Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Online Graduate Programs

Graduate Programs Committee
Department of Computer Science & Software Engineering
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**Online Graduate Programs**

1. Are the online graduate programs 100% online or required any time face to face?

   **Answer:** Our online graduate programs are 100% online. Many graduate courses can be taken online to partially fulfil your online M.Sc. and Ph.D. degree requirements. Please note that online graduate students will attend a handful of important events on campus (e.g., proposal defense and final defense). A detailed description on our online/distance Ph.D. program is given below.

2. How can I take online courses?

   **Answer:** Most, but not all, of our regular graduate courses are offered through the EDGE (i.e., *Electronically Delivered Graduate Education*) department, meaning that you get a video of the lecture given in the course in which you are enrolled. You do the same work as the on-campus students. You get the same instruction as the on-campus folks, and you are pursuing the same degree. Importantly, one advantage is that you are enabled to hit the "pause" button. There is a special tuition rate for EDGE courses that is a little bit more than in-state tuition, but not as much as out-of-state tuition. Click the link below for more information about how the online graduate programs work.

3. How can I take dissertation courses as an online Ph.D. student?

   **Answer:** The dissertation research has to be taken as an on-campus course, but can be done from an off-campus location with the permission of whomever you choose as your major professor. Taking an on-campus course from off-campus doesn't affect your education; it affects the tuition you pay. If you are an Alabama state resident, you pay in-state tuition for dissertation hours, otherwise you have to pay out-of-state tuition.
We have paperwork making its way through the various university curriculum committees to create an outreach version of the dissertation course, but it can’t guarantee that online dissertation course will happen.

4. Why the last digits of my courses are “6”?

**Answer:** The last digit of the course number indicates the course venue. A "0" means the course is on-campus; a "6" means the course is part of the EDGE’s online programs. For example, COMP6706 is the EDGE version of the on-campus COMP6700. All EDGE courses are taught in conjunction with an on-campus course.

5. Can I receive DVDs of my online courses?

**Answer:** Since you are already accepted for graduate studies, you can participate in the EDGE program by enrolling in EDGE courses. Once enrolled, you'll need to contact the EDGE office and tell them if you require DVDs or will be watching the lecture via video stream. You'll also need to provide test proctor information (see the URL below).


6. Why some online courses are canceled?

**Answer:** EDGE lecture courses at the 6000-level must have at least two students enrolled in order to be considered viable. The EDGE section will be canceled if fewer than two students are enrolled. EDGE courses at the 7000- and 8000-levels are held regardless of the number of students enrolled.

**Application Requirements**

7. What’s the GRE requirement?

**Answer:** Because you apply to one of the online graduate program, you are exempted from the GRE requirement.

8. What’s the TOEFL requirement?

**Answer:** You are a domestic student and; therefore, you are exempted from the TOEFL requirement.

9. Can I have my GRE requirement waived?

**Answer:** Yes, you are an online student so your GRE requirement is waived.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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:

   • 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.

13. 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.
14. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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**

17. 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).

18. 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: http://www.eng.auburn.edu/comp/academics/graduate/prospective-graduate-students/graduate-pre-requisites.html

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

19. 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 ApplyYouself system.

20. 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.

21. 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)

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.

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

**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.

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

**Answer:** There are two cases in which current online CSSE Master’s students may apply to the online 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](https://web.auburn.edu/alpha/CurriculumChangeDomestic.aspx)
After Being Admitted into the CSSE Graduate Program

24. 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.

25. 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

26. 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.

27. 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/