the director of graduate programs (i.e., Dr. Qin) at the department of computer science and software engineering. To proceed with your deferment request, you will need to confirm your intent to enroll on your application and submit the required financial documentation. After you have your
documents in order, please contact Director Theresa Morgan (morgatk@auburn.edu) at the Graduate School to further process your request.

27. How to transfer credits from the graduate school in my former university?

**Answer:** Master’s Students: You can transfer up to six (6) credit hours from your former graduate school to Auburn. If you transfer a total of six credit hours, you need to take at least 24 semester hours (for thesis option) or 27 credit hours (for non-thesis option) to earn the M.Sc. degree from our department.

Ph.D. Students: If you are a doctoral student, a maximum of 30 semester hours of graduate work completed outside CSSE may be applied toward your Ph.D. degree requirements. This case includes courses taken in other departments at Auburn University and course work from another university.

For all the transfer-credit cases, only graduate-level courses which resulted in a grade of "B" or better are eligible for transfer.

You may download the policy on transfer credits from the link below.

https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universitypolicies/Policies/PolicyonTransferofCreditfromOtherInstitutions.pdf

Non-Degree Applications

28. What is the non-degree application procedure?

**Answer:** The Graduate School only requires an official copy of the highest degree earned by each non-degree applicant. Once this has been received, the student is granted admission for one term only (without further approval) and for a maximum of 12 hours. Graduate Non-degree admission does NOT constitute admission to a degree seeking program. If, at any time, the student wishes to enter a degree seeking program, a new application along with all requirements must be submitted.

If the GPD approves a non-degree applicant taking, please let the admission director at the graduate school know as soon as possible. Once all the requirements are met, the admission director will process the admission.

If the GPD does not approve of the applicant taking courses in CSSE, please will discuss with the admission director about other alternatives.
29. Can international students apply for non-degree graduate studies in your department to take computer science re-requisite courses?

**Answer:** If you are currently in a degree non-computer science program, then you may take any computer science pre-requisite courses in his current degree program. You cannot graduate and apply for Non-Degree graduate program in our department. If you have any question, you may follow up with Obrad Budic in the Office of International Programs.

**References:**
FAQs by the Auburn Graduate School
http://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/frequently-asked-questions/