AUBURN UNIVERSITY



# CSSE Graduate Student Handbook

2026–2027 Edition

All graduate degree programs and graduate certificates

## Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering

Samuel Ginn College of Engineering
Auburn University

AUBURN UNIVERSITY
Samuel Ginn College of Engineering

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# Welcome

Welcome to graduate studies in the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering at Auburn University. Whether you are beginning a PhD journey, pursuing one of our four master's degrees, or completing a graduate certificate, we are delighted to have you join our department.

Graduate study is about much more than completing coursework. It is a time to deepen your knowledge, develop as a scholar and professional, and become part of a community of students, faculty, and researchers.

This handbook brings together, in one place, the policies, requirements, and procedures that apply to CSSE graduate students. It explains them in clear, accessible language and directs you to Auburn University's and the Graduate School's official policies when you need more detail. Please begin by reading Part I and then the chapter for your degree program, and keep this handbook readily available throughout your graduate studies.

Most importantly, please do not hesitate to ask for help. Graduate school can be challenging, and you do not have to navigate it alone. My door is always open: drop me an email, visit my office, or join a Zoom call during my office hours, listed on the Key Contacts page.

We are excited to have you as part of the CSSE family, and I look forward to celebrating your accomplishments with you at graduation. Best wishes for a successful and rewarding graduate experience. War Eagle!



**Xiao Qin, PhD**

Professor and Director of Graduate Programs
Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering
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# Purpose, Authority, and Scope

## Purpose of This Handbook

This handbook is for graduate students in the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering (CSSE), and for the faculty advisors and staff who work with them. It covers the five CSSE graduate degree programs—PhD-CSSE, MS-CSSE, MS-AIEN, MS-CYBE, and MS-DSEN— and the department's three graduate certificates.

The handbook has two parts:

- **Part I** explains the policies and procedures that apply to every CSSE graduate student: enrollment, academic rules, advising and committees, assistantships, research conduct, student rights, graduation, and resources.
- **Part II** gives the requirements of each program, in the same order for every program, followed by the graduate certificates.

The appendices list forms, milestones and deadlines, terms and acronyms, the full web address of every linked page, the revision history, and answers to common questions.

## Authority of This Handbook

This handbook summarizes policy. It does not replace or supersede any University or Graduate School policy. The Auburn University Bulletin and the official University policy documents govern. If anything in this handbook differs from them, they prevail, and you should follow them.

University policies are published in the Student Policy eHandbook. Policies published on other Auburn websites and in handbooks, manuals, guides, and other publications, including this one, do not carry the full force of the University. University policy documents are not contracts, and the Board of Trustees and authorized executive officers may revise them.

When rules from different sources seem to disagree, the higher authority governs, in this order:

1. Auburn University policies (the Student Policy eHandbook);
2. Graduate School policies and the Auburn University Bulletin;
3. Samuel Ginn College of Engineering policies;
4. CSSE department policies and decisions of the department's Graduate Programs Committee.

If you are unsure how a rule applies to you, ask the Director of Graduate Programs before you act.

## Which Edition Applies to You

This is the 2026–2027 edition. It describes the policies and procedures in effect for the 2026–2027 academic year, as of the date on its title page. University and Graduate School policies apply as they are currently published, so always check the linked official page if a date or deadline matters.

When a program's requirements change, the change applies to students who enter the program after it is approved. If you are already enrolled, you may choose to follow the new requirements, but a change will never require you, while you are continuously enrolled, to take more hours or earn more grade points to graduate. If you leave Auburn for two or more semesters and then return to the same program, you may have to meet the requirements in effect when you return.

## How This Handbook Is Maintained

The department publishes a new edition of this handbook each academic year. The footer of every page shows the version number and date. Corrections made between editions are listed in the revision history (Chapter E).

Each edition is reviewed by the Director of Graduate Programs and is to be approved by the CSSE graduate faculty.

If you find an error, an outdated link, or a rule that is unclear, please tell the Director of Graduate Programs (Key Contacts).

## AI Usage Statement

This handbook was created with Claude Code, an AI assistant made by Anthropic. Working from official University, Graduate School, college, and department documents—as well as guidelines, tips, FAQs, webpages, student announcements, procedures, assessments, and resources authored or provided by Dr. Xiao Qin from 2017 to 2026—Claude Code was instructed to extract key policies, structure sections, and draft LaTeX source text. Dr. Xiao Qin, Director of Graduate Programs, reviewed and verified all generated content against primary sources, and the CSSE graduate faculty approved this edition on November 2, 2026. As with any edition, official University and Graduate School policies govern if they differ from this handbook.



# How to Use This Handbook

## Where to Start

1. Read **Part I** (Part I). It applies to every CSSE graduate student.
2. Read the chapter for your program in **Part II** (Part II). Each program chapter follows the same order: overview, admission, degree requirements, options, examinations and milestones, plan of study, satisfactory progress, and a checklist.
3. If you are earning, or thinking about, a graduate certificate, read Chapter 15.
4. Use the appendices as quick references: forms (Chapter A), milestones and deadlines (Chapter B), terms and acronyms (Chapter C), and common questions (Chapter F).

This combined edition covers every CSSE graduate program. A separate edition is also published for each program; it contains the same Part I and only that program's chapter.

## Must, Should, and May

This handbook uses three words with exact meanings:

**must** The action is required. Not doing it can delay your degree or affect your enrollment, assistantship, or immigration status.

**should** The action is strongly recommended. You may have a good reason to do otherwise, but talk to your advisor first.

**may** The action is permitted. It is your choice.

## Finding the Rules That Apply to You

- A section that applies only to some programs begins with an *Applies to* line, for example:
  **APPLIES TO** PhD-CSSE; MS-CSSE (thesis option)
- Cross-references, such as Chapter 3, are links. Click them to jump to the section. The PDF bookmarks list every chapter and section.
- The tab at the right edge of each page shows the chapter number; appendices have orange tabs with their letter. In a printed copy, the tabs step down the page so you can find a chapter with your thumb.
- Words and abbreviations such as CTEC, ABD, and GTA are defined in the glossary (Chapter C).

## Boxes, Notes, and Links

A few rules are easy to miss and costly to get wrong. They appear in a box:

> **IMPORTANT**
> A box marked *Important* states a rule you must not miss.

A box marked *Deadline* gives a deadline and where to find its date.

Notes for particular groups of students are set off with a rule at the left and a label:

> **International students (F-1/J-1).** Notes like this one apply to students on F-1 or J-1 visas.

> **Online students.** Notes like this one apply to students in online programs.

Links use descriptive text, such as the Graduate School calendar. Every linked page is listed with its full web address in Chapter D, so a printed copy remains usable. Dates that change every year, such as registration and graduation deadlines, are not printed here; follow the link to the official calendar instead.

## Reporting Errors

If you find an error, a broken link, or a rule that is unclear, please tell the Director of Graduate Programs (Key Contacts). Corrections are listed in the revision history (Chapter E).

# Key Contacts

DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS (GRADUATE PROGRAM OFFICER, GPO)

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Graduate program policies and procedures; advisor of record for MS-CSSE (non-thesis option) and MS-DSEN students; point of contact for the GCRT-DENG certificate. Virtual office: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 1:30–2:30 p.m. Central Time (Zoom room).

MANAGER OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

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Registration for directed study, research hours, and capstone courses; assistantship paperwork; forms that need a department signature; academic advising for MS-AIEN and MS-CYBE students.

DIRECTOR OF AI ENGINEERING PROGRAMS

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Point of contact for MS-AIEN and the GCRT-AIEN certificate, including approved AI engineering electives; advisor of record and academic advising for MS-AIEN students.

DIRECTOR OF CYBERSECURITY ENGINEERING PROGRAMS

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Building access, general department questions, and administrative support; GTA office assignments; graduate student travel reimbursement.

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SYSTEMS ENGINEER

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CSSE computing: departmental servers and Linux/Unix systems; faculty, staff, and student computing accounts; network and system services; research computing support; software installation and licensing; security and backups; and technical support for CSSE classrooms and labs.



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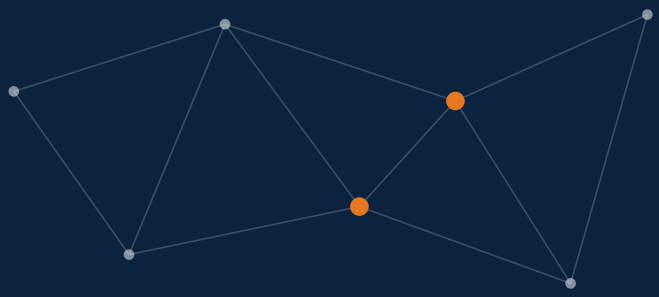
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PART I

# Policies and Procedures for All CSSE Graduate Students

CSSE Graduate Student Handbook
2026–2027 Edition

# Introduction

## 1.1 The Department

The Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering (CSSE) is part of the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering at Auburn University. Its offices are in the Shelby Center for Engineering Technology.

CSSE offers a Doctor of Philosophy, four Master of Science degrees, and three graduate certificates (Section 1.2). The faculty's research areas include artificial intelligence, machine learning and deep learning, cybersecurity, data science and big data, software engineering, cloud computing, computer networks, high-performance computing, and autonomous vehicles. Faculty profiles and research groups are on the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering website.

## 1.2 Graduate Programs at a Glance

Table 1.1 compares the five degree programs. The minimum credit hours and required courses are set by the Auburn University Bulletin; your program chapter gives the details.

**Table 1.1** CSSE graduate degree programs at a glance

| Program | Minimum hours | Options and culminating work | Required courses | Delivery |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PhD-CSSE | 60 beyond the bachelor's | Dissertation (at least 24 hours of COMP 8990); qualifying examination, general oral examination, and final examination | COMP 7270, 7300, 7500 | On campus; required courses may also be offered online |
| MS-CSSE | 30 (thesis) or 33 (non-thesis) | Thesis option: thesis (6 hours of COMP 7990) and a comprehensive oral examination. Non-thesis option: coursework, with an optional capstone (COMP 7980) | COMP 7270, 7300, 7500 | On campus or online |

| Program | Minimum hours | Options and culminating work | Required courses | Delivery |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| MS-AIEN | 30 | Coursework; may include directed study (COMP 7930) or a capstone (COMP 7980) | COMP 6130, 6600, 6630 | On campus or online |
| MS-CYBE | 33 | Coursework and a required capstone (COMP 7980) | COMP 7500, 6350, 6370, 6530, 6830, 7370, 7720 | On campus or online |
| MS-DSEN | 30 | Data Engineering option (CSSE): capstone COMP 7980. Data Science option (Department of Mathematics and Statistics): capstone STAT 7940 | COMP 6120, 6130, 6630; STAT 6000, 6600, 6650 | On campus or online |

A full-time student typically completes a master's program in about two years. The PhD typically takes about three to four years for a student who enters with a master's degree and transfers credit, and about four to five years for a student who enters with a bachelor's degree only. There is no separate distance PhD program. The PhD's required courses may also be offered online, and a student who takes them online follows the same rules and plan of study as an on-campus student.

The department also offers three graduate certificates (Table 1.2). You may earn a certificate on its own or while you complete a CSSE degree, usually without taking extra courses (Chapter 15).

**Table 1.2** CSSE graduate certificates

| Certificate | Hours | Required courses | Delivery |
|---|---|---|---|
| Graduate Certificate in Artificial Intelligence Engineering (GCRT-AIEN) | 12 | COMP 6130, 6600, 6630, and one approved AI elective | On campus or online |
| Graduate Certificate in Data Engineering (GCRT-DENG) | 12 | COMP 6120, 6130, 6630, and one of STAT 6000, 6600, 6650 | On campus or online |
| Graduate Certificate in Cybersecurity Engineering (GCRT-CYBE) | 9 | COMP 6350, 6370, 7370 | On campus or online |

CSSE undergraduates can also begin graduate study early through the Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's program (Section 2.10).

## 1.3 Who Runs the Graduate Programs

Several people and offices share responsibility for your graduate program. Table 1.3 shows whom to ask about what. Names and contact details are on the Key Contacts page (Key Contacts).

**Table 1.3** Who handles what

| Role | Responsibilities that affect you |
|---|---|
| Your major professor (advisor) and committee | Guide your research and course choices, approve your CTEC form and other forms, and conduct your examinations (Chapter 4). |
| Director of Graduate Programs (GPO) | Oversees the graduate programs and their policies; signs curriculum changes; may approve exemptions from the minimum enrollment for graduate assistants; is the default advisor of record for MS-CSSE (non-thesis) and MS-DSEN students (Table 4.1); point of contact for the GCRT-DENG certificate. |
| Director of AI Engineering Programs | Advisor of record, academic advisor (with the Manager of Academic Programs), and point of contact for MS-AIEN and the GCRT-AIEN certificate. |
| Director of Cybersecurity Engineering Programs | Advisor of record, academic advisor (with the Manager of Academic Programs), and point of contact for MS-CYBE and the GCRT-CYBE certificate, including approved cybersecurity electives. |
| Manager of Academic Programs | Registers students for directed study, research hours, and capstone courses; gives final department approval of directed-study forms; issues assistantship award paperwork for international students; provides academic advising for MS-AIEN and MS-CYBE students (Section 4.2). |
| Graduate Programs Committee | Develops department policies for graduate students, such as the policy on graduate teaching assistants, and maintains the department's graduate FAQ. |
| Department Chair and Associate Chair | Lead the department. The department chair is the last step in the department for a concern you cannot resolve with your advisor or the Director of Graduate Programs (Section 7.8). |
| The Graduate School | Sets Graduate School policy and approves forms, committees, and degrees. The dean of the Graduate School is the general counselor to all graduate students, and each student has a Graduate School advisor, assigned by last name, who helps confirm that degree requirements are met. |
| Office of International Programs (OIP) | Immigration status, enrollment rules for F-1 and J-1 students, and work authorization (Section 2.11). |

## 1.4 Where Official Policy Lives

This handbook summarizes rules that are published elsewhere (Purpose, Authority, and Scope). When you need the official text, go to the source:

- **University policies**: the Student Policy eHandbook, which links to the official version of every University policy, including the Code of Student Conduct, the Student Academic Honesty Code, and the Student Academic Grievance Policy. Questions about a specific University policy go to the office responsible for that policy.

- **Graduate School policies and degree requirements**: the Auburn University Bulletin. Graduate School policies are published in the Bulletin's Graduate School section, and each degree's requirements are on its Bulletin page.
- **Graduate School guidance and forms**: the Graduate Student Resource Guide, the Graduate School forms directory, and the Graduate School calendar (deadlines).
- **CSSE requirements and procedures**: this handbook and the department's Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering website.

**Requesting an exception.** The Graduate School may make an exception to its policies in special circumstances. To request one:

1. Write a letter to the dean of the Graduate School that explains what you are asking for and why.
2. Give the letter to your major professor, who writes a letter of recommendation.
3. Both letters go to the department head, then to the college dean for approval, and then to the dean of the Graduate School.

A request for more time to finish your degree must be justified. Include a proposed schedule for completing the degree and show that you are current in the subjects on your plan of study.

Many routine exceptions to CSSE program requirements, such as substituting a course or transferring credit, are requested on the CTEC form instead (Section 4.4).



# Admission and Enrollment

This chapter covers your status as a graduate student: how you are admitted, how to get started, how you register, how many hours you must take, what happens if you drop courses or leave for a time, how long you have to finish, and how to change or add programs. Admission requirements for each program are in its chapter (Part II).

## 2.1 Admission Status

The Graduate School admits students in one of several classifications. Degree-seeking students are admitted to a master's program (MST) or a doctoral program (PhD). Students may also be admitted as graduate provisional (GPR) or graduate non-degree (GND).

Only degree-seeking master's and doctoral students who meet all admission requirements are eligible for federal loans and other financial aid. Provisional and non-degree students are not. CSSE does not admit students in provisional or non-degree status. (Under Graduate School rules, a post-baccalaureate non-degree student needs the instructor's written consent and the graduate dean's approval to register for a graduate course.)

**How applications are reviewed.** CSSE takes a "whole person" approach to admission. Instead of looking at a single test score or grade point average, the department weighs everything you provide: GRE scores, transcripts, recommendations, and the rest of your application. An application is not automatically rejected because one measure, such as the GRE, falls below the department's minimum, but the other parts of the application are then expected to be strong enough to balance it. The Graduate School's own admission requirements also apply (Graduate School: apply for admission).

**Background for the MS-CSSE, MS-CYBE, and PhD-CSSE programs.** Most applicants should have an undergraduate degree in a closely related area. You need undergraduate-level background in:

- a high-level programming language such as C, C++, Java, or Python, in which you are fluent;
- data structures and algorithms;
- discrete mathematics;
- computer organization and architecture;
- operating systems; and
- computer networks.

If you do not have this background, you will be required to take the courses in Table 2.1 before admission.

**Table 2.1** Background courses for applicants without a computing background

| Semester | Courses |
|---|---|
| First | COMP 2210 Fundamentals of Computing II; COMP 3240 Discrete Structures; COMP 3350 Computer Organization and Assembly Language Programming |
| Second | COMP 3270 Introduction to Algorithms; COMP 3500 Operating Systems; COMP 4300 Computer Architecture; COMP 4320 Computer Networks |



The background expected for the MS-AIEN and MS-DSEN programs is described in their chapters (Section 12.2) (Section 14.2).

## 2.2 Getting Started

**APPLIES TO** new students

**Orientation.** CSSE holds an orientation for new graduate students. The CSSE new graduate student orientation information page has the details, and you can download the orientation slides. If you cannot attend the in-person or online session, download and watch the Zoom recording. To learn about the faculty's research and the graduate programs, see faculty information and the department's graduate programs page.

The Graduate School and the Office of International Programs offer their own orientations:

- the Graduate School's new student orientation, a set of online modules you complete at your own pace before your first semester;
- for international students, the international student orientation and the information for new international arrivals.

If you will hold a teaching or graduate assistantship, you must also attend the orientations for assistants (Section 5.7).

> **International students (F-1/J-1). Getting to Auburn.** To help newly arriving international graduate students, the Graduate School coordinates transportation to Auburn from Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL) on designated arrival dates before the fall and spring semesters. The service is offered for a fee, due when you register, and is coordinated through several resources, including a commercial shuttle company (Groome Transportation), local volunteers, and University transportation services. Register for the airport pick-up service.

**Housing and relocation.** Download the Graduate School's Relocation guide for new graduate students. Auburn has no University housing for graduate students, but Student Affairs hosts an off-campus housing search with useful information. International students should also read the Office of International Programs' information for new international arrivals before they travel. Local rental agencies include Auburn Realty, First Realty, and Northcutt Realty; they are listed only as a starting point, not as an endorsement or a complete list.

**Your first term.** Table 2.2 is a checklist for your first term.

**Table 2.2** First-term checklist

| | To do | Where to find it |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ | Attend or watch the CSSE orientation; complete the Graduate School's online orientation | This section |
| ☐ | International students: check in with the Office of International Programs as soon as you arrive | Section 2.11 |
| ☐ | Register for your courses | Section 2.3 |
| ☐ | Start using your Auburn email; check it regularly | Section 7.6 |
| ☐ | Health insurance: enroll, or confirm your automatic enrollment or waiver | Section 5.10 |
| ☐ | Complete RCR training before you begin research | Section 6.1 |
| ☐ | Find a major professor (PhD and thesis master's) or note your advisor of record (course-based master's) | Sections 4.1 and 4.2 |
| ☐ | Lay out a plan of study | Section 3.7 |
| ☐ | Graduate assistants: attend the assistant orientations and complete your hiring paperwork | Sections 5.4 and 5.7 |
| ☐ | Sign up for AU Alert emergency notifications | Section 9.7 |

## 2.3 Registering for Courses

You register in AU Access, on the My Academics tab, where you can also look up the classes offered each term.

1. *Plan.* Review your degree requirements in DegreeWorks and your plan of study (Section 3.7). The CSSE graduate course offerings and CSSE syllabus bank show what is offered and what each course covers.
2. *Check your time ticket.* Registration opens by time ticket. Time tickets for spring usually open on the first Monday in November, and those for summer and fall on the first Monday in April. Your time ticket appears on your AU Access academic profile about three weeks before registration opens. See the Registrar's time ticket schedule.
3. *Build a schedule.* Use Tiger Scheduler to plan your schedule.
4. *Register early.* Popular courses fill quickly, so register on the first day your time ticket allows.

Some courses are not registered for in the usual way. Directed study, the capstone project, and thesis or dissertation research hours are arranged with a professor and registered by the department (Section 3.8). Online sections are explained in Section 3.9. Add and drop deadlines are on the Graduate School calendar (deadlines).

## 2.4 Full-Time Status and Minimum Enrollment

The Graduate School classifies you as a full-time student if you carry nine hours in a semester, or if you enroll in GRAD 7AA0 or GRAD 8AA0 together with at least one hour of COMP 7990

or COMP 8990. To enroll in GRAD 7AA0 or GRAD 8AA0, you must complete the Graduate School's Loan Deferment Request form. You may carry at most 16 hours in a semester (14 in summer), including undergraduate courses.

How many hours you must take depends on your situation:

- *International students on F-1 or J-1 visas* must enroll in at least nine credit hours each fall and spring semester to keep their immigration status, unless an exception below applies.
- *Graduate assistants* must enroll in at least nine graduate credit hours in CSSE each fall and spring semester and at least three in summer. The Director of Graduate Programs may approve an exemption, but never below three hours in any semester. In your last semester as a master's student, you may take fewer than nine hours to finish exactly the hours your degree requires (Section 5.6).
- *Other domestic students* have no department minimum, but you must keep continuous enrollment (Section 2.5). If you receive financial aid, check its enrollment requirements.

> **International students (F-1/J-1). Counting toward nine hours.** Up to three credit hours of online courses count toward the nine, so at least six must be in-person courses. Undergraduate courses also count toward the nine, but you should still be enrolled in graduate courses and must keep making normal progress toward your degree.
> **Enrolling below nine hours.** You may enroll for fewer than nine hours only in the situations in Table 2.3. In every other case, dropping below nine hours without authorization from the Office of International Programs puts you out of status.

**Table 2.3** International students: enrolling for fewer than nine hours

| Your situation | What to file | Rules |
|---|---|---|
| Summer term that is not your first term at Auburn | Nothing | The nine-hour rule does not apply. |
| Master's student in your final semester, taking fewer than nine hours | Reduced Course Load (RCL) request | File by the 8th class day of the term, and before you drop any hours. The Manager of Academic Programs signs for the department; you then send the form to the Graduate School, which forwards it to the Office of International Programs. If you file an RCL, you must graduate that term; you cannot continue the next term. |
| Master's student finishing a thesis or project, possibly over more than one term | All-But-Thesis (ABT) request for GRAD 6AA0 | GRAD 6AA0 is a non-credit course that counts as a full course load. File the request each term you enroll below full time, by the 8th class day, up to four times. Your major professor approves it, then the Graduate School. |

| Your situation | What to file | Rules |
|---|---|---|
| PhD student who has passed the general oral examination (ABD) and completed all lecture-based coursework | Nothing; do not file an RCL | After the Graduate School receives your approved general oral examination report, your record is marked ABD, and the Registrar automatically adds GRAD 6AA0 if you register for fewer than nine hours. You then need at least one in-person credit hour to keep your status (more if you hold an assistantship). |



If you are a master's student and there is any chance you will need another term, file the ABT request rather than an RCL. The RCL form and instructions are available from the Office of International Programs, and the ABT request is the GRAD 6AA0 thesis/non-thesis with project registration request (ABT form).

## 2.5 Continuous Enrollment

Every degree-seeking graduate student, full-time or part-time, must be continuously enrolled: you must register for at least one credit hour in at least two of the three semesters (fall, spring, summer) of each academic year, until you receive your degree or officially withdraw. This applies to online students as well. International students and graduate assistants have stricter enrollment rules (Section 2.4).

- You must also register in the term in which you take an examination, defend your thesis or dissertation, or complete your degree requirements, including a summer term (Section 8.4).
- If you first enroll in a spring or summer semester, you will not be declared inactive as long as you register in at least two semesters in your first full academic year and in each year after.
- The Graduate School and CSSE monitor enrollment, but making sure you meet this rule is your responsibility.
- The Graduate School may grant an exception if circumstances warrant it. Appeal directly to the dean of the Graduate School.

The full policy is in the Bulletin (Bulletin: Graduate School registration (continuous enrollment, leave of absence, transfer of credit)).

**Inactive status.** If you do not register in at least two semesters of an academic year, you are declared inactive. To be re-activated, you must apply for re-activation to CSSE and to the Graduate School and complete the re-admission form. Re-activation is not guaranteed. If you are re-activated, you must register retroactively for at least one credit hour, and pay the tuition and fees, for each semester that has passed since you were last enrolled, up to two semesters per academic year and four semesters in all. An approved leave of absence avoids this (Section 2.7).

If you are away for more than twelve months, you must also obtain permission to register again (Section 2.7).

## 2.6 Dropping and Withdrawing from Courses

**Dropping a course.**

- Through the 15th class day of fall or spring (the 5th class day of summer), you may drop a course with no record on your transcript.
- After that, until the last day to withdraw, you may drop for any reason, and a W appears on your transcript.
- After the last day to withdraw, you may drop only in extenuating circumstances, such as a serious illness or a death in your immediate family, with documentation and permission from the dean's office. Failing a course or no longer needing it is not a reason. If a late drop is approved while you are failing, the instructor may assign a WF, which counts as an F in your GPA.

The exact deadlines for each term are on the Graduate School calendar (deadlines).

Before you drop, check how it affects your other obligations: graduate assistants and international students must keep their minimum hours (Section 2.4), and dropping can affect financial aid and insurance.

> **International students (F-1/J-1).** You must stay at nine hours unless an RCL has been approved before you drop (Table 2.3).

**Resigning from all courses.** Withdrawing from all of your courses in a term is a *resignation*, and the University's Withdrawal and Resignation of Enrollment Policy applies:

- If you resign before the term starts, you are not charged refundable fees.
- If you resign within the first 15 class days (the 5th class day in summer), refundable fees are refunded, minus a $100 resignation fee.
- After that, you remain liable for fees, except for a resignation caused by personal illness (with a physician's statement) or activation for military service (with orders).
- If you resign before midterm, you receive W grades. After midterm, each instructor reports a grade: passing grades become W and failing grades become WF.
- You are responsible for contacting Student Financial Services and the Office of the Registrar.

To resign for personal reasons, start with your academic advisor:

1. Fill out the resignation form and have your academic advisor review and sign the advisor section. Your academic advisor is your major professor or, if you do not have one, your advisor of record (Table 4.1).
2. Send the signed form to your Graduate School advisor (Table 9.2), who processes the resignation for the Graduate School. Your Graduate School advisor is assigned by your last name and does not sign as your academic advisor.

For military reasons, give your academic advisor a copy of your orders. For medical reasons, contact Auburn Cares first (see "Medical withdrawal" below).

**Withdrawing after the deadline.** The Graduate School's withdrawal policy allows a withdrawal after the deadline only in specific circumstances, and it is normally a full withdrawal from all courses:

- *Medical or family medical withdrawal* (a serious physical or psychological condition, or the death or serious illness of an immediate family member): reviewed and approved by the Auburn Cares office.
- *Personal withdrawal* (documented, extraordinary personal circumstances): begins with your advising office and is approved by your college's associate dean for academics.
- *Military withdrawal* (called to active duty before the end of the term): approved by the Office of the Registrar.

Courses you are passing receive a W, which does not count in your GPA; courses you are failing receive a WF, which counts as an F. Before you withdraw for a serious condition or a family emergency, even before the deadline, consult Auburn Cares.

**Medical withdrawal.** Auburn Cares, in the Division of Student Affairs, handles all medical withdrawals for undergraduate and graduate students. Contact it first:

1. Complete the online Medical Withdrawal Application on the Auburn Cares medical withdrawal page.
2. Schedule an intake meeting with the Medical Withdrawal Coordinator in the Auburn Cares office (Melton Student Center, Suite 1206), in person, by Zoom, or by phone.
3. Have your licensed health-care provider send documentation supporting your request directly to Auburn Cares.

## 2.7 Time Off, Leave of Absence, and Readmission

**Taking a term off.** Because of the continuous-enrollment rule, you may skip at most one of the three terms in an academic year without being declared inactive (Section 2.5). Skipping a single term within this rule does not break continuous enrollment, so you do not need an approved leave of absence for it. A leave is for students who will be away longer than continuous enrollment allows.

If you hold a graduate assistantship or receive financial aid or a scholarship, skipping a term or enrolling for fewer hours than your support requires (Section 2.4) can affect your assistantship, stipend, tuition fellowship, or aid. Check with your funding source or your financial aid advisor first.

> **International students (F-1/J-1).** Summer is the only term you can take off. If you need to take a fall or spring semester off, the Office of International Programs must end your F-1 record, and you must leave the United States. To return, you work with the Office of International Programs and the Graduate School to obtain a new I-20 and a new F-1 visa.

**Leave of absence.** You may be granted a leave of absence for medical reasons, family necessity or dependent care, military service, or other approved personal reasons.

- *Length.* You may take at most two semesters of leave during your entire program. The Graduate School may approve an extension, for example for military service that lasts longer than two semesters.
- *How to request it.* Petition the Graduate School before the absence begins. The petition (or a request for an extension) must be signed by the Director of Graduate Programs or the department chair and approved by the dean of the Graduate School, who may ask for documentation. Start with the Director of Graduate Programs.
- *Returning.* After an approved leave, you re-enter your program without applying for re-activation and without owing retroactive tuition and fees.
- *While you are on leave,* you pay no fees, but you may not use the faculty, facilities, resources, or services that are only for enrolled students; you may not receive a graduate assistantship, fellowship, or University financial aid; and you may not take Auburn courses related to your plan of study.



If a leave will make it hard to finish within your time limit, you may request an extension (Section 2.8). If you are an international student, the note on taking a semester off also applies.

**Returning after time away.** If you have not been enrolled at Auburn during the preceding twelve months, or if you were academically ineligible to enroll, you must obtain permission to register from the Office of the Registrar before you return:

- Send the Registrar an official transcript from each institution you attended while away.
- The University may review your earlier work and require you to meet the graduation requirements in the catalog in effect when you return.
- If you have been away for more than one year, you must re-establish your residency status for tuition.

See the University's Policy on Readmission.

A student who has been academically dismissed from the Graduate School cannot simply reapply. The Graduate School's academic bankruptcy policy, however, offers a way to restart (Section 3.4).

## 2.8 Time Limits

Your time to complete a degree starts with the earliest course on your plan of study, including any transfer course. Transfer credit must also fall within these limits (Section 3.5).

- *Master's degrees and graduate certificates:* all graduate work must be completed within six calendar years.
- *Doctoral degree:* you are expected to reach candidacy within six years and to complete all requirements within ten years. After you are admitted to candidacy, you have four calendar years to complete all remaining requirements.

If you need more time, you may request an extension through the Graduate School's exceptions process. The request must be justified and must include a proposed schedule for completing the degree and assurance that you are current in the subjects on your plan of study (Section 1.4). A doctoral student may petition the dean of the Graduate School, with the advisory committee's

approval, for a one-year extension. A doctoral student who does not finish in the allotted time reverts to the status of an applicant and must petition, with the committee's approval, to retake the oral examination.

## 2.9 Changing or Adding Programs

Most program changes are made with a curriculum change form: domestic students or international students. Table 2.4 summarizes the steps. The University's Change of Major or Curriculum Policy also applies.



**Table 2.4** Changing or adding a program

| I want to... | What to do |
|---|---|
| Move from a CSSE master's program to the PhD | *Either* apply to the PhD program through the Graduate School (ask the Graduate School to waive the application fee, which is possible for current Auburn students, and let the Director of Graduate Programs know you have applied), *or*, if your major professor endorses you, file a curriculum change form to move from the master's program to the PhD. Your major professor signs the form; then email it to the Director of Graduate Programs for approval. |
| Add a master's degree to my PhD | Talk with your major professor first. If your major professor approves, file a curriculum change form that *adds* the master's program; do not replace the PhD. After your major professor signs, email the form to the Director of Graduate Programs (Section 10.5.7). |
| Add a graduate certificate | PhD students consult their major professor; master's students consult the Director of Graduate Programs. File a curriculum change form that *adds* the certificate without replacing your program, and email the signed form to the Director of Graduate Programs (Chapter 15). |
| Switch between the MS-CSSE thesis and non-thesis options | File a curriculum change form. To move from the thesis to the non-thesis option, you need your major professor's endorsement; after your major professor and the Director of Graduate Programs sign the form, submit it to the Graduate School. Non-thesis students are not eligible for tuition fellowships (Section 5.2). |

**Graduate School rules.** A change between master's and doctoral status (in either direction) must be requested by you, endorsed by the department chair, your major professor, and your advisory committee, and approved by the dean of the Graduate School. To move from CSSE to another department, you must be in good academic standing and submit a new application for admission with the usual application fee.

> **International students (F-1/J-1).** If you hold a teaching or research assistantship, ask the Manager of Academic Programs to issue an International Graduate Assistantship Award statement (International Graduate Assistantship Award (IGAA) statement). Email the approved curriculum change form and the IGAA to the Graduate School. When you move from a master's program to the PhD, the Office of International Programs can issue a new

> I-20 for the doctoral program (Section 2.11); you must recertify full financial sponsorship for the new I-20.

A PhD student who transfers to a master's program without continuing the PhD loses any departmental teaching assistantship (Section 5.8).

## 2.10 Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's (ABM) Program

Outstanding CSSE undergraduates may apply to the Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's (ABM) program, which lets you earn both degrees in less time and at lower cost. Up to nine credit hours may count toward both the bachelor's and the master's degree. Details are on the CSSE Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's (ABM) program page.

Graduate courses you took as an ABM undergraduate appear first as undergraduate courses, so they may be missing from your graduate record in DegreeWorks. In your first term as a graduate student, notify your Graduate School advisor so that your ABM coursework is moved to your graduate transcript.

**Graduate School rules for ABM.**

- *Eligibility.* You need at least 45 credit hours, with at least 24 completed at Auburn, and a cumulative GPA of at least 3.4 on all your Auburn coursework. Programs may set higher standards.
- *Shared hours.* Up to nine approved graduate-level hours may count toward both degrees in a master's program of 30 to 35 hours, and up to twelve in a program of 36 hours or more.
- *Applying.* Work with a graduate advisor in the department to complete the Graduate School's ABM application, which lists the courses that will count toward both degrees and the projected completion dates of both degrees.
- *Grades.* Only graduate courses with a grade of B or better count toward the master's degree.
- *Full admission.* You must earn the bachelor's degree and meet the department's admission criteria to be fully admitted to the master's program.
- *Registration.* As an ABM undergraduate you may register only for graduate courses listed as required or elective courses in your ABM plan. In a semester in which you take a graduate course, your total load may not exceed 16 hours.

**CSSE criteria and programs.**

- *To be eligible,* you must have completed at least 45 and no more than 93 semester credit hours, with at least 24 at Auburn if you transferred to Auburn, and you need a cumulative Auburn GPA of at least 3.4.
- *Once admitted,* you must keep a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 and earn a B or better in every 6000-level graduate course that counts toward both degrees.
- *Programs.* Your shared hours can count toward the MS-CSSE (thesis or non-thesis option), the MS-CYBE, or the MS-DSEN (Data Engineering option).

- *Time limits.* Complete the bachelor's degree requirements within two years and the master's degree requirements within three years.

**How to apply.**

1. Meet with the Manager of Academic Programs to review your degree audit and choose approved 6000-level courses.
2. Complete the CSSE ABM application form, with the approvals of the Manager of Academic Programs and the Director of Graduate Programs, and submit it to the Graduate School.
3. Before you move to full graduate status, submit a regular application to the Graduate School by its deadlines (Graduate School: apply for admission).

**Graduate courses taken as an undergraduate outside ABM.** If you are an Auburn undergraduate who is not in an ABM plan, you may register for a graduate course if you have at least a 3.0 GPA, are within 30 semester hours of graduating, have the written consent of the course's instructor, and have the Graduate School's approval in advance. Your total load that semester may not exceed 16 hours. Up to 12 hours of such coursework may later count toward an Auburn graduate degree if your advisory committee approves, you make arrangements in advance with the Graduate School, and you earn a B or better in each course. The same course cannot count for both undergraduate and graduate credit. Honors College students may take a limited number of graduate courses under the same shared-hours rule as ABM students.

## 2.11 International Students: Arrival and Status

**APPLIES TO** students on F-1 or J-1 visas

**When to arrive.** The Office of International Programs must report every student to the federal government within the first 30 days of each term, so it asks all students to arrive by the 21st day after classes start. Auburn also sets these deadlines:

- New international students must arrive by the first day of classes.
- All students must enroll in classes before the last day to add classes.
- Returning students who hold an assistantship must arrive by the 8th class day.
- All other returning students must arrive by the 15th class day.

The dates for each term follow from the first day of classes on the Graduate School calendar (deadlines). If you will hold an assistantship, also see Section 5.4.

**Keeping your status.**

- Enroll full time, or file the right form to enroll below full time (Section 2.4).
- Take no more than three online credit hours toward full time (Section 3.9).
- Take a term off only in summer (Section 2.7).
- Work only with authorization, including unpaid or volunteer work (Section 5.13).

**Between programs.** If you finish a master's degree and start a PhD the next term, the Office of International Programs can issue a new I-20 for the doctoral program. A student who completes a degree in spring and starts a PhD in fall is typically eligible to stay in the United States

during the summer, if they keep valid status and the new program issues an I-20. Working that summer requires work authorization, such as OPT, and working without it is not permitted. Talk with the Office of International Programs as early as possible.

For immigration questions, contact the Office of International Programs.



# Academic Policies

This chapter explains the academic rules that apply in every CSSE graduate program: grades, the GPA you must keep, what happens if you fail a course or lose good standing, transfer credit, course levels, your plan of study, and the courses used for directed study, capstone projects, and research. Requirements that differ by program are in your program chapter (Part II).

## 3.1 Grades

Passing grades are A, B, C, and S. Failing grades are D, F, and U. A grade of C or better counts toward your degree. No grade below C, including a U, is accepted for credit toward a graduate degree or certificate.

**Table 3.1** Graduate grades and what they mean for your degree

| Grade | Meaning |
|---|---|
| A, B, C | Passing. Counts toward your degree. A few courses require a B or better. |
| D, F | Failing. Does not count toward any degree or certificate requirement. A course you need must be repeated (Section 3.3). |
| S | Satisfactory: the passing grade in a course graded satisfactory/unsatisfactory. |
| U | Unsatisfactory: the failing grade in such a course. |
| TD | Thesis/dissertation research credit: the grade normally entered for COMP 7990 Research and Thesis and COMP 8990 Research and Dissertation. |

**Incomplete grades.** To receive an incomplete (IN), you must have completed and passed more than half of the course work, and you must ask the instructor in writing, for a documented reason such as illness or a death in the family, before final grades are submitted. The instructor records the work still needed, the deadline (at most six months), and the grade you will receive if you do not finish, counting missing work as zero. You must remove an incomplete grade within six months. Otherwise it is recorded permanently as an F, and you must repeat the course. The six months run whether or not you are enrolled. You cannot graduate until every incomplete and "no record" grade has been removed, and they must be removed at least three weeks before your graduation date.

**Class attendance.** Each instructor sets the attendance policy for a course and gives it to the class in writing at the start of the term. Instructors are expected to excuse absences for your illness or the serious illness or death of an immediate family member, religious holidays (tell the instructor in writing in advance), a subpoena, trips for University classes or for student organizations sponsored by an academic unit, and *presentations at professional meetings or*

*conferences*. Arrange to make up a missed major examination within one week after the excused absence ends.

**Letter grades are required.** In the master's programs, every course in your degree must be taken for a letter grade. The one exception is COMP 7990 Research and Thesis in the MS-CSSE thesis option, which is not letter-graded; its grade is normally TD. COMP 7980 Capstone Engineering Project is a letter-graded course. The PhD requires a set number of letter-graded credits (Section 10.3).

**The S/U option and auditing.** If your major professor recommends it, you may take a course under the satisfactory/unsatisfactory (S/U) option. You cannot choose this option after the 15th class day. Courses on your plan of study must be graded A, B, C, D, or F unless the course itself is designated S/U. You may also audit any course that is not on your plan of study. You cannot change from audit to credit after classes begin, but you may change from credit to audit before the 15th class day. Every use of the S/U or audit option requires the Graduate School's approval.

**Higher grade requirements.** If you are a PhD student, you must earn a B or better in each of COMP 7270, COMP 7300, and COMP 7500. These grades fulfill the PhD qualifying examination (Section 10.5.1). Graduate certificates have an additional grade rule (Section 15.4).

## 3.2 GPA Requirements

To receive a graduate degree, you must have a cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale on all courses carrying graduate credit. The same minimum applies to graduate certificates.

How your GPA is calculated:

- Only Auburn courses approved for graduate credit count. Credit transferred from another institution cannot be used to meet the 3.0 requirement. Grades in undergraduate courses (1000- to 4000-level) appear on your graduate transcript but do not count in your GPA.
- Every graduate course you take at Auburn counts. A low grade stays in your GPA even if you take a different course to meet the same requirement.
- If you retake a course, both the original grade and the new grade count.
- To bring your GPA up to 3.0 for graduation, you may take no more than nine hours beyond your plan of study. Retaken courses do not count against these nine hours.

If your GPA falls below 3.0, you are placed on academic probation (Section 3.4). For GPA rules that affect assistantships, see Section 5.8.

## 3.3 If You Fail a Course

**IMPORTANT**
A course with a grade below C (D, F, or U) does not count toward your degree. If you fail a *required* course, you must repeat it at Auburn or receive approval for a substitute

course. If you fail any other course, you do not have to repeat it; you may take another course that meets the same requirement.

A required course is one that your program lists by name in the Bulletin, such as the three core courses in the PhD-CSSE and MS-CSSE programs (Part II).

A substitute for a failed required course is possible only when the program approves it, for example when the course is not being offered. The Graduate School must also approve the substitution. You request it as an exception on your CTEC form (Section 4.4).

The failing grade stays on your transcript and in your GPA, even after you repeat the course (Section 3.2).

## 3.4 Academic Standing, Probation, and Dismissal



The Graduate School sets the rules for academic standing, and they are published in the Bulletin (Bulletin: Graduate School academic progress (grades, academic standing, advisors, progress reviews)). This section summarizes them; read the Bulletin if your GPA falls below 3.0.

1. *Probation.* If your cumulative graduate GPA is below 3.0 at the end of any semester, you are placed on academic probation.
2. *Suspension.* If your GPA is still below 3.0 after your next eleven credit hours of graduate enrollment (graded and ungraded) or after two consecutive terms, whichever comes first, you are placed on academic suspension. A summer term counts as one of the two terms only if you are enrolled that summer. While suspended, you may not hold a graduate assistantship, and you lose the full tuition waiver of a tuition fellowship until your GPA is back to 3.0.
3. *Remediation.* You may be readmitted only after you complete a remediation plan that the department recommends and the dean of the Graduate School approves. You must finish the plan's coursework within two consecutive terms. With the department head's recommendation and the dean's approval, that coursework may count toward your degree and your GPA. By the end of the plan, you must have corrected your academic deficiencies and raised your cumulative graduate GPA to at least 3.0. An approved plan cannot be changed or extended.
4. *Dismissal.* If you do not complete the plan as approved, or if you earn a grade of C or lower while completing it, you are dismissed from the Graduate School, and "Academic Dismissal" is recorded on your official record.

A student who has been academically dismissed from the Graduate School cannot simply reapply to the Graduate School.

**Academic bankruptcy.** If you were suspended or dismissed for poor academic performance, you may petition for academic bankruptcy, which lets you restart your graduate program after at least one calendar year away from Auburn. You submit a readmission request, and the graduate program must recommend you for readmission. With the Graduate School and the program's graduate program officer, you then identify the semesters to be declared bankrupt.

If the petition is approved, you forfeit all graduate courses and credit earned at Auburn in those semesters; they stay on your transcript but no longer count in your graduate GPA. You may declare academic bankruptcy only once.

Grades are not the only grounds for dismissal. As a graduate student you are expected to follow standards of academic integrity, personal conduct, and professional conduct, and a violation may lead to dismissal from the Graduate School (Section 7.2). Your advisory committee may also recommend dismissal if your progress is unsatisfactory in other areas. That process begins with a written statement of the problem, a meeting with you, and a set time to correct it (Section 7.7).

## 3.5 Transfer Credit

You may count a limited number of graduate credit hours earned at another institution toward your degree. The credit must have been taken in residence at a regionally accredited U.S. institution or at an international institution. Your major professor, advisory committee, and the department's graduate coordinator recommend the transfer, and the dean of the Graduate School approves it. No commitment is made in advance that transfer credit will be accepted. In every program, transfer credit may not exceed half of the program's total hours; CSSE's limits are in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2** Maximum transfer credit

| Program | Maximum hours |
|---|---|
| MS-AIEN; MS-CSSE (thesis option); MS-DSEN | 15 |
| MS-CSSE (non-thesis option); MS-CYBE | 16 |
| PhD-CSSE (from a previous master's degree) | Up to 30. Credit from another institution must also be less than half of the hours on your plan of study: fewer than 30 for a 60-hour plan |

**Which courses can transfer.**

- The course must fall within the time limit for your degree: six years for master's coursework and ten years for doctoral coursework (Section 2.8).
- It must be a graduate-level course with a grade of B or better.
- Your combined GPA on graduate work at other institutions must be at least 3.0.
- You must provide an official transcript and evidence that the course is comparable to a graduate course in CSSE and relevant to your plan of study.
- A course that counted toward an undergraduate degree cannot also count as graduate credit.
- Transfer credit cannot be used to raise your GPA on Auburn courses (Section 3.2).

**How to request transfer credit.**

1. List the courses on your CTEC form (Committee, Transfers, Exceptions and Candidacy (CTEC) form) and check the exceptions box (Section 4.4).
2. Your committee approves the request, and then the dean of the Graduate School approves it. If you are in a course-based master's program, you still file a CTEC form to transfer credit; your advisor of record serves as your committee (Section 4.2).
3. PhD students usually file the CTEC form a few weeks before the general oral examination (Section 10.5.2).

**Credit from an Auburn master's degree.** If your master's degree is from Auburn, its credits apply to the PhD automatically, up to 30 hours. If it is a CSSE master's degree, you do not need to list its coursework on your PhD CTEC form, and with your committee's approval its credits apply to the PhD, with two limits on research and project hours: COMP 7990 hours do not transfer to the PhD, and up to 3 hours of COMP 7980 do.



## 3.6 Course Levels and the 5000/6000 Rule

The requirements of every CSSE graduate degree are met with courses numbered 6000 and above (Part II).

If you have taken the 5000-level version of a course, you may not take its 6000-level version. You must take another graduate course that your program approves instead.

If the course you cannot repeat is a required course, ask for the substitution as an exception on your CTEC form (Section 4.4). In the exceptions box, name the approved course and the required course it replaces; for example, "COMP 7720 substitutes for required course COMP 6120." For an MS-AIEN example, see Section 12.3. Graduate courses taken as an undergraduate in the Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's program follow different rules (Section 2.10).

You may also register for undergraduate courses (1000- to 4000-level). Their grades appear on your graduate transcript but do not count in your graduate GPA (Section 3.2).

> **International students (F-1/J-1).** Undergraduate courses count toward the nine credit hours you need each semester for full-time status. You should still be enrolled in graduate courses, and you must keep making normal progress toward your degree (Section 2.4).

## 3.7 Plan of Study

The Graduate School no longer requires you to file a plan of study; it stopped requiring one in spring 2020. You should still prepare a plan of study with your advisor and use it each term when you register. This applies to PhD students as well.

A plan of study does not record transfer credit or exceptions to your program's requirements. Request those on your CTEC form (Section 4.4).

**Sample plans.** The department provides sample plans of study you can download and adapt:

- PhD-CSSE: entering with a bachelor's degree; entering with a master's degree.

- MS-CSSE: suggested plans with an artificial intelligence, data engineering, software engineering, or game development focus. These are suggested course plans only. MS-CSSE has no official concentrations, and the focus does not appear on your transcript.
- MS-AIEN: sample plan.
- MS-CYBE: sample plan.
- MS-DSEN (Data Engineering option): sample plan.
- All templates: CSSE sample plans of study (all templates).

To see which courses are offered and what they cover, use the CSSE graduate course offerings and the CSSE syllabus bank.

## 3.8 Directed Study, Capstone, and Research Credit

Four kinds of courses are arranged individually with a CSSE professor rather than taken as regular classes. Table 3.3 compares them.

**Table 3.3** Directed study, capstone, and research courses

| Course | What it is | Who takes it | Limits and grading |
|---|---|---|---|
| COMP 7930 / COMP 8930 Directed Study | A one-on-one course in which a professor coaches you on a topic; no lectures or exams. | Master's students (7930); doctoral students (8930). | At most 3 hours of COMP 7930 (master's) or 6 hours of COMP 8930 (doctoral). The professor sets the grading criteria. |
| COMP 7980 Capstone Engineering Project | A project you complete under a faculty mentor. | Required in MS-CYBE and MS-DSEN (Data Engineering option); optional in MS-CSSE (non-thesis) and MS-AIEN. | At most 3 hours. You may register for it for 1 credit hour at a time. Letter grade. |
| COMP 7990 Research and Thesis | Research toward a master's thesis. | MS-CSSE thesis option. | 6 hours, which is both the requirement and the limit. Grade normally TD. |
| COMP 8990 Research and Dissertation | Research toward the PhD dissertation. | PhD-CSSE students. | At least 24 hours required. You may take more than 30 hours, but at most 30 count toward the PhD. Grade normally TD. |

Special topics courses (for example, COMP 6970) are different: they are regular classes with lectures, homework, and exams.

**How to register for directed study (COMP 7930/8930).**

1. Find a CSSE professor who agrees to supervise your directed study. In most cases you need an advisor before you take directed study, but a professor who is not your advisor may supervise you if willing.

2. Complete the Approval for Independent Study / Directed Readings form with the professor, who specifies the course objectives, how you will learn, the work you will do, and the grading criteria. Attach a syllabus.
3. Submit the signed form to the Manager of Academic Programs, who gives final approval and registers you for the course.

See also the CSSE guideline on registering for directed study (COMP 7930/8930) and the University's Policy on Credit for Directed Studies.

**How to register for capstone or research hours (COMP 7980, 7990, 8990).**

1. For COMP 7980, first get approval from the professor who will supervise your project. For COMP 7990 or COMP 8990, agree with your advisor on the number of hours.
2. Complete the CSSE request form for research hours and capstone (COMP 7980, 7990, 8990). Give the number of hours, the professor's name, and whether you are an on-campus or online student.
3. The Manager of Academic Programs adds you to the course and notifies the professor.

MS-DSEN students should contact the faculty contact for MS-DSEN capstone projects, named in each term's registration email, before registering for COMP 7980 (Section 14.3).



## 3.9 Online Courses and Online Students

Online sections of a course have the same course number as the in-person course, but their section numbers begin with D (for example, COMP 6600 D01). In-person sections have numbers such as 001.

**On-campus students taking online courses.** If you are admitted to an on-campus program, you may enroll in an online section (for example, a D01 section) only in special circumstances and with the approval of your major professor (advisor), who approves the courses in your plan of study. Online courses are charged at the online tuition rate, which is the same for Alabama residents and nonresidents. A tuition fellowship that comes with an assistantship does not cover online courses (Section 5.9). If you take at least one on-campus course in a term, you are also charged the Student Services fee for that term; a student taking only online courses is not. Current rates are published by Student Financial Services.

> **International students (F-1/J-1).** You may take up to three credit hours of online courses each semester. At least six of the nine credit hours you need for full-time status must be in-person courses. Check your plan with the Office of International Programs before you register.

> **Online students.**
>
> - *Registration.* Students in online programs need to register in only two of the three terms each year (fall, spring, summer); see Section 2.5.

- *Exams.* Graduate online courses are asynchronous. Instructors do not require online students to take an exam, including a final exam, at a particular time of day; you receive a reasonable time window, such as 24 hours.
- *Proctors.* When a course needs a proctor, submit your proctor's information to the Engineering Online office for approval (Engineering Online testing services and proctor form).
- *Recorded lectures.* If a lecture recording is missing, email eolhelp@auburn.edu.



# Advising and Committees

Every CSSE graduate student has a faculty advisor, called the *major professor*, and an advisory committee. This chapter explains how your advisor and committee are chosen, who may serve, how the committee is made official on the CTEC form, and how your progress is reviewed.

## 4.1 Your Major Professor (Advisor)

Each graduate student has a faculty advisor, or major professor, designated under the department's policy, and an advisory committee. The major professor usually chairs the committee. The dean of the Graduate School serves as the general counselor to all graduate students.

In CSSE, you choose your own research focus and your major professor. Read about the faculty's research on the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering website, talk with the professors whose work interests you, and ask one to serve as your major professor.

- *Thesis master's and PhD students* work with a major professor who supervises their research. Until you have one, the Director of Graduate Programs can advise you on course registration.
- *Course-based master's students* have an advisor of record assigned by program (Section 4.2).

You will usually need an advisor before you register for directed study (Section 3.8).

**When to choose.** The Graduate School expects you to plan your first-semester courses with an advisor and to develop your plan of study during your first semester. Master's committees are usually established during the first semester of coursework.

**Changing your major professor or committee.** If your committee needs to change, your committee chair helps you find replacement members, and the department chair helps you find a new chair (major professor). Submit an amended CTEC form (Section 4.4). Once you have filed a CTEC form, you must keep a full committee to continue in the program: make any replacement within one academic term, or you may be placed on inactive status.

## 4.2 Advisor of Record for Course-Based Master's Students

**APPLIES TO** MS-CSSE (non-thesis option), MS-AIEN, MS-CYBE, MS-DSEN

If you are in a course-based master's program, your committee has one member: your advisor of record. No other committee members are needed. You name this person on your CTEC form (Section 4.4).

**Table 4.1** Advisor of record for course-based master's students

| Program | Advisor of record | Email to enter on the CTEC form |
|---|---|---|
| MS-CSSE (non-thesis) and MS-DSEN | The Director of Graduate Programs, Dr. Xiao Qin. If you completed COMP 7930 or COMP 7980 under a CSSE professor, list that professor instead. | xzq0001@auburn.edu (not the Director's everyday address), or your COMP 7930/7980 professor's Auburn email |
| MS-AIEN | The Director of AI Engineering Programs, Dr. Sathya Aakur | san0028@auburn.edu |
| MS-CYBE | The Director of Cybersecurity Engineering Programs, Dr. Farah Kandah | fzk0016@auburn.edu |

The CTEC form checks each committee member's Auburn email address, which is why you must enter the address shown in Table 4.1.

Your advisor of record approves the forms that need an advisor's or committee's approval, such as a transfer credit request (Section 3.5) and, for international students finishing a project, the ABT request (Section 2.4).

**Academic advising in MS-AIEN and MS-CYBE.** Your program director is your advisor of record. For academic advising, such as planning your courses each term and registration questions, you may see either your program director (Dr. Sathya Aakur for MS-AIEN, Dr. Farah Kandah for MS-CYBE) or the Manager of Academic Programs, Dr. Clint Lovelace (jcl0014@auburn.edu, 334-844-6313). Questions about which electives are approved go to your program director.

## 4.3 Supervisory Committees

Your advisory (supervisory) committee guides your program, approves your CTEC form, and conducts your examinations. Its size and membership depend on your degree (Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2** Committee membership by degree

| Degree | Members | When it is formed |
|---|---|---|
| PhD-CSSE | At least four Auburn Graduate Faculty members, chaired by your major professor. Three of the Auburn members, including your major professor, must be Graduate Faculty at Level 2. Your major professor and at least one other member must be graduate faculty members resident in CSSE. At most one member may come from outside Auburn, as an additional (fifth) member, and must hold the terminal degree in the field (a PhD). | On the CTEC form, a few weeks before your general oral examination. Most PhD students file it after publishing or submitting their first research paper, often in the second year. |

| Degree | Members | When it is formed |
|---|---|---|
| MS-CSSE (thesis option) | At least three Auburn Graduate Faculty members, one of whom is your major professor, who must be a graduate faculty member in CSSE. An outside member serves as a fourth member. | As agreed with your major professor; it becomes official on the CTEC form. |
| Course-based master's | One member: your advisor of record (Section 4.2). | On the CTEC form, before you apply for graduation. |

**Outside members.** When your committee includes a member from outside Auburn, attach that person's curriculum vitae when you submit your CTEC form.

**Co-chairs.** If your committee has co-chairs, at least one must be a member of the Auburn graduate faculty at the appropriate level.

**The University Reader (PhD).** For the dissertation, a University Reader joins your committee to represent the graduate faculty and the Graduate School. You and your major professor select the reader, who must be a member of the Graduate Faculty at Level 1 or 2 from outside your department. Your major professor may request the reader's appointment at any time. The reader evaluates your dissertation and, like every committee member, must be present at your final examination and must support the result (Section 10.5.5).



## 4.4 The CTEC Form

The Committee, Transfers, Exceptions and Candidacy (CTEC) form, also called the committee selection form, makes your committee official. On it you:

- name your major professor (or advisor of record) and committee members;
- list any credit you want to transfer from another institution (Section 3.5); and
- request exceptions to program requirements, such as substituting one course for another (Section 3.6).

Your committee and the Graduate School approve the form. Other Graduate School forms, such as the ABT request, take your major professor's name from your CTEC form. If that information is missing or wrong, submit or amend your CTEC form.

**When to file it.**

- *Master's students* file the CTEC form before applying for graduation, normally in the term before the one in which you plan to graduate (Section 8.2).
- *PhD students* file it before requesting the general oral examination, usually a few weeks before (Section 10.5.2).
- *Graduate certificates* do not require a CTEC form; you only apply for graduation (Chapter 15).

**How to file it.**

1. Agree with your major professor on who will serve on your committee.
2. Complete the Committee, Transfers, Exceptions and Candidacy (CTEC) form online. The form asks you to validate each member's Auburn email address. For a member from outside Auburn, attach their curriculum vitae.
3. If you are transferring credit or requesting an exception, say so on the form and describe it in the exceptions section.
4. Submit the form. Your committee approves it, and then the Graduate School.

## 4.5 What You and Your Advisor Can Expect

A good working relationship with your major professor starts with clear communication and shared goals for your research and studies. In CSSE:

**What you can expect from your advisor.**

- *Guidance and mentoring:* regular feedback on your research, your academic progress, and your degree milestones, such as the CTEC form, the proposal defense, and the thesis or dissertation.
- *Accessibility:* office hours and scheduled one-on-one meetings to discuss your courses, research direction, and professional development.
- *Professional development:* support in publishing papers, presenting at conferences, and planning a career in academia or industry.
- *Fair treatment:* a supportive, respectful environment that follows University standards on workload (for example, no more than 20 hours a week for an assistantship, Section 5.5) and on academic ethics.

**What your advisor can expect from you.**

- *Communication:* you keep your advisor informed about your academic standing, your research progress, and any obstacles or delays.
- *Rigor and integrity:* you hold yourself to high standards in your courses, meet your degree timelines, and follow safety and ethics rules (Chapter 6).
- *Responsibility:* you complete research work on time and, if you hold an assistantship, carry out its duties professionally.
- *Initiative:* you take charge of your own progress, check your degree audit, and prepare required forms well before the deadlines.

Your advisory committee monitors your progress toward your degree, and it may consider your professional and personal development as well as your grades.

If your program ends in a thesis or dissertation, the Graduate School's academic engagement policy says you will engage directly in research with your major professor, have access to the tools you need for the research, take part in the culture of graduate education and the professional activities of the discipline, and complete the research in a reasonable period of time.

Many forms and reports need signatures from your major professor, your committee, the department head or chair, and the dean of the Graduate School. It is your responsibility to find out which signatures each form needs and to obtain them.

Your major professor also plays a part in your examinations. For example, before your PhD proposal defense you share your proposal with every committee member at least one week in advance and ask your major professor for feedback on your slides. Your major professor announces your defense to the department the day before it takes place.

If you hold a research assistantship, its continuation depends on satisfactory research progress under your major professor's supervision (Section 5.8).

If the relationship with your major professor is not working, start with your major professor; if that does not resolve it, go to the Director of Graduate Programs and then to the department chair (Section 7.8).

## 4.6 Annual Progress Review

**APPLIES TO** PhD-CSSE students and graduate teaching assistants (required); other students at the department's discretion

The Graduate School requires each department to evaluate, at least once a year, the progress of every student in a doctoral program and every graduate teaching assistant (GTA). Departments are encouraged to monitor all other degree-seeking students as well. Each year the department reports to the Graduate School that these evaluations are complete.

Continuing as a doctoral student or GTA depends on a satisfactory review. The Graduate School asks that each review include at least:

1. your own written report on your academic progress, and on your teaching and research if they apply, prepared before the review meeting;
2. a report from your advisor, preferably joined by at least one other faculty member such as a committee member, that assesses your progress, names strengths and weaknesses, and sets expectations for the next year;
3. a chance to discuss the report with your reviewers in person; and
4. a signed copy of the written assessment, placed in your file, with a copy for you.

The department also reports to the Graduate School every unsatisfactory review of a GTA or doctoral student.

If you are a GTA, you are also evaluated on your teaching assistantship (Section 5.8).

When your committee evaluates your proposal defense or thesis defense, the department also uses that evaluation in its annual assessment of the graduate programs.

If your committee finds your progress unsatisfactory, it follows the Graduate School's due-process steps before any dismissal: a written statement, a meeting with you, and a set time for you to correct the problem (Section 7.7).

**How CSSE runs the review.** Every active PhD student is reviewed each year on academic and research progress, and every GTA and GA is evaluated on assistantship duties.

1. *Your report.* You prepare an annual progress report covering your courses, your degree milestones (such as the core courses, the CTEC form, and the proposal defense), your research results and publications, and an updated CV.
2. *Your advisor's review.* Your major professor (or your committee, or your teaching supervisor for assistantship duties) reviews your progress, gives you written feedback, and evaluates your academic standing, research progress, and assistantship performance.
3. *Record and reporting.* A signed copy of the written assessment is placed in your departmental file, and you receive a copy. The Director of Graduate Programs reports to the Graduate School that the evaluations are complete.

The review sets clear expectations, catches problems such as a falling GPA early, before they lead to probation, and documents your performance. Continuing an assistantship and its tuition fellowship depends on satisfactory evaluations (Section 5.8).

# Assistantships and Financial Support

Most CSSE graduate students who receive financial support do so through a graduate assistantship, which pays a monthly stipend and usually brings a tuition fellowship. This chapter explains the kinds of assistantships, who is eligible, what the University and the department expect of assistants, how tuition fellowships work, and other sources of support and work experience.

## 5.1 Types of Assistantships

- *Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA).* Supports the University's teaching. To be classified as a GTA, at least half of your assistantship duties must be direct instruction of students, typically in a classroom or laboratory. A GTA may also advise or mentor students, proctor and grade, and prepare course materials, but may not be given research or mainly clerical duties.
- *Graduate Research Assistant (GRA).* Carries out original, professional-level research under a faculty member's supervision as part of earning a graduate degree. The supervising faculty member sets the duties.
- *Graduate Assistant (GA).* Performs duties other than teaching, research, or extension.

In CSSE, a student who supports a course without instructional responsibilities, for example by grading assignments or helping the instructor proctor, is appointed as a GA. An international student who has not met the spoken-English requirement for teaching (Section 5.3) can serve only as a GA.

Graduate assistants are paid monthly and are paid during official University holidays and breaks, including fall break, spring break, and University closures.

## 5.2 Eligibility, Offers, and Continuation

**University requirements.** To hold an assistantship, you must:

- be in a degree-seeking program, registered as MST, EDS, PHD, or GPR (Section 2.1);
- be registered for at least one course in each term of the assistantship and meet the department's minimum course load (Section 5.6);
- make satisfactory progress toward your degree;
- pass a background check, which is a condition of appointment for all graduate student employees, including those paid hourly; and

- complete the required Title IX and discrimination training, which is a condition of continued appointment.

**Non-thesis master's programs.** The Samuel Ginn College of Engineering does not give qualifying assistantships to students in non-thesis master's programs: the MS-CSSE non-thesis option, the MS-AIEN, the MS-CYBE, and the MS-DSEN. These students are therefore not eligible for tuition fellowships (Section 5.9).

**Distance students.** CSSE does not offer assistantships or tuition fellowships to distance (online) students, including students who take the PhD online.

**CSSE selection.** CSSE assistantships are awarded competitively. You can be considered only after you have completed your Graduate School application. GTA and GA appointments are based on your undergraduate GPA, GRE scores, TOEFL scores (for international students), letters of recommendation, statement of purpose, and, optionally, an interview. International applicants for a teaching assistantship need a TOEFL score of at least 79 or an IELTS score of at least 6.5. You pay the cost of the background check.

**Offers.** Official offers of support come from the department in writing. A faculty member's informal mention of a salary or of support for several years is not an offer. If you are offered a fellowship together with an assistantship, the award is guaranteed only for the first year. Continuation is expected but depends on satisfactory research progress under your advisor (for a research assistantship), satisfactory performance as a teaching assistant and available funds (for a teaching assistantship), and the unit that awards the fellowship. The department cannot guarantee a teaching assistantship, or a combined teaching and research assistantship, from year to year.

All graduate assistant appointments are temporary. Continuation depends on available funds, enrollment, research needs, and satisfactory performance (Section 5.8).

**Hiring paperwork.** The department's Office Manager, Ms. JoAnn Lauraitis (bjl0002@auburn.edu, 334-844-6300), handles the hiring paperwork for graduate research and teaching assistants and other graduate-student employment matters. International students also follow the steps in Section 5.4.

**Current students.** If you are already a CSSE graduate student, you do not apply for a teaching assistantship yourself. Your major professor (advisor) nominates you for a GTA position.

## 5.3 English Proficiency for International GTAs

**APPLIES TO** international students who will teach

If you are an international GTA assigned to lecture or laboratory sections, you must be certified in spoken English before you teach. You can show it with any one of these:

- a score of 23 or higher on the Speaking section of the TOEFL iBT;
- a score of 7 on the Speaking section of the IELTS; or
- a score of 4.4 or higher on the Speaking section of the iTEP, which Auburn gives before classes start (it replaced the SPEAK test).

If your bachelor's degree is from an accredited institution where instruction is in English, you may be exempted. You may be asked to take a course to improve oral communication for international teaching assistants. The department submits a certification of eligibility for each international GTA.

If you do not meet the requirement, you may still serve as a GA, with duties such as grading but no teaching (Section 5.1).

## 5.4 Starting an Assistantship as an International Student

**APPLIES TO** international students who begin an assistantship after arriving at Auburn

1. *Check in* with the Office of International Programs as soon as you arrive in the United States.
2. *Register* for nine hours of graduate COMP courses as soon as your check-in and medical holds are removed (Section 2.3).
3. *Assistantship award.* After you accept the offer, the department submits your International Graduate Assistantship Award (IGAA) to the Graduate School. It must arrive before your employment starts and no later than the 8th class day for you to receive a tuition waiver. The Graduate School approves it and sends it to the Office of International Programs.
4. *Employment counseling.* Visit the Office of International Programs for employment counseling and to complete the alien employment verification and tax form. Then bring the form to the CSSE office to be signed.
5. *Social Security number.* Apply at the local Social Security office, about ten business days after you arrive, with the letter you receive at employment counseling.
6. *Employment packet.* At the CSSE office, complete your hiring packet with the Office Manager, Ms. JoAnn Lauraitis (bjl0002@auburn.edu): the graduate assistantship authorization form, personal data form, Alabama A-4 and federal W-4 tax forms, alien employment and tax verification form, I-9, a copy of your Social Security card or proof of application, direct deposit (through AU Access), and a background check.
7. *Submission.* The department sends the packet through the college to the Graduate School, which forwards it to Human Resources. Human Resources must receive it no later than the third day of hire so that you are paid on time.

Questions go to the Manager of Academic Programs (Key Contacts).

## 5.5 Workload, Presence on Campus, and Breaks

**Workload.** You may not normally hold assistantships totaling more than 0.50 FTE, which is 20 hours per week, whether from one unit or several, including any hourly campus job or internship appointment. A GTA who teaches one four-credit course and one three- or four-credit course is automatically allowed 0.58 or 0.67 FTE. Other exceptions require a written request with strong academic reasons, sent by the dean to the Provost. Students who work more than half time are advised not to carry a full course load.

> **International students (F-1/J-1).** Federal rules limit international students to a total appointment of 0.50 FTE (20 hours per week); students on F-1 visas cannot hold more than a 50 percent appointment. Students on F-2 visas may not hold an assistantship.

**Being on campus.** As a GTA or GA, you are an Auburn employee. You are expected to be in Auburn and working Monday through Friday from the first day of classes through commencement, for up to 20 hours a week, including exam weeks. Any absence, including a business or personal trip during the semester, requires advance permission from every instructor you work for.

**Breaks.** You are paid during University breaks. What you do during a break depends on your role: GTAs may still have grading or course preparation, and GRAs usually continue research. Confirm your schedule with the instructor you assist or your research advisor before any break.

**Changes during a term.** A GTA's assignment (FTE, courses, and workload) stays fixed for the whole term. If you are both a GTA and a GRA, changes to your GRA appointment or salary take effect in the following term.

## 5.6 Enrollment Requirements for Assistants

As a graduate assistant, you must enroll in at least nine graduate credit hours in CSSE each fall and spring semester and at least three in summer. The Director of Graduate Programs may approve an exemption, but never below three hours in any semester.

In your last semester as a master's student, you may take fewer than nine hours, so that you finish exactly the 30 or 33 hours your degree requires. This keeps your total within the tuition fellowship limit (Section 5.9). The three-hour floor still applies, and international students must also meet the rules in Table 2.3.

PhD students who have passed the general oral examination usually register for three hours each semester, including summer (Section 5.9).

COMP 8990 hours that you take beyond the 30 that count toward the PhD still count toward these minimums. They meet the department's course-load and active-research requirements for assistants, which the University allows.

## 5.7 GTA and GA Responsibilities

**APPLIES TO** graduate teaching assistants and graduate assistants

**University rules for GTAs.** GTAs are supervised by a faculty member, who evaluates their work at least once a year. A GTA with no teaching experience receives training before teaching. A GTA who is primarily responsible for a course must have at least 18 graduate semester hours in that field. GTAs may not be the instructor of record for courses numbered 6000 or above, though they may assist with laboratories for those courses, and may not teach or assist with a course in which they are enrolled.

**CSSE expectations.**

- *Kickoff meeting.* Before the first day of classes each semester, schedule a meeting with the instructor of each course you are assigned to.
- *Orientation.* Attend the graduate student orientations held by the department and the Graduate School at the start of each fall and spring semester. New GTAs and GAs also attend the new-GTA orientation run by the Biggio Center in their first semester as assistants. Vacations and internship plans are not excuses for missing an orientation, and missing one can lead to losing your appointment.
- *Office hours.* With your instructor's approval, set office hours and a location by the first week of classes. Hold them on weekdays between 7:45 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. in a publicly accessible Auburn office or lab, and tell your students, the Director of Graduate Programs, and the department staff. Be present for every scheduled office hour; substantiated complaints that you were absent can lead to losing your appointment. GTA offices are assigned by the CSSE main office, Ms. Kecia Hill (ksh0026@auburn.edu).
- *Email.* Use your Auburn email for all assistantship business, check it daily during the semester, and answer student questions about assignments by the next business day.
- *Mailbox.* Check your departmental mailbox at least twice a week during the semester.
- *Conflicts of interest.* You may not grade a family member, a close friend, or someone you are dating. Tell the instructor and the Director of Graduate Programs; another assistant or the instructor will grade that student.
- *Social media.* Do not comment about your students or classes on social media, and interact with students through the course's learning platforms rather than personal social media accounts.
- *Conduct.* Treat students, faculty, and staff with courtesy and respect. As an Auburn employee, you must follow all University policies, including those on sexual harassment and romantic relationships.

**Parking.** Graduate students are eligible for C-zone parking permits. The department generally does not support requests for B-zone permits for graduate students.

## 5.8 Evaluation, Renewal, and Limits on Support

**Evaluation.** Your supervisor evaluates your performance at least once a year. If you are a GTA, the department must also review your progress annually as part of the Graduate School's required evaluation (Section 4.6), and the CSSE GTA policy calls for an evaluation each semester. Renewal depends on satisfactory performance and available funds.

**Academic standing.** You may not hold an assistantship while on academic suspension, and a student on suspension loses the full tuition waiver until the cumulative graduate GPA is back to at least 3.0 (Section 3.4).

**How long the department can support you.** Departmentally funded GTA and GA appointments are limited to four academic semesters (fall or spring) for a master's student and eight for a PhD student. An extension in extenuating circumstances needs the approval of your advisor, the Graduate Programs Committee, and the department chair. A PhD student who moves to a master's program without continuing the PhD loses any teaching assistantship. These limits do

not apply to research assistantships (GRAs) paid from grants. The PhD advisor who offers a GRA sets how long it can last.

**If your performance is not satisfactory.** The University's performance-improvement policy for graduate assistants works as follows:

1. Your supervisor meets with you, identifies the duties you are not performing satisfactorily, and sets a reasonable time for you to improve. Within about three working days, you receive a written summary, which is also sent to the department chair and the dean of the Graduate School.
2. If your performance does not improve, the department chair meets with you and your supervisor and may end the assistantship. You receive a written decision within five working days.
3. Misconduct or unprofessional conduct, such as insubordination, abusive language, drinking intoxicants or using illegal drugs on University property, theft, scientific misconduct, or harassment, can lead to prompt action: suspension or termination of the assistantship, or a reduction in FTE or benefits. You may be placed on paid administrative leave while the department chair reviews the case.
4. You may appeal an administrative action, in writing, to the dean of the college within five working days of the department chair's notice. The dean's decision is final.

**IMPORTANT**
Losing an assistantship, or having its FTE reduced, can have large financial effects, including on your tuition fellowship and health insurance, especially if it happens before the last class day of a semester (Section 5.9).



## 5.9 Stipends and Tuition Fellowships

**Tuition fellowship.** If you hold a qualifying assistantship, the Graduate School automatically awards you a Graduate Tuition Fellowship that pays your tuition. You do not apply for it. The amount depends on your total appointment (Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1** Tuition support by assistantship level

| Appointment | Tuition support |
|---|---|
| 0.33 FTE or more | Full resident and non-resident tuition for all attempted hours, up to 15 hours a semester, until you reach the maximum support. |
| 0.25 to 0.32 FTE | 50% of tuition at the in-state rate; you are also charged tuition as an Alabama resident. |
| Less than 0.25 FTE | No tuition support. |

**To qualify for the full fellowship,** you must:

- hold an appointment of at least 0.33 FTE (at least 13.2 hours per week) for the full semester, from no later than the 8th class day (5th class day in summer) through the last day of classes;

- receive at least the minimum stipend (see below);
- be a degree-seeking student (provisionally admitted students qualify in their first semester);
- be in good academic standing, with a cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0; and
- be registered for at least 1 and no more than 15 hours.

> **IMPORTANT**
> The Samuel Ginn College of Engineering does not give qualifying assistantships to students in non-thesis master's programs. As a result, students in the MS-CSSE non-thesis option, the MS-AIEN, the MS-CYBE, and the MS-DSEN are not eligible for tuition fellowships (tuition waivers).

**Minimum stipend.** The Provost sets a minimum monthly stipend for each appointment level, and colleges may set higher requirements. In the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering, an assistant must receive at least $2,083.33 a month ($25,000 a year) at a cumulative 0.50 FTE, effective October 1, 2025, to be eligible for the tuition waiver. The current Provost minimums are published in the Graduate School's guidelines.

**How many hours are covered.**

- University-funded tuition support is limited to **110% of the hours your degree requires**. For the 60-hour PhD-CSSE, that is 66 hours; for the 30-hour MS-CSSE thesis option, 33 hours. Exceptions may be approved by the graduate dean if you document an academic need and have used your support well.
- Hours transferred into your degree do not count against this limit. Neither do hours paid for an Auburn master's degree, as long as the master's and the PhD are in the same or a complementary field.
- Support covers one master's degree, one PhD, or one master's degree plus one PhD in the same or a complementary field (with your college dean's approval).
- No student receives more than 12 semesters of support as a master's student, or 24 semesters as a doctoral student, including master's study at Auburn.
- When your fellowship is used up, the non-resident portion of tuition is still waived while you hold an assistantship, and you are charged in-state tuition and fees.

**Summer.** If you held an assistantship of 0.33 FTE or more in both the fall and the spring, your tuition is also covered in the following summer, even if you do not hold an assistantship that summer.

**What is not covered.**

- *Online courses.* Online (distance) sections are not automatically covered; a college may cover them only with the college dean's approval. CSSE students pay the online rate for any online course, even with an assistantship (Section 3.9).
- *Fees.* The Student Services Fee is reduced for graduate assistants but is not covered by the fellowship. Current fees are listed in the Bulletin: tuition and fees (including the graduate assistant student services fee).

**Making your hours last (PhD).** Because your support is capped, plan your registration. If you pass the general oral examination by the end of your second year, you need to register for only three hours a semester after that as an ABD student, and a five-year plan fits within 66 hours (Table 5.2). A five-year plan spans ten fall and spring semesters, which is more than the eight semesters of departmental GTA or GA support, so plan for a GRA or an approved extension in the later semesters (Section 5.8).

**Table 5.2** Sample PhD registration plan within 66 supported hours

| Year | Fall | Spring | Summer |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 9 | 9 | 3 |
| 2 | 9 | 9 | 3 |
| 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 5 | 3 | 3 | — |

Total: 66 hours. Summer hours are COMP 8990, required for a summer assistantship.

**Tracking your hours.** The Graduate Tuition Fellowship System (GTUFS) shows how many hours you have taken toward your degree, how many the fellowship allows, and how many remain. To open it, log in to AU Access, My Academics, choose the Student menu on the My Academics tab, and select *Graduate Tuition Fellowship System*. See also the Guidelines for Graduate Tuition Fellowships and its FAQs.

## 5.10 Health Insurance and Fees

**Graduate assistants.** Health insurance through the Auburn graduate student plan is mandatory if you are a graduate assistant (GTA, GRA, or GA) in good academic standing, employed at 0.25 FTE or more for the full fall or spring semester, and paid at least the Provost's minimum stipend.

- You are enrolled automatically, by the 15th class day of each term in which you are registered.
- To opt out, submit an insurance waiver request showing that you have other coverage equal to or greater than the entire Auburn plan.
- Premiums are charged per term on your E-Bill: six months in fall and six months for spring and summer. If you arrive in spring or summer, you are billed from your arrival. There is no month-by-month enrollment.
- Premiums are refunded only if you withdraw, transfer out, or are suspended or otherwise lose graduate standing, and then only prorated by month.

**Other students and dependents.** Any currently enrolled graduate student may buy coverage by submitting the online enrollment form by the ninth class day of fall or spring. Your spouse and children may be covered only if you are enrolled yourself. Enroll them by the 15th class day of fall or spring (the 5th class day of summer). Once enrolled, a dependent can be removed

only at the end of an enrollment period or when your own eligibility ends. You are not eligible if you are not enrolled for at least one credit hour or have completed your degree.

**Coverage periods.** The plan year runs from August 16 to August 15. Fall enrollment covers August 16 through February 15, and continuing coverage runs February 16 through August 15.

> **International students (F-1/J-1).** You and your F-2 or J-2 dependents must carry the University's mandatory international student health insurance plan, so you cannot enroll separately in the graduate student plan. See the Office of International Programs' insurance page.

Questions about enrollment or waivers go to the Graduate Student Health Insurance Office (334-844-5035, insurance@auburn.edu). More detail is on the Graduate School's Graduate student health insurance page.

**Fees and your bill.** Your E-Bill is managed by Student Financial Services. Questions about a specific charge go to the office that issued it.

## 5.11 Fellowships and Awards

Auburn awards in-state tuition fellowships to most graduate assistants (Section 5.9). The Graduate School may also award tuition fellowships to students who are not assistants, with the dean's approval.

**Fellowships for PhD students.**

- *Presidential Graduate Research Fellowships (PGRF).* Multi-year packages that combine a department research assistantship stipend, a College Dean's Fellowship, and a President's Fellowship. Packages typically start at about $37,000 a year, plus a full tuition waiver.
- *Samuel Ginn College of Engineering endowed fellowships.* Named fellowships the College awards to recruit and retain high-performing graduate students.

Faculty nominate the PhD applicants they are recruiting for these fellowships, and official offers come only from the department. Your offer letter states the department's assistantship amount, the fellowship amount, and the total yearly support. The fellowship's continuation depends on the unit that awards it.

**External fellowships.** You may also compete for national awards, such as the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP), the SREB Doctoral Scholars Fellowship, and agency awards such as the Eisenhower Transportation Fellowship.

If you are supported by an outside (extramural) fellowship and perform duties equivalent to a research assistant's, you can be treated as a research assistant for the tuition fellowship. The department must send your name to the Graduate School each semester.

The Graduate School lists other fellowships and funding and its programs and awards.

## 5.12 Travel Funding

The Auburn Graduate Student Council (GSC) offers a Travel Fellowship, also called the GSC Travel Award, to help graduate students pay for travel to conferences, symposia, or professional meetings where they present their research and whose cost is not fully covered by other sources. In brief:

- *Amount.* $500, paid as a reimbursement.
- *Eligibility.* You must be enrolled and in good standing, and you must be presenting (as first or primary author of an accepted paper, poster, or talk), not only attending.
- *Matching funds.* The award supplements other support, so you are expected to request travel funds from your major professor, the department, or the College as well.
- *When to apply.* Applications are accepted year-round. Apply at least two months before the month in which you travel. Applications are reviewed monthly, and only the applicants selected for each travel month receive awards.
- *Applying.* Apply online (GSC Travel Fellowship application). You will typically need proof that your abstract was accepted, a travel budget, an approved travel authorization, and a letter of support from your major professor.

The Graduate School's programs and awards page lists current funding opportunities.

**Support in CSSE.** In CSSE, travel support for graduate students comes mainly from your major professor's research grants. When you apply for University-level support, such as the GSC Travel Award or a College of Engineering award, the department or the College may provide matching funds, depending on available resources and with the approval of your major professor and the department chair.

**Travel reimbursement.** The CSSE main office, Ms. Kecia Hill (ksh0026@auburn.edu, 334-844-6352), handles travel reimbursement for graduate students.

## 5.13 Internships, CPT/OPT, and Volunteering

**Internships.** Engineering Career Development and Corporate Relations helps students find internships, and the department also announces internship openings on the graduate student mailing list. If you hold an assistantship, any internship appointment counts toward the 0.50 FTE limit (Section 5.5). See Engineering internships (Career Development and Corporate Relations).

> **International students (F-1/J-1). Curricular Practical Training (CPT).** Any off-campus work, paid or unpaid, must be authorized before it starts. For an internship, the steps are:
>
> 1. Get a written internship offer letter.
> 2. Report your internship to Engineering Career Development and Corporate Relations.
> 3. Obtain the CPT application from the Office of International Programs and get the department's signature.
> 4. Register for ENGR 7920 Internship in Engineering (0 credit) for each semester of the internship.

5. Submit your CPT application, and wait for the Office of International Programs to approve it. Do not complete any hiring paperwork or company orientation until your CPT is approved.

During a summer internship, ENGR 7920 is the only course you need. In fall or spring, a part-time internship requires ENGR 7920 plus other courses to keep full-time status, and a full-time internship requires ENGR 7920 and COOP 4920 (both 0 credit). See Curricular Practical Training (CPT) information.

**Optional Practical Training (OPT).** Apply through the Office of International Programs. If you have a major professor, your major professor signs your OPT application and writes a letter recommending it. See Optional Practical Training (OPT) information.

**Volunteering and unpaid work.** Volunteering for a genuinely charitable cause is allowed. But unpaid work for a company or a university, including unpaid research or teaching help in CSSE, can count as employment and requires work authorization (CPT, OPT, or J-1 Academic Training). Working without authorization can cost you your visa status, and unpaid work on your record can cause problems in later visa or green card applications.

- On OPT, you may work unpaid if the work relates to your degree and complies with Department of Labor rules; check with the employer's human resources office.
- To volunteer for a CSSE professor after graduation, you need approval from Auburn's Human Resources.
- For academic experience without these risks, register for directed study (COMP 7930/8930) or research hours (COMP 7990/8990) with a professor (Section 3.8), or seek a paid campus position.

Off-campus employment of any kind, paid or unpaid, must be authorized before it starts. Questions go to the Office of International Programs.

# Research Conduct

Research is at the center of graduate study in CSSE. This chapter summarizes the University's requirements for research integrity, training, and research with people or animals, the department's publication expectations, the University's guidance on artificial intelligence (AI), and lab safety. The linked University pages govern.

## 6.1 Research Integrity and RCR Training

**Research misconduct.** Research misconduct means *fabrication*, *falsification*, or *plagiarism* in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting its results:

- fabrication is making up data or results and recording or reporting them;
- falsification is manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results, so that the research is not accurately represented; and
- plagiarism is using another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.

Honest error and differences of opinion are not research misconduct. A finding of misconduct requires a significant departure from accepted practice, committed intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly, and proven by a preponderance of the evidence. See the University's Research misconduct (Office of Research Integrity) page.

Violations of academic integrity or professional conduct can lead to dismissal from the Graduate School (Section 3.4).

**Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training.**

> **IMPORTANT**
> Every graduate student who takes part in research must complete the CITI course *AU Basic RCR Training for ALL Faculty, Staff, Postdocs, and Students*, and must repeat it every three years. This applies whatever the source of funding, including unfunded research.

- This course is required in addition to any RCR training you have taken before.
- Use your auburn.edu email as your primary email in CITI; otherwise you will not receive credit for the training.
- The course satisfies the RCR training requirements of the National Science Foundation (NSF) and USDA-NIFA. Some National Institutes of Health (NIH) awards require additional training.

- Follow the University's steps for accessing your Auburn CITI account. Questions go to Research Integrity at riadmin@auburn.edu.

See the University's Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) requirements page.

CSSE sets no separate deadline: the University requirement already applies to everyone who conducts research at Auburn. If you take part in research, including thesis or dissertation research and work as a research assistant, complete the course before you begin and keep it current. The Office of Research Integrity and Compliance administers the requirement.

**Research security training.** If you take part in a sponsored (externally funded) project, for example as a graduate research assistant on a grant, you must also complete research security training. Take the CITI course *Research Security Combined Course*, using your auburn.edu email. Federal agencies, including NSF, NIH, and the Department of Energy, now require this training for proposals. Until everyone involved has completed RCR and research security training, the University pauses the submission of externally funded proposals that involve them. The Office of Research Security Compliance oversees this training.

## 6.2 Research with Human Subjects or Animals

**Human subjects.** All research that involves human subjects, by faculty, staff, or students, must be approved in advance by Auburn's Institutional Review Board (IRB), whatever the source of funding or lack of it. Research involving human subjects that was not approved in advance may be disallowed and may carry severe penalties. If your project involves people, ask the IRB whether it needs review before you begin. See the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for research with human subjects.

**Animals.** Any use of animals in research, teaching, or demonstration requires review by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). See the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

The IRB and the IACUC each publish required training for researchers on their web pages.

## 6.3 Publication Expectations and Authorship

**PhD publication requirement.** As a PhD student, you must meet the department's minimum publication requirement. For students admitted after November 2, 2026, it is one of the following (if you were admitted earlier, see *Effective date and applicability* below):

- two published peer-reviewed papers (conference or journal); or
- one published peer-reviewed paper (conference or journal) and one paper submitted to a peer-reviewed journal.

A paper counts toward the requirement only if it meets these conditions:

- *You are the first author.* A co-first-authored paper (one that states that two or more authors contributed equally) counts for each co-first author, but at most one of the two papers you count may be co-first-authored. In a field or venue that lists authors alphabetically (Section 6.3.1, item 4), your advisory committee decides whether the paper counts.

- *The venue is genuinely peer reviewed.* Papers in venues without peer review, or in predatory venues (journals or conferences that accept papers for a fee without genuine peer review or editorial standards), do not count. Your advisory committee decides whether a venue qualifies.

This is a departmental minimum. Your major professor and your advisory committee may set a higher requirement, for example more papers or papers in higher-ranked venues. Acceptance at a top-tier venue often takes more than one submission, so plan to submit early.

**Effective date and applicability.** The publication requirement above applies to all students admitted to the PhD program after November 2, 2026. Students admitted on or before November 2, 2026, are subject to the publication requirement in effect at the time of their admission: two published papers (conference or journal), or one published paper (conference or journal) and one submitted journal paper.

Your dissertation proposal and dissertation build on your published and submitted papers, and you are ready to file your CTEC form and schedule your general oral examination once you have published or submitted your first research paper (Section 10.5.2).

> **IMPORTANT**
> You must meet the publication requirement before you request and schedule your final oral examination (dissertation defense). Your advisory committee and the Director of Graduate Programs review your publication record when the first submission of your dissertation and your defense are approved. The requirement does not apply to the general oral examination, although publishing or submitting a paper before your proposal defense is strongly encouraged.

**Authorship and credit.** Give appropriate credit for every idea, process, result, and passage you use; failing to do so is plagiarism, a form of research misconduct (Section 6.1). AI tools may not be listed as authors (Section 6.4). Ownership of inventions and creative works produced in research is governed by the University's Patent Policy and Policy Governing the Creation of Copyrighted Material.



### 6.3.1 CSSE Statement on Authorship

The CSSE Graduate Programs Committee approved this statement on October 14, 2026; revisions made on October 26, 2026, in response to faculty comments (items 6 and 9 and the meaning of "the major professor") were approved by the CSSE graduate faculty on November 2, 2026, with version 1.1 of this handbook. Its purpose is to give graduate students and faculty a shared understanding of who is an author, how author order is decided, and how disagreements are resolved, for conference papers, journal articles, and other research publications from CSSE research.

**Who "the major professor" is.** In this statement, "the major professor" means the faculty member who leads the project and supervises the paper, usually the corresponding faculty author. When students with different major professors work on the same paper, those faculty members make the decisions in this statement together; if they cannot agree, item 8 applies.

1. **Who is an author.** An author has made a substantial intellectual contribution to the work. That means contributing to one or more of:
   - the research idea or design;
   - the development of methods, algorithms, software, or experiments that are central to the results; or
   - the analysis and interpretation of results.

   An author must also have helped write or critically revise the paper, have approved the version submitted, and be prepared to take responsibility for its content.
2. **Who is acknowledged instead.** Contributions that do not by themselves qualify for authorship belong in the acknowledgments. Examples:
   - general supervision without intellectual contribution to the work;
   - providing funding, equipment, or access to data;
   - routine technical help, such as setting up a system or collecting data under direction; and
   - proofreading, that is, correcting spelling, grammar, punctuation, and formatting.
3. **AI tools.** An AI tool is never an author. Its use is disclosed as described in the CSSE rules on the use of generative AI (Section 6.4.1). (University AI guidance: AI-generated content should not be listed as a co-author.)
4. **Students' work.** When a paper is based substantially on a student's thesis or dissertation research, the student is normally the first author. The exception is a field or venue whose convention orders authors differently, for example alphabetically; then that convention may be followed if all authors agree in advance.
5. **Agree early, confirm before submission.** The major professor and the students on a project should discuss authorship and author order:
   - when the project begins;
   - whenever contributions change significantly; and
   - again before the paper is submitted.

   All listed authors must agree to the final author list. For former members of the group, item 6 applies instead.
6. **Former members.** When a student or collaborator leaves the research group:
   - *Publication decisions.* The major professor decides whether, when, and where to publish work from the project, and how each person's contribution is credited.
   - *Who may stay an author.* A former member whose contribution meets the contribution criteria in item 1 (the research idea or design; central methods, algorithms, software, or experiments; or the analysis and interpretation of results) is entitled to remain an author of the resulting papers. Smaller contributions are acknowledged (item 2).
   - *Departure agreement.* Before leaving the group, each student signs a short departure agreement (Chapter G) and chooses one of two options:
     (a) to be listed as an author on papers from the project that use their contributions, and to authorize the major professor to prepare and submit those papers; or

(b) not to be listed as an author on future papers from the project, in which case their contribution is acknowledged instead, if they agree.

Under option (a), the agreement meets the writing and approval requirements in item 1.

- *Right to decline a paper.* A former member who chose option (a) may still decline authorship of a particular paper, for example because they disagree with its direction, data, or analysis. The major professor sends the former member the manuscript at their last known email address at least 7 days before submission. If the former member declines in writing before the paper is submitted, they are not listed. If they do not reply, the paper is submitted under the consent given in the agreement.
- *No agreement on file.* A former member who left without signing an agreement is listed as an author only with their written consent. The major professor makes a reasonable effort to reach them; if they cannot be reached, their contribution is acknowledged instead.

7. **Reusing your own papers.** When a thesis or dissertation includes the student's published or submitted papers, as CSSE dissertations usually do:
   - cite each paper;
   - state the student's contribution and the co-authors' contributions; and
   - follow each publisher's terms for reuse.
8. **Resolving disagreements.** Authors should first try to resolve an authorship disagreement among themselves. If they cannot:
   (a) the student and major professor bring it to the Director of Graduate Programs, who may consult the Graduate Programs Committee;
   (b) if it is still unresolved, it goes to the department chair.

   An allegation of plagiarism or other research misconduct is reported to the University's Office of Research Integrity, not handled as an authorship dispute.
9. **Co-authors outside CSSE.** When a paper has co-authors in other departments, colleges, universities, or organizations whose authorship rules differ from this statement:
   - the authors agree at the start of the collaboration (item 5) which rules they will follow on authorship, author order, and credit;
   - the publication venue's authorship policy governs the paper itself, and Auburn University policies take precedence over this statement wherever they apply;
   - CSSE students and faculty still follow this statement for their own conduct, such as giving credit and the first-author expectation in item 4; and
   - if the rules conflict and the authors cannot agree, the CSSE authors bring the matter to the Director of Graduate Programs, who works with the corresponding office in the co-authors' unit or organization (item 8).

## 6.4 Use of AI Tools

Auburn is committed to the responsible use of AI. The University's Guidance for Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence applies to coursework and research.

**In courses.** Each instructor decides whether and how you may use AI tools in a course and should explain the rules and the consequences of misuse. When you use AI in academic work, you must say so and must not present AI-generated content as entirely your own. Plagiarism rules apply to AI-generated work, and misusing AI may violate the Academic Honesty Code (Section 7.2).

**In research, theses, and dissertations.**

- Disclose your use of AI in data analysis, experiments, and publications, including your thesis or dissertation.
- Distinguish clearly between your own contributions and AI-generated content.
- Do not list an AI tool as a co-author; acknowledge its contribution where appropriate.
- You are responsible for the accuracy of anything an AI tool produces and for checking it for bias. Data or results that are made up, whether by you or by a tool, are fabrication (Section 6.1).

**Protecting data and intellectual property.** Do not enter confidential or operational University data into an AI tool unless a binding data-security agreement is in place, and remember that inputs to many AI tools may be used to train them. You may not own the output of an AI tool, and its output may copy others' copyrighted work. Accepting a tool's terms of service without University approval can make you personally liable. Consult University IT and compliance staff before using AI tools with University data, and report suspected misuse of AI to the Division of Institutional Compliance and Privacy.

### 6.4.1 CSSE Rules on the Use of Generative AI

The CSSE Graduate Programs Committee approved these rules on October 14, 2026; a revision to rule 3 made on October 26, 2026, for papers with co-authors outside CSSE was approved by the CSSE graduate faculty on November 2, 2026, with version 1.1 of this handbook. They set department-wide expectations, within the University's Guidance for Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence, for graduate coursework, examinations, theses and dissertations, peer review, and research code.

1. **Courses.** Each course's syllabus governs the use of AI tools in that course. If a syllabus does not address AI, ask the instructor before using an AI tool to produce any work you submit for a grade. When AI use is allowed, disclose exactly how you used it, as the instructor directs or, if the instructor gives no direction, as described in rule 3. Presenting AI-generated work as your own violates the Academic Honesty Code (Section 7.2).
2. **Examinations.** You may not use AI tools during an examination unless the instructor (for a course exam) or your committee (for a comprehensive, general oral, or final oral examination) explicitly allows it. Materials you prepare for an oral examination follow rule 3.
3. **Proposals, theses, dissertations, and papers.**
   - *You must disclose exactly how you used AI.* Every use of an AI tool in a proposal, thesis, dissertation, or paper must be disclosed, including the permitted uses listed below. The disclosure must state:

     (a) **the tool**, with its version or model if known;

(b) **the task**: what you used it for (for example, editing your text, searching the literature, or writing or debugging code);

(c) **where**: which parts of the work were affected (chapters, sections, figures, code modules, or appendices); and

(d) **how you checked** the output (for example, reading every cited source, testing all code, or reviewing every edit).

A general statement such as "AI tools were used in preparing this work" does **not** meet this requirement. Put the disclosure in a section titled "Use of AI Tools," or in the acknowledgments or methods section. For a paper, also follow the venue's own AI policy. When co-authors in other departments, universities, or organizations follow different AI policies, the authors agree at the start which policy they will follow, and the paper must meet the strictest of the policies that apply to it (see the authorship statement, item 9).

*Model statement:* "I used [tool, version] to correct grammar and improve the clarity of text I wrote in Chapters 2 and 4, and to suggest fixes for errors in the simulation code in Appendix B. I did not use AI to generate research ideas, data, results, or analysis. I reviewed every suggested edit, tested all of the code, and take full responsibility for the content."

- *Permitted uses, when disclosed as above:*
  - editing for grammar, spelling, and clarity of text you wrote;
  - help finding literature, as long as you read and verify every source you cite; and
  - help with code, such as debugging, refactoring, and boilerplate, as long as you understand and verify all code you use.
- *Not acceptable:*
  - using an AI tool in the work without disclosing it as above;
  - presenting AI-generated text, analysis, or ideas as your own original contribution;
  - fabricating or altering data, results, figures, or experimental outputs, which is research misconduct; and
  - citing sources produced by an AI tool that you have not read and verified.
- *Talk with your major professor* before any use beyond the permitted uses listed above.

4. **Peer review and confidential material.** Do not upload manuscripts or proposals you are reviewing, unpublished work by others, or confidential, proprietary, or sponsor-restricted data into a public AI tool. Use only University-approved tools with appropriate data protections.
5. **Research code and lab work.** Follow your major professor's rules for the lab. Record which code an AI tool generated or substantially changed, in code comments or commit messages, so that your disclosure under rule 3 can say exactly where AI was used. Check that AI-produced code does not reproduce licensed or copyrighted material without permission.
6. **Responsibility.** You are responsible for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of everything you submit, whatever tools you used. Misuse of AI may be handled under the

Academic Honesty Code, the Graduate School *Policy on Academic Integrity & Student Conduct*, or the University's research misconduct procedures (Sections 6.1 and 7.2).

## 6.5 Lab Safety and Building Security

The Shelby Center is generally locked at night, but people without authorization can sometimes get into the building after hours. There have been a few reports of unidentified people trying to enter a CSSE lab around 2 a.m. When you work late in a lab:

- keep the lab door closed and locked; and
- do not open the door for anyone you do not recognize.

If you see anything suspicious, call the Auburn University Threat Assessment Team at 334-844-5010 (answered 24 hours a day) or email autat@auburn.edu. If you feel threatened, call 911 in an emergency or the police non-emergency line at 334-501-3100.

The University's Laboratory Visitors Policy and Health and Safety Considerations Policy also apply to research labs.

# Student Rights and Responsibilities

The University policies in this chapter apply to every Auburn student. Each section gives a short summary and a link to the official policy, which governs.

## 7.1 Code of Student Conduct

The Code of Student Conduct sets the standards of behavior for students and student organizations. The conduct process is meant to be educational and to keep the campus healthy and safe while respecting the rights of everyone in the Auburn community. For graduate students, it is the primary code of conduct.

## 7.2 Academic Integrity

The Student Academic Honesty Code applies to every student taking classes at Auburn. As a graduate student, you are also expected to follow standards of academic integrity, personal conduct, and professional conduct under the Graduate School Policy on Academic Integrity and Student Conduct. Academic units may publish their own discipline-specific standards. A violation may lead to dismissal from the Graduate School.

Plagiarism rules apply to work produced with AI tools (Section 6.4), and fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism in research are research misconduct (Section 6.1).

## 7.3 Discrimination, Harassment, and Title IX

Auburn does not tolerate harassment based on a protected class: race, sex, age, religion, color, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination prohibited by federal law. See the Policy Against Discrimination and Harassment and the Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy.

To make a complaint of sexual or other prohibited harassment or discrimination, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity Compliance, 317 James E. Foy Hall, 334-844-4794. Complaints of sexual harassment or discrimination go to the Title IX Coordinator in that office, not through the academic grievance process (Section 7.7).

Graduate assistants must complete the University's Title IX and discrimination training (Section 5.2). Auburn email may not be used to harass, threaten, or intimidate anyone (Section 7.6).

## 7.4 Accessibility and Accommodations

Auburn is committed to an accessible campus and an equitable learning environment. If you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, assistive technology training, or support services, contact the Office of Accessibility: 1228 Haley Center, 334-844-2096 (voice/TT).

The Office of Accessibility also handles resignations for medical reasons (Section 2.6).

## 7.5 Student Records and Privacy (FERPA)

The University's Policy on the Confidentiality of Student Records (FERPA) protects the privacy of your education records under the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. In summary:

- *Your rights.* You may inspect and review your education records, ask that inaccurate or misleading information be corrected, and request a formal hearing if the University declines to correct it. To see your records, contact the Office of the Registrar.
- *Directory information.* The University may release directory information without your consent: your name, addresses, telephone numbers, Auburn email address, classification and curriculum, dates of attendance, enrollment status, degrees and awards, photographs for official publications, and participation in recognized activities. You may block its release with a privacy setting change in AU Access or at the Office of the Registrar.
- *Everything else* requires your written consent, with limited exceptions such as University officials with a legitimate educational interest, financial-aid authorities, accrediting bodies, court orders, and health or safety emergencies.
- *Separate units.* Being a student in one part of the University (for example, as an undergraduate) does not by itself give you these rights in another (for example, the Graduate School).

If you are a GTA, you are among the University officials who may see other students' records when your duties require it.

## 7.6 Official Email

Auburn email is the University's official means of communication, and email to students is sent to their Auburn accounts. You are responsible for checking your Auburn email as often as your activities require.

- Do not use a non-Auburn account to send confidential or sensitive University information.
- An Auburn email account that is not accessed for 12 months is deleted or suspended.
- Report phishing, or a compromised account, to the IT Service Desk at 334-844-4944 or phishing@auburn.edu.

See the University's Email Policy.

If you are a GTA or GA, use your Auburn email for all assistantship business and check it daily during the semester (Section 5.7).

## 7.7 Grievances, Appeals, and Due Process

**Academic grievances.** If you believe a faculty member or administrator has treated you unfairly in an academic matter, the University's Student Academic Grievance Policy sets the process. It covers, for example, practices that contradict the written syllabus, grading errors, failure to give timely feedback on graded work, and faculty behavior that is capricious, intimidating, or discriminatory. It does not cover matters of academic freedom, such as differences in grading between sections of a course or fine distinctions between two grades, which you may raise only with the faculty member.

1. *Talk with the faculty member* involved, in person or in writing, no later than the first five working days of the semester after the one in which the grievance arose.
2. *If that does not resolve it,* meet with the faculty member's department chair or head.
3. *If you are still not satisfied,* as a graduate student contact *both* the academic dean of the faculty member's college and the dean of the Graduate School.
4. *Formal grievance.* If the informal steps fail, file a formal grievance in writing through the Provost's online grievance filing page (Auburn sign-in required) no later than the 30th class day of the semester after the one in which the grievance arose. The Student Academic Grievance Committee reviews it and may dismiss it, ask for more information, or hold a hearing. It then makes a recommendation to the Provost's office.

If starting with the faculty member would be too awkward, you may begin at the next level. As the student filing the grievance, you carry the burden of proof.

**Due process for unsatisfactory progress.** Besides failing to maintain academic standing (Section 3.4), you may be dismissed from the Graduate School if your progress is unsatisfactory in other areas. In that case:

1. your advisory committee prepares a written statement of the problem, which all its members must support, and discusses it with you;
2. you are told what you must correct and by when;
3. if the problem is not corrected in time, the committee sends the statement and a recommendation of dismissal to the dean of the Graduate School; and
4. the dean gives you a chance to respond before making a final decision.

The action does not appear on your official transcript, and the information is protected under the University's records-confidentiality policy.

**Assistantship decisions.** Decisions about a graduate assistantship, including termination, follow the Graduate School's performance-improvement and appeal process (Section 5.8).

## 7.8 Where to Start When You Have a Concern

**Table 7.1** Where to take a concern

| Your concern | Where to start |
|---|---|
| A grade or a course | The instructor, then the department chair, then the college's academic dean and the dean of the Graduate School (Section 7.7). |
| Your assistantship | Your supervisor, then the department chair; appeals go to the college dean (Section 5.8). |
| Harassment or discrimination | The Office of Equal Opportunity Compliance and its Title IX Coordinator (Section 7.3). |
| Possible research misconduct | The Office of Research Integrity (Section 6.1). |
| Misuse of AI or another compliance concern | The Division of Institutional Compliance and Privacy, or Report a Concern (Office of Audit, Compliance and Privacy). |
| Your progress, advisor, or committee | Your major professor first, then the Director of Graduate Programs, then the department chair (Key Contacts). |
| A disability accommodation | The Office of Accessibility (Section 7.4). |
| Your immigration status | The Office of International Programs (Section 2.11). |

If a concern does not fit any of these processes, start with your major professor. If that does not resolve it, or if the concern involves your major professor, go to the Director of Graduate Programs and then to the department chair.

## 7.9 Student Policy eHandbook

The Student Policy eHandbook links to the official text of every University policy for students: academic affairs, records and grades, finances, information technology, parking, housing, conduct, and safety. Questions about a specific policy go to the office responsible for it.

Policies that graduate students most often need, beyond those above, include the Policy on Readmission, the Withdrawal and Resignation of Enrollment Policy, the Change of Major or Curriculum Policy, and the Policy on Credit for Directed Studies. Some policies in the eHandbook apply only to undergraduates.

# Graduation

This chapter covers the steps to finishing a degree or certificate: forms, deadlines, the thesis and dissertation submission, and what happens after you graduate. The degree requirements themselves are in your program's chapter in Part II.

## 8.1 Planning to Graduate on Time

Graduation takes planning that starts at least one term before your last term. You have help: your Graduate School advisor checks that you have met your degree requirements, working with your major professor and the Director of Graduate Programs. Each graduate student has an assigned advisor at the Graduate School; see the Graduate School's contact points page. The Graduate School's matriculation pages explain, with videos, how a graduate student moves from admission to graduation. Watch them, then contact your Graduate School advisor with specific questions.

Work through the Graduate School's checklist for your degree early, and again in the term before you graduate:

- Doctoral completion checklist;
- Master's completion checklist; and
- On Track for Graduation, which explains how to apply to graduate.

Figure 8.1 shows the usual path. The sections that follow explain each step.

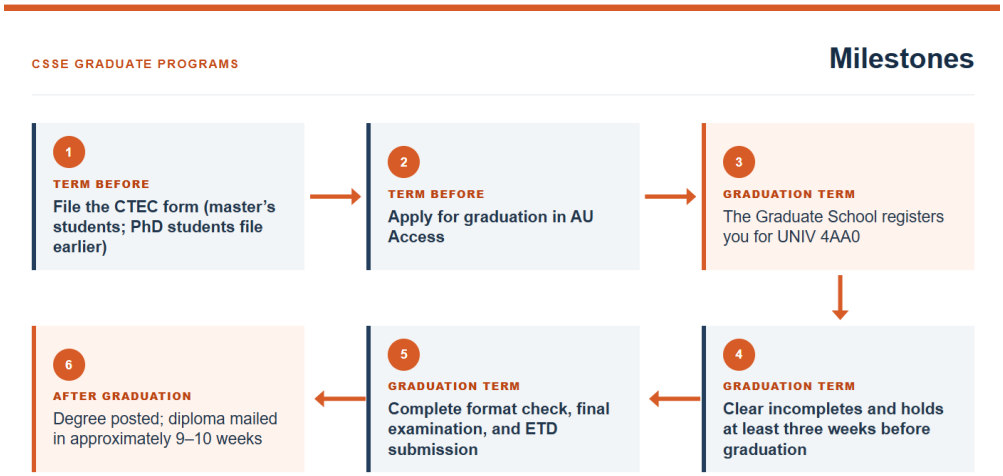



**Figure 8.1** The path to graduation. Step 5 applies only to the MS-CSSE thesis option and the PhD.

## 8.2 Step 1: File the CTEC Form

**APPLIES TO** master's students. PhD students file the CTEC form before the general oral examination; certificates do not need one.

File your Committee, Transfers, Exceptions and Candidacy (CTEC) form in the term before the one in which you plan to graduate. Submit it first: you apply for graduation once it has been submitted and approved. Section 4.4 explains how to complete the form.

If you are in a course-based master's program, the CTEC form names a single advisor of record and no other committee members. Table 4.1 shows whom to list.

If you are transferring credit or need an exception to a requirement, such as a course substitution, request it on the CTEC form (Sections 3.5 and 3.6).

> **DEADLINE**
> The last day to submit the CTEC form is the same as the last day to apply for graduation (Section 8.3). Because the application follows approval of the CTEC form, file the CTEC form early in the term.

## 8.3 Step 2: Apply for Graduation

**APPLIES TO** all degrees and certificates

One term before you plan to graduate, submit a graduation application in AU Access, My Academics. You need a separate application for each degree and each certificate you plan to receive. For master's degrees, apply once your CTEC form has been submitted and approved (Section 8.2).

> **DEADLINE**
> The last day to apply for graduation, and to submit the CTEC form, is graduation day (the official last day) of the term *before* the one in which you will graduate. For example, to graduate in spring, apply by the fall graduation day. Confirm the date on the Graduate School calendar.

Checking that your record meets the graduation requirements is your responsibility.

**Certificates.** A graduate certificate needs a graduation application but no CTEC form. Apply in the term before the one in which you will finish the certificate's requirements. For example, if you will finish at the end of a summer term, apply during the preceding spring. See also Section 15.5.

**If you do not finish in time.** You do not have to reapply. If you cannot finish in the term you applied for, the Graduate School automatically moves your application to the next term, and your advisor notifies the Graduate School that you will not graduate as planned. Once the Graduate School has done a graduation check for you, you must notify it of your pending graduation before the 15th class day of each later semester until you graduate.

**If you missed the deadline.** Apply for the next term that is still open, then contact the Graduate School and ask whether your application can be moved to the term you intended.

**Graduation fee.** Your bill for the term in which you graduate includes a graduation fee.

## 8.4 Step 3: Graduation Registration (UNIV 4AA0)

**APPLIES TO** all degrees and certificates

You do not register yourself for graduation. After the Graduate School receives and processes your CTEC form and graduation application (for a certificate, the application alone), it registers you for UNIV 4AA0 in your graduation term. Section GR1 of UNIV 4AA0 is for degrees and section CRT is for certificates. GRAD 7000 is not required.

If UNIV 4AA0 does not appear on your schedule in your graduation term, check with your Graduate School advisor.

> **IMPORTANT**
> You must register for at least one course in the semester in which you graduate. Thesis students register for COMP 7990, and doctoral students for COMP 8990, in the semester in which they submit, defend, or await final approval of the thesis or dissertation.

> **International students (F-1/J-1).** In your final term you may be able to enroll for fewer than nine hours by filing a Reduced Course Load (RCL) or All-But-Thesis (ABT) request, but only as described in Table 2.3. If you file an RCL, you must graduate that term.

## 8.5 Theses and Dissertations: Format Check and ETD

**APPLIES TO** MS-CSSE thesis option and PhD-CSSE

Course-based master's programs (MS-AIEN, MS-CYBE, MS-DSEN, and the MS-CSSE non-thesis option) have no thesis and no final oral examination, also called the final defense.

Theses and dissertations are submitted electronically, as ETDs, to the AUETD (Auburn University Electronic Theses and Dissertations) database. Most of the forms are handled by the Graduate School's automated workflow: once you file the first form, the later ones are sent to you, your committee, and (for a dissertation) the University Reader.

**Writing and formatting.** Follow the Graduate School's Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Guide and use its ETD samples and templates. The department also shares a sample thesis and dissertation in LaTeX on Overleaf that you may use. A CSSE dissertation is normally built from your published papers and submitted manuscripts (Section 6.3).

**Before you start the process.** Clear all incomplete grades and all holds on your record. Incomplete and "no record" grades must be removed at least three weeks before your graduation date (Section 3.1). If you are a PhD student, you must also have met the publication requirement before you request your final oral examination (Section 6.3).

**The steps.** Table 8.1 lists the steps in order. Each step has a deadline in the Graduate School calendar (Section 8.6).

**Table 8.1** Thesis and dissertation steps in the graduation term

| Step | Master's thesis | PhD dissertation |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Format check | Email a PDF of the thesis to thesis@auburn.edu for a format check. | After your major professor approves your draft, submit the Doctoral Dissertation First Submission Approval Form, and email a PDF of the dissertation to doctoral@auburn.edu for a format check. When your committee approves the first submission, the University Reader receives the dissertation to evaluate. |
| 2. Final examination | Defend your thesis before your committee. Your major professor announces the defense to CSSE faculty and students the day before. | After the University Reader's evaluation, you receive a link to give the details of your final oral examination. Your committee, including the University Reader, must attend (Section 10.5.5). |
| 3. Report and approval | Request the Master's Thesis Final Examination Report and ETD Publishing Approval Form; the automated workflow sends it to your committee. | On the day of the defense, the Graduate School sends your committee the Report on the Final Oral Examination and the publishing approval form. |
| 4. Submit the ETD | Submit the final PDF to AUETD. | Submit the final PDF to AUETD, and complete the Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED). |

Recent calendars also list an accessibility check of the thesis or dissertation, due with the final ETD submission. The thesis requirements for the MS-CSSE are in Section 11.5.1.

**Publication and access.** Theses and dissertations in AUETD are indexed by Google and other search engines; they are also distributed through ProQuest, and you keep all publication rights. When you submit, you choose the access:

- *Unlimited access*: published immediately; this cannot be reversed.
- *Limited access*: only users with an Auburn user ID can read the full text, for six months, one year, two years, or five years.
- *Withheld access*: no one, including you and your committee, can read the full text in AUETD, for the same periods.

With limited or withheld access, the bibliographic information and abstract still appear, and the full text becomes public when the period ends unless you petition to extend it. If you plan to copyright your work, or it includes shared data, discuss this with your major professor first. A thesis or dissertation may not be based exclusively on proprietary or classified research, or include such information. Questions go to a Graduate School advisor (334-844-4700) *before* you submit to AUETD.

## 8.6 Key Deadlines

The Graduate School calendar is the official source for every deadline. This handbook does not list dates, because they change each term. Near the start of each term, the Director of Graduate Programs also emails CSSE graduate students a summary of that term's deadlines.

**Table 8.2** Deadlines to watch in each term

| Deadline | Who |
|---|---|
| Last day to drop a course with no grade, and for a possible tuition refund (Section 2.6) | All students |
| Last day to withdraw from a course with a grade of W | All students |
| Format check: thesis PDF to thesis@auburn.edu; First Submission Approval Form and dissertation PDF to doctoral@auburn.edu | Thesis master's and PhD students graduating this term |
| Final examination and its report; for master's theses, also the ETD approval form and AUETD submission | Thesis master's and PhD students graduating this term |
| Final ETD deadline: ETD approval form, accessibility check, and AUETD submission; for PhD students, also the Survey of Earned Doctorates | PhD students graduating this term; in some terms, thesis master's students too |
| Graduation day (commencement); last day to apply for graduation and to submit the CTEC form for the *next* term | Students graduating next term |

> **DEADLINE**
> The first thesis and dissertation deadline, the format check, comes before the end of classes: in recent terms, from about one to five weeks before. Plan to have a complete draft approved by your major professor before then.

## 8.7 Diplomas, Transcripts, and Commencement

**Your degree and diploma.** The Office of the Registrar posts degrees by the end of the term in which you graduate. Diplomas are then printed by an outside company and mailed to the address given in your diploma application, generally 9 to 10 weeks after graduation. There is no electronic diploma. Until your diploma arrives, an official transcript verifies that your degree has been conferred, and your final transcript can be ordered after commencement.

**Transcripts.** You can view your transcript in AU Access (Student Self Service). Order official transcripts through the Office of the Registrar. For help with transcript orders, call 334-844-2544 or email transcripts@auburn.edu.

**Commencement.** To take part in commencement in a term other than your official graduation term, submit a walk request form.

**Honors.** Auburn's honor for graduate students is membership in the Phi Kappa Phi honor society.

> **International students (F-1/J-1).** If family members need an invitation letter for a visa to attend your graduation, you write the letter yourself. Include your student status, college, department, and degree program; the dates and purpose of the visit; and who is paying for it. For your own status after graduation, including OPT and starting a new program, see Sections 2.11 and 5.13.

**After you graduate.** Join the Auburn University Alumni Association. For help with your job search, see Section 9.4.

# Resources and Support

This chapter tells you where to get help: in the department, at the Graduate School, and across the University. Many topics are covered in earlier chapters; this chapter points you to them.

## 9.1 Department Resources

**Whom to ask.** Table 9.1 lists the usual first contact in the department for common questions. Names and contact details are in Key Contacts.

**Table 9.1** Whom to ask in the department

| Question | Ask |
|---|---|
| Which courses to take and when | Your major professor; in a course-based master's program, your advisor of record (Table 4.1). In MS-AIEN and MS-CYBE, both your program director and the Manager of Academic Programs, Dr. Clint Lovelace, provide academic advising (Section 4.2) |
| Registering for research hours, the capstone project, or directed study (COMP 7930, 7980, 7990, 8930, 8990) | The Manager of Academic Programs, after the faculty member agrees to supervise you (Section 3.8) |
| Assistantship paperwork, such as the IGAA statement for international graduate assistants | The Manager of Academic Programs (Section 5.4) |
| Hiring paperwork for a GRA or GTA appointment, and other graduate-student employment matters | The Office Manager, Ms. JoAnn Lauraitis (Section 5.2) |
| CSSE computing accounts, departmental servers, software, or computing in CSSE classrooms and labs | The Systems Engineer, Ms. Kelly Price |
| MS-AIEN or GCRT-AIEN requirements | The Director of AI Engineering programs |
| MS-CYBE or GCRT-CYBE requirements, including electives | The Director of Cybersecurity Engineering programs |
| Program policies, exceptions, transfer credit, changing programs, or a problem you cannot resolve with your advisor | The Director of Graduate Programs (Section 7.8) |

| Question | Ask |
|---|---|
| Desk space, research lab access, or research servers | Your major professor or research lab director |
| Building access or general department questions | The CSSE main office, Ms. Kecia Hill |
| A GTA office assignment, or travel reimbursement | The CSSE main office, Ms. Kecia Hill (Sections 5.7 and 5.12) |



**Announcements.** The department uses the CSSE graduate student mailing list for announcements, including internship openings. Each term, the Director of Graduate Programs also emails CSSE graduate students about course registration, deadlines, and graduation applications. Read these messages: they often contain dates and steps for the current term.

**Planning your courses.** The department publishes its CSSE graduate course offerings, a CSSE syllabus bank, and CSSE sample plans of study (all templates) (Sections 2.3 and 3.7).

**Desk space, labs, and research computing.** Your major professor, or the director of your research lab, assigns desk space in the Shelby Center research labs and arranges your access to the lab's research computing servers. Card or key access to a research lab is requested for you by your major professor through the CSSE administrative office. If you work late in a lab, follow the safety advice in Section 6.5.

**Department computing.** The department's Systems Engineer, Ms. Kelly Price (pricekg@auburn.edu, 334-844-6311, 3124 Shelby Center), is in charge of CSSE computing:

- CSSE servers and computing infrastructure, including Linux/Unix systems and departmental servers;
- computing accounts for faculty, staff, and students;
- network and system services within CSSE;
- research computing support;
- software installation and licensing;
- security, backups, and system maintenance; and
- computing resources used by graduate students and faculty, including technical support for CSSE classrooms and labs.

For Auburn-wide services, such as your user ID or campus Wi-Fi, contact the OIT Service Desk (below).

**Department main office.** For general department questions, building access problems, or administrative help, visit the CSSE main office in 3101 Shelby Center, or contact Ms. Kecia Hill (ksh0026@auburn.edu, 334-844-6352).

**University IT support.** For your Auburn user ID, TigerMail, campus Wi-Fi, Canvas, campus printers, or Duo multi-factor authentication, contact the OIT Service Desk: 3rd floor, RBD Library; 334-844-4944; itservicedesk@auburn.edu. Report phishing or a compromised account

to the same desk or to phishing@auburn.edu (Section 7.6). See also the Office of Information Technology.



**CSSE Graduate Program AI Assistant.** The department offers an AI assistant for questions about the CSSE graduate programs, available 24 hours a day in two versions: Claude and Gemini. Its answers are not official: this handbook and the University sources it cites govern, and your advisor and the Director of Graduate Programs remain your contacts for decisions.

> **Online students.** Engineering Online handles proctors and course registration for online courses, and Media Production Resources handles lecture-capture problems (Section 3.9).

## 9.2 Graduate School Services

The Graduate School, at 106 Hargis Hall (334-844-4700), oversees your progress from admission to graduation.

- *Your Graduate School advisor.* Each graduate student has an assigned advisor at the Graduate School, called a matriculation advisor, who checks that you meet your degree requirements. Advisors are assigned by last name (Table 9.2). See also the contact points page and Section 8.1.
- *Matriculation resources.* The Graduate School's matriculation pages explain, with videos, how you progress through your degree.
- *Forms and deadlines.* The Graduate School forms directory has the forms for matriculation, schedule changes, graduation, and awards. Deadlines are on the Graduate School calendar.
- *Current students.* The Graduate School's pages for current students cover academic resources, assistantships and funding, campus resources and organizations, and student life. They include professional development, programs and awards, and InterConnect.
- *The Graduate Student Resource Guide*, the Graduate School's summary of its policies for students, is at Graduate Student Resource Guide.

**Graduate School matriculation advisors.** Your matriculation advisor helps with:

- registration, including the special courses for full-time enrollment (loan deferment), auditing a course, and course substitutions and exceptions;
- committee selection and the CTEC form;
- electronic thesis and dissertation (ETD) questions;
- graduation applications, the graduation course, and graduation checks, including staying on track with the master's or doctoral checklist; and
- graduate policies, procedures, and forms.

You can call or email your advisor, visit the Graduate School offices in Hargis Hall (Monday through Friday, 7:45–11:45 a.m. and 12:45–4:45 p.m. Central Time), or book a Microsoft Teams meeting through the Graduate School advising appointments page.

**Table 9.2** Graduate School matriculation advisors (assigned by last name)

| Last names | Advisor | Phone |
|---|---|---|
| A–H | Jessica Holley, Matriculation Advisor III | 334-844-2129 |
| I–Q | Sedi Zamani, PhD, Matriculation Advisor III | 334-844-2124 |
| R–Z | Sherry Ray, Director of Graduate Matriculation | 334-844-2131 |

Sherry Ray also oversees the Graduate School's matriculation services. Assignments can change; check the Graduate School advising appointments page for the current list.

## 9.3 International Student Services

**APPLIES TO** students on F-1 or J-1 visas

The Office of International Programs, through International Student and Scholar Services, handles your immigration status, I-20, work authorization, and reduced-course-load requests. Talk with the Office of International Programs before you make any change that could affect your status.

Table 9.3 shows where this handbook covers each topic for international students.

**Table 9.3** Where to find information for international students

| Topic | See |
|---|---|
| Orientation, airport pick-up, and housing | Section 2.2 |
| Arrival deadlines; keeping your status; moving from a master's program to a PhD | Section 2.11 |
| Full-time enrollment; RCL and ABT requests | Section 2.4, Table 2.3 |
| Online courses (at most three hours count toward full time) | Section 3.9 |
| Taking a term off (summer only) | Section 2.7 |
| English requirements for teaching assistants | Section 5.3 |
| Starting an assistantship | Section 5.4 |
| Internships, CPT, OPT, ENGR 7920, and volunteering | Section 5.13 |
| Health insurance | Section 5.10 and International student health insurance (Office of International Programs) |
| Your final term; invitation letters for family at graduation | Sections 8.4 and 8.7 |

## 9.4 Career Development

Engineering Career Development and Corporate Relations runs career fairs, reviews resumes, and helps engineering students find internships (Engineering internships (Career Development and Corporate Relations)). The University Career Center publishes a Graduate Student Career Guide in print and online.

As you approach graduation, the Director of Graduate Programs recommends that you:

- keep your code repositories (for example, on GitHub) and your professional networking profile up to date with your projects and software development experience;
- practice programming questions of the kind asked in technical interviews, using the Director's shared folder of interview programming questions;
- finalize your resume, using the Director's shared folder of sample resumes, and have it reviewed by Career Development and Corporate Relations;
- connect with Auburn graduates working in your field; and
- keep applying, even when no interviews are lined up yet.

If you need to verify your employment at Auburn, such as a graduate assistantship, the University uses the i2Verify service.

> **International students (F-1/J-1).** Any work, paid or unpaid, needs work authorization (CPT, OPT, or J-1 Academic Training) before it starts (Section 5.13).

## 9.5 Student Organizations

Two organizations are especially relevant to CSSE graduate students:

- *The Graduate Student Council (GSC)*, a student organization that serves the needs of Auburn's graduate and professional students. Departments are represented on the council, and it offers the GSC Travel Fellowship for presenting your research at conferences (Section 5.12).
- *The CSSE student chapter of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)*, the department's chapter of the professional society for computing.

The Samuel Ginn College of Engineering lists more graduate student organizations, including the Council of Engineering Graduate Students. To find Auburn's other student organizations, search AUInvolve (student organization directory).

## 9.6 Health, Counseling, and Well-Being

**Counseling.** Student Counseling and Psychological Services offers short-term individual counseling, ongoing group counseling, and skill-building workshops. Its Safe Harbor program provides counseling for victims of sexual assault and violence. Students who need long-term therapy or 24-hour crisis care are referred to appropriate services. Call 334-844-5123.

**Health insurance.** For most graduate assistants, the graduate student health insurance plan is mandatory: you are enrolled automatically unless you waive it by showing comparable coverage (Section 5.10). See also the Graduate School's health and wellness pages.

**Accessibility and safety.** For disability accommodations, contact the Office of Accessibility (Section 7.4). For harassment or discrimination, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity Compliance (Section 7.3). If you see something suspicious on campus, call the Auburn University Threat Assessment Team; in an emergency, call 911 (Section 6.5).

## 9.7 Campus Safety and Emergencies

**Emergency alerts.** AU Alert is Auburn's emergency notification system. It sends critical information about situations affecting campus by text message, voice message, and email. Sign up for AU Alert when you arrive, and keep your contact information current. During a campus emergency, check the campus emergency updates page.

**Severe weather.** Auburn tracks storms with a campus weather radar system. When a watch or warning is issued, tone alert radios in campus buildings sound with safety instructions, and outdoor warning sirens sound for a tornado warning. (The sirens are tested at noon on the fourth Wednesday of each month.) During a tornado warning:

- go to the building's designated shelter location; if there is none, move to the center and lowest point of the building, away from windows and doors;
- do not go outside to watch the storm; and
- if you are in a vehicle, take shelter in a building or another safe place.

**Other emergencies.** For police, fire, or medical help, call 911 without delay. Stay on the line and give your name, phone number, exact location, and what is happening, including any injuries. The Campus Emergency Guide (action steps by emergency) gives action steps for other emergencies, such as fire, a medical emergency, a suspicious package, or an active threat. More information is on the Auburn University Emergency Management site and its alerts and notifications page. For safety when you work late in a lab, see Section 6.5.

## 9.8 Library and Writing Support

CSSE does not have its own library or writing support; use the University's services described here.

**Libraries.** The Auburn University Libraries support your coursework and research.

**University Writing.** University Writing offers writing resources, programs, and one-on-one consulting for graduate students, including help with theses, dissertations, and research papers.

- *The Miller Writing Center* offers free one-on-one consultations with trained undergraduate and graduate peer consultants, at any stage of writing, from brainstorming and organizing to revising a draft. Meet in person on the second floor of the RBD Library (Room 3436), on Zoom, or through written feedback. You can book up to three appointments a week in Advise & Assist, through AU Access.

- *Programs for graduate writers* include the Graduate Studio (time and space to write alongside other graduate students on long projects, with optional help from a writing consultant); the Lit Review Lab (a four-part workshop series on organizing and writing literature reviews); WriteFest (a multi-session program for starting or finishing a long project); Graduate Writing Partners (a semester of one-on-one appointments with a graduate writing consultant); and the English Conversation Corner (informal practice in conversational English).
- *Free online resources* include toolkits, worksheets, and guides on academic and research writing, managing large projects such as theses and dissertations, professional documents such as cover letters, grant proposals, and personal statements, and presentations and posters.

Contact University Writing at universitywriting@auburn.edu or 334-844-7475; the Miller Writing Center front desk is 334-844-7482.

For the Graduate School's formatting rules and templates for proposals, theses, and dissertations, see Section 8.5. Other campus resources listed by the Graduate School include the Biggio Center and the Office of Information Technology.

## 9.9 Billing and Financial Questions

**Your E-Bill.** Student Financial Services manages the E-Bill (Student Financial Services). Questions about a specific charge go to the office that issued it (Table 9.4).

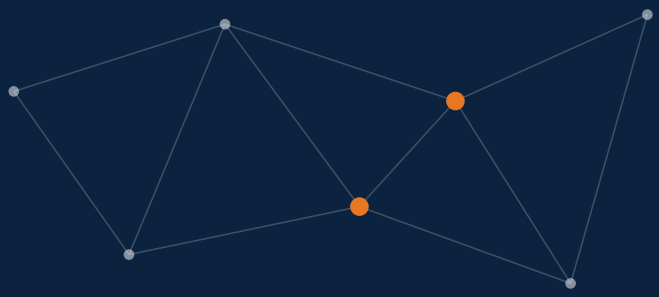
**Table 9.4** Whom to ask about a charge

| Charge | Office |
|---|---|
| Tuition and financial aid | Student Financial Services, 334-844-4634 |
| Health insurance premium | Graduate Student Health Insurance Office, 334-844-5035, insurance@auburn.edu (Section 5.10) |
| Parking permits and fines | 334-844-4143 |
| On-campus housing | Housing and Residence Life, 334-844-4580 |
| Dining plan | Dining Office, 334-844-8504 |
| Any other charge | The office or department that issued it |

The University's Student Business and Account Services office also handles student account questions.

**Tuition, fees, and your assistantship.** Tuition fellowships, the 110% limit on University-funded tuition, and the fees graduate assistants still pay are explained in Section 5.9. Tuition for online courses is not covered by a tuition fellowship (Section 3.9). For current rates, see the Graduate School's tuition and fees page and the Bulletin: tuition and fees (including the graduate assistant student services fee).

**Loans and financial aid.** Only degree-seeking master's and doctoral students who meet all admission requirements are eligible for federal loans and financial aid. Graduate provisional (GPR) and graduate non-degree (GND) students are not eligible (Section 2.1). For deferring student loans, the Graduate School provides a Loan deferment form (GRAD 7AA0/8AA0). More information on funding is on the Graduate School's fellowships and funding pages.



PART II

# Program Requirements



# Doctor of Philosophy in Computer Science and Software Engineering (PhD-CSSE)

**REQUIREMENTS AT A GLANCE**

**Total hours** At least 60 semester hours of graduate work beyond the bachelor's degree.
**Core courses** COMP 7270, COMP 7300, and COMP 7500 (9 hours), on campus; they may also be offered online.
**Typical duration** About three to four years if you enter with a master's degree and transfer credit; about four to five years if you enter with a bachelor's degree only.
**Research** At least 24 hours of COMP 8990 Research and Dissertation.
**Examinations** Qualifying examination (a B or better in each core course); general oral examination (proposal defense); final oral examination (dissertation defense).
**Publications** If admitted after November 2, 2026: two published peer-reviewed papers, or one published and one submitted to a peer-reviewed journal, as first author. If admitted earlier: the requirement in effect at your admission (Section 6.3). Met before you request the final oral examination.
**Key forms** CTEC form; general oral examination request; Dissertation First Submission Approval Form; graduation application; AUETD submission.
**Advisor** Your major professor, who chairs your supervisory committee.
**Language** No foreign-language requirement.

## 10.1 Program Overview and Learning Outcomes

The PhD program offers advanced coursework and emphasizes original, creative research in computer science and software engineering. The major part of the degree is a dissertation that presents the results of your research.

In CSSE, your research is expected to lead to publications: your dissertation proposal and your dissertation are built from your published and submitted papers (Section 6.3).

**Online study.** There is no separate distance PhD program. The required courses may also be offered online, and if you take them online, your plan of study follows the same rules as for on-campus PhD students. CSSE does not offer assistantships or tuition fellowships to distance students (Section 5.2).

**Student learning outcomes.** Graduates of the PhD-CSSE program will be able to:

SLO 1. demonstrate mastery, with in-depth knowledge, of algorithms, operating systems, and computer architecture;
SLO 2. develop and evaluate software systems to meet desired requirements;
SLO 3. perform cutting-edge research in at least one area of specialty; and
SLO 4. communicate concepts and results to technical audiences, both in conference and journal papers and in oral presentations.



## 10.2 Admission Requirements

Apply to the PhD program through the Graduate School. If you are already a CSSE master's student, you may instead change or add the PhD program with your major professor's endorsement (Section 2.9).

You may enter the PhD with a bachelor's or a master's degree. Credit from a previous master's degree may count toward the 60 hours (Section 10.3).

How applications are reviewed, and the computing background you need, are described in Section 2.1.

## 10.3 Degree Requirements

The PhD requires at least 60 semester hours of graduate work beyond the bachelor's degree, distributed as in Table 10.1. The official requirements are in the Bulletin: Computer Science and Software Engineering — PhD; the Graduate School's general rules for doctoral degrees are in the Bulletin: Graduate School, doctoral degrees.

**Table 10.1** PhD-CSSE degree requirements

| Requirement | Hours | Subtotal |
|---|---|---|
| **Core courses** | | |
| COMP 7270 Advanced Topics in Algorithms | 3 | |
| COMP 7300 Advanced Computer Architecture | 3 | |
| COMP 7500 Advanced Topics in Operating Systems | 3 | 9 |
| **Additional graded courses** | | |
| Graded lecture courses in COMP, numbered 6000 or above | 9 | |
| Other graded courses numbered 6000 or above | 12 | 21 |
| **Research and flexible hours** | | |
| COMP 8990 Research and Dissertation (at least) | 24 | |
| Courses numbered 6000 or above, graded or ungraded; may include more COMP 8990, but not ungraded courses outside COMP | 6 | 30 |
| **Total (minimum)** | | **60** |

**Notes on the requirements.**

- *COMP 8990.* You may take more than 30 hours of COMP 8990, but at most 30 count toward the 60. Its grade is normally TD (Section 3.8).
- *Grades.* You must keep a cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0 (Section 3.2). A C counts toward the degree, but not toward the qualifying examination (Section 10.5.1).
- *Directed study.* At most 6 hours of COMP 8930 Directed Study may be taken (Section 3.8).
- *Credit from a master's degree.* You may transfer up to 30 hours from a previous master's degree. Credit from another institution needs the approval of your committee and the dean of the Graduate School, and it must also be less than half of the hours on your plan of study (fewer than 30 for a 60-hour plan). If your master's degree is from CSSE at Auburn, its credits apply automatically, except that COMP 7990 hours do not transfer and at most 3 hours of COMP 7980 do (Section 3.5).
- *Courses at the 6000 level.* If you took the 5000-level version of a 6000-level course, you may not take the 6000-level course (Section 3.6).
- *Seminars.* PhD students are not required to attend a seminar series.



## 10.4 Options and How to Choose

The PhD has a single set of requirements; the Bulletin lists no options or concentrations. Your research area is defined by your dissertation research with your major professor.

What you choose instead is your path into and through the program:

- *Entering with a bachelor's or a master's degree.* The department publishes a sample plan of study for each (Section 10.6).
- *Earning a master's degree along the way* (Section 10.5.7).
- *Adding a graduate certificate* (Chapter 15).

## 10.5 Examinations and Milestones

The Bulletin's general doctoral examination has two parts: the qualifying examination and the general oral examination. When you pass both, you advance to candidacy. After you complete your dissertation, you must pass a final examination defending it.

Figure 10.1 shows the order of the milestones, and Table 10.2 gives their usual timing.




**Figure 10.1** PhD-CSSE milestones in order

**Table 10.2** PhD-CSSE milestones and usual timing

| Milestone | Usual timing | Details |
|---|---|---|
| Find a major professor | Early in your first year | Section 4.1 |
| RCR training | Before you begin research | Section 6.1 |
| Qualifying examination (core courses) | While taking COMP 7270, 7300, and 7500 | Section 10.5.1 |
| First research paper published or submitted | Usually in the second year | Section 6.3 |
| 30 graded credit hours of coursework | Before the general oral examination | Section 10.5.2 |
| CTEC form | A few weeks before the general oral examination | Section 4.4 |
| General oral examination (proposal defense) | Normally in the second year; by the end of the second year to conserve your tuition fellowship | Section 10.5.2 |
| Candidacy and ABD status | The term after you pass | Section 10.5.3 |
| Annual progress review | Every year | Section 4.6 |
| Publication requirement | Before you request the final oral examination | Section 6.3 |
| Graduation application | The term before you graduate | Section 8.3 |

| Milestone | Usual timing | Details |
|---|---|---|
| Dissertation, final oral examination, and ETD | Your graduation term | Section 10.5.5 |

### 10.5.1 Qualifying Examination

You fulfill the qualifying examination by earning a B or better in each of the three core courses: COMP 7270, COMP 7300, and COMP 7500. For these courses, only A and B are passing grades for the qualifying examination. If you earned your master's degree in CSSE, the same rule applies to these courses taken as a master's student.

**Equivalent courses.** If you have taken a course equivalent to COMP 7270, COMP 7300, or COMP 7500 and earned a B or better, the qualifying examination for that course can be waived. Your major professor and advisory committee decide whether a course is equivalent.

**Graduates of other CSSE master's programs.** A CSSE master's degree does not by itself satisfy the qualifying examination. If you hold the MS-AIEN, MS-CYBE, or MS-DSEN and have not taken COMP 7270, COMP 7300, and COMP 7500, you must still complete the ones you have not taken, with a B or better.

**Deadline.** You must complete these three courses, with the required grades, before you take the general oral examination (Section 10.5.2). Most PhD students take the general oral examination around their second year, after finishing their lecture-based coursework.

There is no separate written or oral qualifying examination, and you do not file a request to take one: you simply enroll in the three courses as part of your plan of study. Your grades, assigned by the faculty who teach them, are the official evaluation. Once you have a B or better in all three, the requirement is satisfied.

**If you earn a C.** A C in one of these courses still earns credit toward your degree, as long as your cumulative GPA stays at or above 3.0 (Section 3.2), but it does not fulfill the qualifying examination. With the approval of your major professor and the Director of Graduate Programs, you may retake the course to earn a B or better. Both the original grade and the new grade count in your GPA (Section 3.2).

### 10.5.2 General Oral Examination (Proposal Defense)

In the general oral examination, also called the proposal defense, you present a thorough description of your proposed dissertation research to your advisory committee. You pass only if the committee approves unanimously.

**When.** You are ready once you have published or submitted your first research paper, normally in your second year. Taking the examination by the end of your second year lets you register for fewer hours afterward and conserve your tuition fellowship (Section 5.9). The publication requirement does not have to be met before the general oral examination, although publishing or submitting a paper first is strongly encouraged.

**IMPORTANT**
Before you can take the general oral examination, you must have completed 30 graded credit hours of coursework, and the Graduate School must have approved your committee on your CTEC form. The general oral examination and the final examination may not be taken in the same semester.

**Your committee.** Your committee has at least four Auburn Graduate Faculty members, chaired by your major professor; three of them, including your major professor, must be Graduate Faculty at Level 2, and your major professor and at least one other member must be CSSE graduate faculty. At most one member may come from outside Auburn, as an additional member with the terminal degree in the field (Table 4.2).



**Steps.**

1. *File your CTEC form,* if you have not already, a few weeks before the examination (Section 4.4).
2. *Write a full proposal and an abstract.* Base the proposal on your published papers and your proposed new research; you will later extend it into your dissertation. The department shares a sample proposal in LaTeX on Overleaf that you may use as a template.
3. *Share the proposal* with every committee member at least one week before the examination, so they can give you feedback.
4. *Schedule the examination* with your committee, and reserve the department seminar room (Shelby 3129).
5. *Request the examination* through the Graduate School's Request for the Report on the General Oral Examination. The Graduate School's automated workflow then generates the digital announcement (Form B) and examination report (Form C) and asks your major professor and committee to report the result electronically on the day of the examination. There are no paper forms to print or bring.
6. *Prepare your presentation* and ask your major professor for feedback on your slides. Sample proposal slides are available.
7. *Announcement.* The day before the examination, your major professor announces it to CSSE faculty and students.
8. *Present and defend your proposal.* Your committee reports the result to the Graduate School.

After the examination, the Director of Graduate Programs asks your committee to evaluate your performance for the department's annual program assessment.

**If the examination reveals deficiencies.** The general oral examination assesses your understanding of your field and lets the committee review your proposed research and your grasp of research methods and the literature. If it reveals deficiencies, the committee may recommend remedial work, re-examination, or discontinuation of doctoral study. If you fail, a re-examination may be given on the committee's recommendation with the approval of the dean of the Graduate School. Further examinations require exceptional circumstances and the approval of the Graduate Council.

### 10.5.3 Admission to Candidacy and ABD Status

When you pass the general oral examination, you advance to candidacy: you become a PhD candidate, also called *all but dissertation* (ABD). Once the Graduate School receives your approved examination report, it adds the ABD attribute to your record.

**Registering as an ABD student.**

- If you register for fewer than nine hours, the Registrar automatically adds GRAD 6AA0, a non-credit course that counts as a full course load.
- If you hold an assistantship, you must still register for at least three hours each term (Section 5.6). The department recommends that funded ABD students register for three hours of COMP 8990 each term, which conserves their tuition fellowship (Table 5.2).

> **International students (F-1/J-1).** As an ABD student, do *not* file a Reduced Course Load (RCL) request: if you do, you must graduate at the end of the next term and cannot continue your PhD. Once you are ABD and have completed your lecture-based coursework, you need at least one in-person credit hour each term to keep your status (Table 2.3).

### 10.5.4 Residency

The Bulletin's requirements for doctoral degrees include no residency requirement, so the PhD has none beyond the course, examination, and dissertation requirements in this chapter.

### 10.5.5 Dissertation and Final Examination

Your dissertation presents the results of your original research and must be an original contribution to knowledge; you must pass a final examination defending it. In CSSE, the dissertation is normally built from your published papers and submitted manuscripts. The department shares a sample dissertation in LaTeX on Overleaf.

The final examination, administered by your committee with the University Reader, covers your field and a defense of the dissertation. Passing requires the unanimous support of all members, including the University Reader, and any member of the Graduate Faculty may attend. Register for COMP 8990 in each semester in which you submit your dissertation, await its review, or take the final examination.

> **IMPORTANT**
> You must meet the publication requirement (Section 6.3) before you request and schedule your final oral examination. Your committee and the Director of Graduate Programs review your publication record when your first submission and your defense are approved.

**Steps.** Apply for graduation in the term before you plan to finish (Section 8.3), and work through the Graduate School's Doctoral completion checklist. Then:

1. *Complete your draft* and have it approved by your major professor.
2. *Submit the Doctoral Dissertation First Submission Approval Form.* Once your committee approves the first submission, the University Reader receives the Dissertation Evaluation

Form. You and your major professor choose the University Reader, who must be a member of the Graduate Faculty at Level 1 or 2 from outside CSSE (Section 4.3).

3. *Format check.* Email a PDF of your dissertation to doctoral@auburn.edu.
4. *Schedule the final oral examination.* After the University Reader submits the evaluation, you receive a link to give the details of your examination; your committee and the University Reader are then notified of the date. Find a time when all of them can attend, and reserve a two-hour slot.
5. *Announcement.* Your major professor announces the examination to CSSE faculty and students.
6. *Take the final oral examination.* On the day of the examination, the Graduate School sends your committee and the University Reader the Report on the Final Oral Examination and the publishing approval form. All committee members, including the University Reader, must be present.
7. *Submit your dissertation* to AUETD (Auburn University Electronic Theses and Dissertations), and complete the Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED).

Each step has a deadline in the Graduate School calendar; see Table 8.1 and Section 8.6. Clear any incomplete grades at least three weeks before your graduation date (Section 3.1).

### 10.5.6 Time Limits

You are expected to reach candidacy within six years and to complete all requirements within ten years; after you are admitted to candidacy, you have four calendar years to finish. The clock starts with the earliest course on your plan of study. You may petition, with your committee's approval, for a one-year extension (Section 2.8).

Your support is also limited: departmentally funded GTA and GA appointments are limited to a combined eight fall and spring semesters for a PhD student (Section 5.8), and University-funded tuition to 110% of the hours your degree requires, which is 66 hours for the 60-hour PhD (Section 5.9).

### 10.5.7 Earning an MS Along the Way

You may add the MS-CSSE to your PhD program while keeping your PhD status. PhD students who earn an MS along the way usually complete the non-thesis option.

1. Discuss it with your major professor.
2. With your major professor's approval, file a curriculum change form (international students) that *adds* the master's program. Keep the PhD program; do not replace it.
3. After your major professor signs the form, email it to the Director of Graduate Programs.
4. If you are an international student, also send your student ID and assistantship information to the Manager of Academic Programs. If you hold an assistantship, ask the Manager to issue an IGAA statement, then email the approved curriculum change form and the IGAA statement to the Graduate School.

University-funded tuition may cover one master's and one PhD program with the college dean's approval (Section 5.9).

**How your courses count.**

- With your advisory committee's approval, your Auburn master's coursework applies to the PhD, and your PhD coursework applies to the master's. You do not retake courses.
- COMP 8990 Research and Dissertation is only for doctoral dissertation research. It cannot meet the coursework requirements of the master's degree.
- COMP 7990 Research and Thesis hours do not transfer from a master's degree to the PhD, and at most 3 hours of COMP 7980 Capstone Engineering Project do (Section 3.5).



## 10.6 Plan of Study and a Typical Path

The Graduate School no longer requires an official plan of study, but you should lay one out with your major professor and use it to register. The department's sample plans of study are a good starting point: PhD from a bachelor's degree and PhD from a master's degree (Section 3.7).

**Your first term.** A typical first-term schedule is one core course, an elective numbered 6000 or above taught by your major professor (or one that interests you, if you do not yet have a major professor), and COMP 8930 Directed Study with your major professor.

**A typical path.** How long the PhD takes depends on the degree you enter with. Full-time students who enter with a master's degree and transfer credit typically finish in about three to four years; students who enter with a bachelor's degree only typically finish in about four to five years. In broad terms, for a student who enters with a bachelor's degree (students with a master's degree usually move through these stages faster):

**Years 1–2: coursework and core requirements**
Complete the core courses with a B or better (Section 10.5.1), keep the enrollment your situation requires (Section 2.4), and choose a major professor and your dissertation focus.

**End of year 2 or year 3: proposal defense and candidacy**
File the CTEC form to set your advisory committee, then write and defend your dissertation proposal in the general oral examination (Section 10.5.2). Passing it admits you to candidacy (Section 10.5.3).

**Years 3–5: research, publication, and final defense**
Meet the publication requirement (Section 6.3), then write, defend, and submit your dissertation (Section 10.5.5).

Table 10.3 shows one way for a student who enters with a bachelor's degree to finish in five years with continuous assistantship support. Your own path depends on the degree you enter with, your research, and when courses are offered. Departmental GTA and GA support is limited to eight fall and spring semesters, so the last year of a five-year path needs a GRA or an approved extension (Section 5.8).

**Table 10.3** An illustrative five-year PhD-CSSE path

| Year | Hours | Main activities |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 9, 9, 3 | Core courses (qualifying examination); electives; directed study with your major professor; RCR training; start research. |

| Year | Hours | Main activities |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 9, 9, 3 | Finish most coursework; publish or submit your first paper; file the CTEC form; pass the general oral examination by the end of the year. |
| 3 | 3, 3, 3 | ABD: COMP 8990 and dissertation research; publish. |
| 4 | 3, 3, 3 | Dissertation research; meet the publication requirement. |
| 5 | 3, 3 | Apply for graduation; first submission; final oral examination; ETD. |

Hours are fall, spring, summer; 66 in total, the tuition fellowship limit (Table 5.2). Summer hours are COMP 8990.



## 10.7 Satisfactory Progress

To make satisfactory progress, you must:

- keep a cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0 and stay in good academic standing (Sections 3.2 and 3.4);
- earn a B or better in COMP 7270, COMP 7300, and COMP 7500, retaking a course with approval if you earn a C (Section 10.5.1);
- keep the enrollment your situation requires and stay continuously enrolled (Sections 2.4 and 2.5);
- file the CTEC form and pass the general oral examination, typically around the end of your second year (Section 10.5.2);
- meet the publication requirement before you graduate (Section 6.3);
- take part in the department's annual evaluation of doctoral students (Section 4.6);
- reach the other milestones in Table 10.2 and finish within the time limits (Section 10.5.6); and
- if you hold an assistantship, perform your duties satisfactorily and meet its enrollment rules (Section 5.8).

Your advisory committee monitors your progress. If it is unsatisfactory, the committee follows the due-process steps in Section 7.7.

## 10.8 Checklist: Admission to Graduation

**Table 10.4** PhD-CSSE checklist

| | Requirement | When | How |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Getting started** | | | |
| ☐ | Find a major professor | Early in year 1 | Section 4.1 |
| ☐ | Lay out a plan of study | Year 1 | Section 10.6 |
| ☐ | Complete RCR training | Before research | CITI (Section 6.1) |
| **Making progress** | | | |

| | Requirement | When | How |
|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | B or better in COMP 7270, 7300, and 7500 | Years 1–2 | Section 10.5.1 |
| ☐ | Publish or submit your first paper | Usually year 2 | Section 6.3 |
| ☐ | Complete 30 graded credit hours | Before the general oral exam | Section 10.5.2 |
| ☐ | File the CTEC form | Weeks before the general oral exam | Committee, Transfers, Exceptions and Candidacy (CTEC) form |
| ☐ | Pass the general oral examination | By the end of year 2 | Request for the Report on the General Oral Examination |
| ☐ | Annual progress review | Every year | Section 4.6 |
| **As a candidate (ABD)** | | | |
| ☐ | Register for COMP 8990 (at least 24 hours in all) | Each term | Section 10.5.3 |
| ☐ | Meet the publication requirement | Before requesting the final exam | Section 6.3 |
| **One term before graduating** | | | |
| ☐ | Apply for graduation | By the deadline in the calendar | AU Access, My Academics |
| ☐ | Review the doctoral completion checklist | Term before | Doctoral completion checklist |
| **Final term** | | | |
| ☐ | Clear incomplete grades and holds | 3 weeks before graduation | Section 3.1 |
| ☐ | First submission and format check | Calendar deadline | Doctoral Dissertation First Submission Approval Form |
| ☐ | Final oral examination | Calendar deadline | Section 10.5.5 |
| ☐ | ETD to AUETD; Survey of Earned Doctorates | Calendar deadline | AUETD (Auburn University Electronic Theses and Dissertations) |

# Master of Science in Computer Science and Software Engineering (MS-CSSE)

**REQUIREMENTS AT A GLANCE**

**Options** Non-thesis (at least 33 hours) or thesis (at least 30 hours, including 6 hours of COMP 7990). Offered on campus and online.
**Core courses** COMP 7270, COMP 7300, and COMP 7500 (9 hours).
**Grades** Every course must be taken for a grade, except COMP 7990.
**Final examination** Thesis option: a comprehensive oral examination (final defense). Non-thesis option: no final examination.
**Tuition fellowship** Thesis option only, with a qualifying assistantship.
**Key forms** CTEC form; graduation application; thesis option: the Master's Thesis Final Examination Report and ETD Publishing Approval Form, and AUETD submission.
**Advisor** Thesis option: your major professor. Non-thesis option: the Director of Graduate Programs is your advisor of record (Table 4.1).

## 11.1 Program Overview and Learning Outcomes

The Master of Science in Computer Science and Software Engineering may be earned under a thesis option or a non-thesis option, on campus or online. Both options share the same three core courses. The thesis option adds research leading to a thesis; the non-thesis option is entirely coursework.

The program has no formal concentrations. The department publishes sample plans of study for several areas of focus, such as artificial intelligence, data engineering, software engineering, and game development (Section 11.6).

**Student learning outcomes.** Graduates of the MS-CSSE program will be able to:

SLO 1. demonstrate proficiency in core knowledge of algorithms, computer architecture, and operating systems;
SLO 2. implement and test software solutions to problems;
SLO 3. apply reasoning and technical skills to solve problems in at least one area of research; and
SLO 4. communicate effectively with technical and non-technical audiences throughout the software lifecycle.

## 11.2 Admission Requirements

Apply through the Graduate School. Outstanding CSSE undergraduates may also enter through the Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's program (Section 2.10).

How applications are reviewed, and the computing background you need, are described in Section 2.1.

## 11.3 Degree Requirements

Tables 11.1 and 11.2 show the requirements for each option. The official requirements are in the Bulletin: Computer Science and Software Engineering — MS; the Graduate School's general rules for master's degrees are in the Bulletin: Graduate School, master's degree program.

**Table 11.1** MS-CSSE non-thesis option

| Requirement | Hours | Subtotal |
|---|---|---|
| **Core courses** | | |
| COMP 7270 Advanced Topics in Algorithms | 3 | |
| COMP 7300 Advanced Computer Architecture | 3 | |
| COMP 7500 Advanced Topics in Operating Systems | 3 | 9 |
| **Electives** | | |
| COMP courses numbered 6000–8999 | 18 | |
| Courses in any subject numbered 6000–8999 | 6 | 24 |
| **Total (minimum)** | | **33** |

**Table 11.2** MS-CSSE thesis option

| Requirement | Hours | Subtotal |
|---|---|---|
| **Core courses** | | |
| COMP 7270 Advanced Topics in Algorithms | 3 | |
| COMP 7300 Advanced Computer Architecture | 3 | |
| COMP 7500 Advanced Topics in Operating Systems | 3 | 9 |
| **Research** | | |
| COMP 7990 Research and Thesis | 6 | 6 |
| **Electives** | | |
| COMP courses numbered 6000–8999 | 9 | |
| Courses in any subject numbered 6000–8999 | 6 | 15 |
| **Total (minimum)** | | **30** |

**Notes on the requirements.**

- *Grades.* Every course in the degree must be taken for a letter grade, except COMP 7990, whose grade is normally TD. You must keep a cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0 (Sections 3.1 and 3.2).
- *Directed study and capstone.* You may take up to 3 hours of COMP 7930 Directed Study. In the non-thesis option you may also take 3 hours of COMP 7980 Capstone Engineering Project, a graded course (Section 3.8).
- *Transfer credit.* You may transfer up to 16 hours into the non-thesis option and up to 15 into the thesis option (Section 3.5). The Graduate School caps transfer credit at half of a program's hours.
- *Courses at the 6000 level.* If you took the 5000-level version of a 6000-level course, take a different course instead and record the substitution on your CTEC form (Section 3.6).
- *Time limit.* Master's coursework must be completed within six years (Section 2.8).



## 11.4 Options and How to Choose

Table 11.3 compares the two options.

**Table 11.3** Choosing between the thesis and non-thesis options

| | Thesis option | Non-thesis option |
|---|---|---|
| Minimum hours | 30, including 6 of COMP 7990 | 33 |
| Research | A thesis on research supervised by your major professor | Optional: COMP 7930 Directed Study or COMP 7980 Capstone Engineering Project |
| Committee | At least three Auburn Graduate Faculty members, chaired by your major professor (Table 4.2) | One member: your advisor of record (Table 4.1) |
| Examinations | Comprehensive oral examination (final defense) | None |
| Thesis submission | Format check and AUETD (Section 8.5) | None |
| Maximum transfer credit | 15 hours (Table 3.2) | 16 hours |
| Tuition fellowship | Possible with a qualifying assistantship (Section 5.9) | Not available: the College does not give non-thesis students qualifying assistantships |
| Suits you if | You want research experience, for example before a PhD, and have a major professor to supervise you | You want a coursework-based degree |

**IMPORTANT**

The Samuel Ginn College of Engineering does not give non-thesis students qualifying assistantships, so students in the non-thesis option are not eligible for tuition fellowships

(tuition waivers). If you hope to hold a graduate assistantship with a tuition fellowship, choose the thesis option (Section 5.9).

**Switching between options.** You may switch between the thesis and non-thesis options by filing a curriculum change form (international students). To switch from the thesis to the non-thesis option, you need your major professor's endorsement; after your major professor and the Director of Graduate Programs sign the form, submit it to the Graduate School.

## 11.5 Examinations and Milestones

**Non-thesis option.** There is no final examination. Your milestones are your courses, the CTEC form naming your advisor of record, and the graduation application (Sections 8.2 and 8.3).

**Thesis option.** Table 11.4 lists the milestones for the thesis option.

**Table 11.4** MS-CSSE thesis-option milestones

| Milestone | Usual timing | Details |
|---|---|---|
| Find a major professor | Early in your program | Section 4.1 |
| RCR training | Before you begin research | Section 6.1 |
| Form your committee | As agreed with your major professor | Table 4.2 |
| COMP 7990 Research and Thesis (6 hours) | While doing your thesis research | Section 3.8 |
| CTEC form and graduation application | The term before you graduate | Sections 8.2 and 8.3 |
| Format check, final defense, report, and AUETD | Your graduation term | Section 11.5.1 |

### 11.5.1 Thesis and Final Defense

At the end of your studies you must pass a comprehensive oral examination, also called the final defense, and submit the Master's Final Examination report to the Graduate School.

**Graduate School rules for the thesis.**

- Your thesis topic must be approved by your major professor and your advisory committee, and you do the research under your major professor's direction.
- Register for COMP 7990 in every semester in which you work on the thesis, submit or defend it, await its final approval, or take your final examination. No more than six hours count toward the degree, and no grade is assigned.
- Your major professor schedules the defense no later than the calendar deadline. Members of the graduate faculty may attend as visitors.
- Passing requires the unanimous support of your committee. If you fail, one re-examination may be given on your committee's recommendation with the approval of the dean of

the Graduate School; further examinations require exceptional circumstances and the approval of the Graduate Council.
- If the electronic thesis needs corrections, your graduation may be delayed by at least one semester.

1. *Check the deadlines* on the Graduate School calendar and apply for graduation in the term before (Section 8.3).
2. *Clear all incomplete grades and holds*, at least three weeks before your graduation date (Section 3.1).
3. *Write your thesis* following the Graduate School's Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Guide. The department shares a sample thesis in LaTeX on Overleaf.
4. *Format check.* Email a PDF of your thesis to thesis@auburn.edu by the calendar deadline.
5. *Request the report form.* File the request for the Master's Thesis Final Examination Report and ETD Publishing Approval Form; the Graduate School's automated workflow then handles the report and approval form with your committee.
6. *Announcement.* The day before your defense, your major professor announces it to CSSE faculty and students.
7. *Defend your thesis* before your committee. Afterward, the Director of Graduate Programs asks your committee to evaluate your performance for the department's annual program assessment.
8. *Submit your thesis* as a PDF to AUETD (Auburn University Electronic Theses and Dissertations).

See also Table 8.1 for the thesis steps and Section 8.6 for the kinds of deadlines.

> **International students (F-1/J-1).** If you are finishing your thesis and may need more than one term, file an All-But-Thesis (ABT) request for GRAD 6AA0 rather than a Reduced Course Load request (Table 2.3).

## 11.6 Plan of Study and a Typical Path

The Graduate School does not require an official plan of study, but you should lay one out and use it to register. Start from one of the department's sample plans of study (Section 3.7):

- artificial intelligence focus;
- data engineering focus;
- software engineering focus; and
- game development focus.

These focus areas are suggestions for choosing electives; they are not concentrations and do not appear on your transcript.

**Your first term.** A good start is COMP 6700 Software Processes and COMP 6710 Software Quality Assurance, plus one of the three core courses.

**Getting advice.** If you are in the non-thesis option, ask the Director of Graduate Programs, your advisor of record, about which courses to take and when. If you are in the thesis option, ask your major professor.

**A typical path.** Full-time students usually take 9 hours in each fall and spring term, so either option takes about two years (four terms).

**Thesis option**
A research path. *Year 1:* the core courses and electives; find a major professor (Section 4.1). *Year 2:* the remaining hours, including 6 hours of COMP 7990; form your three-member advisory committee and file the CTEC form; write and defend your thesis (Section 11.5.1).

**Non-thesis option**
A coursework path: 33 hours of courses, including the core courses. File the CTEC form with the Director of Graduate Programs as your advisor of record (Table 4.1) in the term before you graduate.



## 11.7 Dual Degree with MS-DSEN

You may earn both the MS-CSSE and the MS-DSEN (Data Engineering option). Some credit hours count toward both degrees, depending on the order:

- *MS-DSEN first (recommended):* complete the 30-hour MS-DSEN, then transfer 9 hours into the 33-hour MS-CSSE non-thesis option.
- *MS-CSSE first:* only 6 hours transfer into the MS-DSEN.

Because more hours transfer, starting with the MS-DSEN saves tuition. Either way, the Graduate School requires that at least 24 hours, or half the hours the degree requires if that is more, be unique to each degree and taken at Auburn. To add a program, see Section 2.9.

## 11.8 Satisfactory Progress

To make satisfactory progress, you must:

- keep a cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0 and stay in good academic standing (Sections 3.2 and 3.4);
- complete the core courses and the rest of your required hours (Section 11.3);
- in the thesis option, form your advisory committee and successfully defend your thesis (Section 11.5.1); your committee monitors your progress (Section 4.6);
- in the non-thesis option, file the CTEC form with your advisor of record (Table 4.1);
- keep the enrollment your situation requires and stay continuously enrolled (Sections 2.4 and 2.5);
- finish within the six-year time limit (Section 2.8); and
- if you hold an assistantship, perform your duties satisfactorily (Section 5.8).

## 11.9 Checklist: Admission to Graduation

Items marked *(thesis)* apply only to the thesis option.

**Table 11.5** MS-CSSE checklist

| | Requirement | When | How |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Getting started** | | | |
| ☐ | Lay out a plan of study | First term | Section 11.6 |
| ☐ | Take core courses (COMP 7270, 7300, 7500) | Early | Section 11.3 |
| ☐ | *(thesis)* Find a major professor; complete RCR training | Early | Sections 4.1 and 6.1 |
| **Making progress** | | | |
| ☐ | Keep a GPA of at least 3.0 | Every term | Section 3.2 |
| ☐ | *(thesis)* Form your committee | As agreed with your major professor | Table 4.2 |
| ☐ | *(thesis)* Complete 6 hours of COMP 7990 | During research | CSSE request form for research hours and capstone (COMP 7980, 7990, 8990) |
| **One term before graduating** | | | |
| ☐ | File the CTEC form | Term before | Committee, Transfers, Exceptions and Candidacy (CTEC) form |
| ☐ | Apply for graduation | By the calendar deadline | AU Access, My Academics |
| ☐ | Review the master's completion checklist | Term before | Master's completion checklist |
| **Final term** | | | |
| ☐ | Clear incomplete grades and holds | 3 weeks before graduation | Section 3.1 |
| ☐ | *(thesis)* Format check | Calendar deadline | thesis@auburn.edu |
| ☐ | *(thesis)* Final defense and report form | Calendar deadline | Master's Thesis Final Examination Report and ETD Publishing Approval Form |
| ☐ | *(thesis)* Submit the thesis to AUETD | Calendar deadline | AUETD (Auburn University Electronic Theses and Dissertations) |

# Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence Engineering (MS-AIEN)

**REQUIREMENTS AT A GLANCE**

**Total hours** At least 30 graduate semester hours; course-based. Offered on campus and online.
**Core courses** COMP 6130, COMP 6600, and COMP 6630 (9 hours).
**Electives** 21 hours of technical electives from the department's list of AI-related courses.
**Grades** Every course must be taken for a grade.
**Final examination** None.
**Tuition fellowship** Not available: the College does not give qualifying assistantships to non-thesis master's students (Section 5.2).
**Key forms** CTEC form; graduation application.
**Advisor** The Director of AI Engineering Programs, Dr. Sathya Aakur, is your advisor of record (Table 4.1). Both Dr. Sathya Aakur and the Manager of Academic Programs, Dr. Clint Lovelace, provide academic advising.

## 12.1 Program Overview and Learning Outcomes

The Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence Engineering is a course-based degree. Every student takes three core courses in data mining, artificial intelligence, and machine learning, then seven technical electives in AI and its subareas, such as machine learning, computer vision, and natural language processing. The program is offered on campus and online.

The Director of AI Engineering Programs is your advisor of record and your contact for questions about the program (Key Contacts).

**Student learning outcomes.** Graduates of the MS-AIEN program will be able to:

SLO 1. demonstrate proficiency in core knowledge of artificial intelligence, including machine learning, data mining, and reasoning methods;
SLO 2. design, implement, and evaluate AI-enabled systems that solve real-world problems;
SLO 3. apply data analysis and modeling techniques to extract insights and support decision-making in application domains; and
SLO 4. recognize and articulate ethical and societal considerations in the development and deployment of AI systems.

## 12.2 Admission Requirements

The program is open to anyone with a bachelor's degree from an institution of recognized standing in computer science, software engineering, or another STEM discipline. Applicants with a different degree may qualify through relevant professional experience that gives them the needed background in programming, computing, and mathematics. Apply through the Graduate School.

You do not need formal coursework in algorithms, as long as you can follow the implementation details of AI and machine-learning algorithms, which build on basic ideas from algorithms such as graph traversal and greedy algorithms. Many of the AI courses briefly review these ideas in lecture, so with some self-study you should be able to follow them. How applications are reviewed is described in Section 2.1.

## 12.3 Degree Requirements

Table 12.1 shows the requirements. The official requirements are in the Bulletin: Artificial Intelligence Engineering — MS.

**Table 12.1** MS-AIEN degree requirements

| Requirement | Hours | Subtotal |
|---|---|---|
| **Core courses** | | |
| COMP 6600 Artificial Intelligence | 3 | |
| COMP 6630 Machine Learning | 3 | |
| COMP 6130 Data Mining | 3 | 9 |
| **Technical electives (graded, from the department's list)** | | |
| AI-related COMP courses numbered 6000–8999 | 15 | |
| AI-related courses in any subject numbered 6000–8999 | 6 | 21 |
| **Total (minimum)** | | **30** |

**Notes on the requirements.**

- *Directed study and capstone.* Your electives may include 3 hours of COMP 7930 Directed Study, 3 hours of COMP 7980 Capstone Engineering Project, or both (Section 3.8).
- *Grades.* Every course must be taken for a letter grade. You must keep a cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0 (Section 3.2).
- *Courses at the 6000 level.* If you took the 5000-level version of a 6000-level course, you may not take the 6000-level course; take a substitute approved by the department (Section 3.6). For example, if you took COMP 5600 as an undergraduate, you may replace COMP 6600 with another AI-related course such as COMP 6650 Deep Learning.
- *Transfer credit and time limit.* You may transfer up to 15 hours (Section 3.5), and coursework must be completed within six years (Section 2.8).

**Approved AI electives.** Table 12.2 lists the approved AI electives. Other special topics courses (COMP 6970) may be added as demand allows, and each term's registration email names the

AI-related courses that count toward the degree. Courses from outside CSSE may count if the program's AI committee approves them; ask the Director of AI Engineering Programs.

**Table 12.2** Approved AI electives

| Offered regularly (fall or spring) | Offered periodically |
|---|---|
| COMP 6650 Deep Learning | COMP 6970 Information Retrieval |
| COMP 6660 Evolutionary Computing | COMP 6970 AI and Adversarial Machine Learning |
| COMP 6970 Deep Learning for Computer Vision | COMP 6970 Topics in Computer Vision |
| COMP 6970 Explainable AI | COMP 7660 Research Methods in Evolutionary Computing |
| COMP 6970 AI for Security | COMP 7800 Artificial Intelligence for Security |
| COMP 6970 Statistical Methods in Bioinformatics | COMP 7970 Natural Language Processing |

## 12.4 Options and How to Choose

The MS-AIEN has a single, course-based track with no thesis option. Choose your electives with your advisor of record. If you want a research or project experience, use your electives for COMP 7930 Directed Study or COMP 7980 Capstone Engineering Project.

The 12-hour GCRT-AIEN certificate consists of the same three core courses plus one approved AI elective (Chapter 15).

## 12.5 Examinations and Milestones

The MS-AIEN has no final examination. Your milestones are:

1. complete the three core courses;
2. complete 21 hours of approved electives;
3. in the term before you graduate, file the CTEC form naming the Director of AI Engineering Programs as your advisor of record, with no other committee members (Section 8.2); and
4. apply for graduation in the same term (Section 8.3).

## 12.6 Plan of Study and a Typical Path

The Graduate School does not require an official plan of study, but you should lay one out and use it to register. Start from the department's sample MS-AIEN plan of study (Section 3.7).

The department also offers some core and elective courses in summer; for example, in Summer 2026 COMP 6130 and COMP 6600 (core) and two approved electives were offered.

Full-time students usually take 9 hours in each fall and spring term, so the 30-hour degree takes about two years (four terms), or three terms plus a summer. A typical path is coursework centered: start with the core courses, then take your AI electives and, if you choose, directed study or a capstone project. In the term before you graduate, file the CTEC form with the Director of AI Engineering Programs as your advisor of record (Table 4.1).

**Getting advice.** Two people provide academic advising in the MS-AIEN program, such as which courses to take and when:

- the Director of AI Engineering Programs, Dr. Sathya Aakur (san0028@auburn.edu), who is also your advisor of record and answers questions about approved AI electives; and
- the Manager of Academic Programs, Dr. Clint Lovelace (jcl0014@auburn.edu).

See also Section 4.2.

## 12.7 Satisfactory Progress

To make satisfactory progress, you must:

- keep a cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0 and stay in good academic standing (Sections 3.2 and 3.4);
- complete the core courses and the rest of your required hours (Section 12.3);
- file the CTEC form with your advisor of record (Table 4.1);
- keep the enrollment your situation requires and stay continuously enrolled (Sections 2.4 and 2.5); and
- finish within the six-year time limit (Section 2.8).



## 12.8 Checklist: Admission to Graduation

**Table 12.3** MS-AIEN checklist

| | Requirement | When | How |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Getting started** | | | |
| ☐ | Lay out a plan of study | First term | Sample plan of study: MS-AIEN |
| ☐ | Take the core courses (COMP 6130, 6600, 6630) | As offered | Section 12.3 |
| **Making progress** | | | |
| ☐ | Take 21 hours of approved electives | Throughout | Table 12.2 |
| ☐ | Keep a GPA of at least 3.0 | Every term | Section 3.2 |
| **One term before graduating** | | | |
| ☐ | File the CTEC form (Director of AI Engineering Programs as advisor) | Term before | Committee, Transfers, Exceptions and Candidacy (CTEC) form |
| ☐ | Apply for graduation | By the calendar deadline | AU Access, My Academics |
| ☐ | Review the master's completion checklist | Term before | Master's completion checklist |
| **Final term** | | | |

| | Requirement | When | How |
|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | Clear incomplete grades and holds | 3 weeks before graduation | Section 3.1 |

# Master of Science in Cybersecurity Engineering (MS-CYBE)

**REQUIREMENTS AT A GLANCE**

**Total hours** At least 33 graduate semester hours; course-based with a capstone. Offered on campus and online.
**Required courses** COMP 7500 and six cybersecurity courses (21 hours).
**Electives** 9 hours of approved cybersecurity-relevant courses.
**Capstone** COMP 7980 Capstone Engineering Project (3 hours).
**Grades** Every course must be taken for a grade.
**Final examination** None.
**Tuition fellowship** Not available: the College does not give qualifying assistantships to non-thesis master's students (Section 5.2).
**Key forms** CTEC form; graduation application.
**Advisor** The Director of Cybersecurity Engineering Programs, Dr. Farah Kandah, is your advisor of record and approves your electives (Table 4.1). Both Dr. Farah Kandah and the Manager of Academic Programs, Dr. Clint Lovelace, provide academic advising.

## 13.1 Program Overview and Learning Outcomes

The Master of Science in Cybersecurity Engineering prepares you to understand, analyze, develop, investigate, protect, and defend an organization's cyber ecosystem. It focuses on the engineering and technical side of cybersecurity, and its capstone experience is designed to serve both students coming from a degree program and working practitioners. The program is offered on campus and online.

The Director of Cybersecurity Engineering Programs is your advisor of record and your contact for questions about the program, including approved electives (Key Contacts).

**Student learning outcomes.** Graduates of the MS-CYBE program:

SLO 1. understand the fundamental concepts of cybersecurity;
SLO 2. know prevalent cybersecurity threats, threat models (such as man-in-the-middle), and canonical defenses;

SLO 3. can identify, assess, and defend against cybersecurity threats; develop defensible and resilient network and software mechanisms; and detect and investigate cybersecurity breaches;

SLO 4. are versed in techniques for gathering and preserving digital forensic evidence relating to a cyber event;

SLO 5. know computer science (for example, algorithms, operating systems, computer architectures, and ethics) and can use this knowledge for a deeper, contextualized understanding of cybersecurity;

SLO 6. communicate cybersecurity issues effectively; and

SLO 7. can apply their cybersecurity capabilities in an integrated way to address specific cybersecurity problems.

## 13.2 Admission Requirements

Apply through the Graduate School.

How applications are reviewed, and the computing background you need, are described in Section 2.1. Outstanding CSSE undergraduates may also enter through the Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's program (Section 2.10).

## 13.3 Degree Requirements

Table 13.1 shows the requirements. The official requirements are in the Bulletin: Cybersecurity Engineering — Graduate Certificate, MS.

**Table 13.1** MS-CYBE degree requirements

| Requirement | Hours | Subtotal |
|---|---|---|
| **Foundational course** | | |
| COMP 7500 Advanced Topics in Operating Systems | 3 | 3 |
| **Required cybersecurity courses** | | |
| COMP 6350 Digital Forensics | 3 | |
| COMP 6370 Computer and Network Security | 3 | |
| COMP 6530 Secure Cloud Computing | 3 | |
| COMP 6830 Cybersecurity Threats | 3 | |
| COMP 7370 Advanced Computer and Network Security | 3 | |
| COMP 7720 Software Reverse Engineering | 3 | 18 |
| **Cybersecurity electives** | | |
| Approved courses numbered 6000–8999 relevant to cybersecurity | 9 | 9 |
| **Capstone experience** | | |
| COMP 7980 Capstone Engineering Project | 3 | 3 |
| **Total (minimum)** | | **33** |

**Notes on the requirements.**

- *Electives.* There is no published list of approved cybersecurity electives. Ask the Director of Cybersecurity Engineering Programs, Dr. Farah Kandah, for the current list.
- *Capstone.* COMP 7980 is required and letter-graded. Before you register, get a faculty member's agreement to supervise your project, then submit the department's CSSE request form for research hours and capstone (COMP 7980, 7990, 8990) (Section 3.8).
- *Grades.* Every course must be taken for a letter grade. You must keep a cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0 (Section 3.2).
- *Courses at the 6000 level.* If you took the 5000-level version of a 6000-level course, substitute another approved cybersecurity-relevant graduate course (Section 3.6).
- *Transfer credit and time limit.* You may transfer up to 16 hours (Section 3.5), and coursework must be completed within six years (Section 2.8).

## 13.4 Options and How to Choose

The MS-CYBE has a single, course-based track with a required capstone project; there is no thesis option. Your choices are your three electives and your capstone project, which you plan with the Director of Cybersecurity Engineering Programs and your project supervisor.

Three of the required courses (COMP 6350, 6370, and 7370) also make up the 9-hour GCRT-CYBE certificate (Chapter 15).

## 13.5 Examinations and Milestones

The MS-CYBE has no final examination. Your milestones are:

1. complete COMP 7500 and the six required cybersecurity courses;
2. complete 9 hours of approved cybersecurity electives;
3. complete COMP 7980, the capstone project;
4. in the term before you graduate, file the CTEC form naming the Director of Cybersecurity Engineering Programs as your advisor of record, with no other committee members (Section 8.2); and
5. apply for graduation in the same term (Section 8.3).

## 13.6 Plan of Study and a Typical Path

The Graduate School does not require an official plan of study, but you should lay one out and use it to register. Start from the department's sample MS-CYBE plan of study (Section 3.7).

Full-time students usually take 9 hours in each fall and spring term, so the 33-hour degree takes about two years (four terms). A typical path is project based: complete the required courses, then COMP 7980, the capstone project. In the term before you graduate, file the CTEC form with the Director of Cybersecurity Engineering Programs as your advisor of record (Table 4.1).

**Getting advice.** Two people provide academic advising in the MS-CYBE program, such as which courses to take and when:

- the Director of Cybersecurity Engineering Programs, Dr. Farah Kandah (fzk0016@auburn.edu), who is also your advisor of record and approves your cybersecurity electives; and
- the Manager of Academic Programs, Dr. Clint Lovelace (jcl0014@auburn.edu).

See also Section 4.2.

## 13.7 Satisfactory Progress

To make satisfactory progress, you must:

- keep a cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0 and stay in good academic standing (Sections 3.2 and 3.4);
- complete the required courses and COMP 7980, the capstone project (Section 13.3);
- file the CTEC form with your advisor of record (Table 4.1);
- keep the enrollment your situation requires and stay continuously enrolled (Sections 2.4 and 2.5); and
- finish within the six-year time limit (Section 2.8).

## 13.8 Checklist: Admission to Graduation

**Table 13.2** MS-CYBE checklist

| | Requirement | When | How |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Getting started** | | | |
| ☐ | Lay out a plan of study | First term | Sample plan of study: MS-CYBE |
| ☐ | Ask which electives are approved | First term | Director of Cybersecurity Engineering Programs |
| **Making progress** | | | |
| ☐ | COMP 7500 and the six required cybersecurity courses | As offered | Table 13.1 |
| ☐ | 9 hours of approved electives | Throughout | Section 13.3 |
| ☐ | COMP 7980 capstone project | As agreed with your supervisor | CSSE request form for research hours and capstone (COMP 7980, 7990, 8990) |
| ☐ | Keep a GPA of at least 3.0 | Every term | Section 3.2 |
| **One term before graduating** | | | |
| ☐ | File the CTEC form (Director of Cybersecurity Engineering Programs as advisor) | Term before | Committee, Transfers, Exceptions and Candidacy (CTEC) form |

| | Requirement | When | How |
|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | Apply for graduation | By the calendar deadline | AU Access, My Academics |
| ☐ | Review the master's completion checklist | Term before | Master's completion checklist |
| **Final term** | | | |
| ☐ | Clear incomplete grades and holds | 3 weeks before graduation | Section 3.1 |



# Master of Science in Data Science and Engineering (MS-DSEN)

**REQUIREMENTS AT A GLANCE**

**Total hours** At least 30 graduate semester hours; course-based with a capstone. Offered on campus and online.
**Options** Data Engineering option (administered by CSSE) or Data Science option (managed by the Department of Mathematics and Statistics). There are no official concentrations. This handbook covers the Data Engineering option.
**Foundational courses** COMP 6120, 6130, 6630 and STAT 6000, 6600, 6650 (18 hours).
**Electives** 9 hours, at least 6 of them in COMP.
**Capstone** COMP 7980 Capstone Engineering Project (3 hours).
**Grades** Every course, including COMP 7980, must be taken for a grade.
**Final examination** None.
**Tuition fellowship** Not available: the College does not give qualifying assistantships to non-thesis master's students (Section 5.2).
**Key forms** CTEC form; graduation application.
**Advisor** The CSSE professor who supervised your COMP 7980, or else the Director of Graduate Programs, is your advisor of record (Table 4.1).

## 14.1 Program Overview and Learning Outcomes

The Master of Science in Data Science and Engineering has no official concentrations, but it has two options: the *Data Engineering option*, administered by CSSE, and the *Data Science option*, managed by the Department of Mathematics and Statistics. (The Bulletin calls the options concentrations.) Both options share six foundational courses. The program is offered on campus and online.

This chapter gives full procedures for the Data Engineering option. If you are in the Data Science option, its requirements are shown in Table 14.2, but follow the Department of Mathematics and Statistics for advising and procedures.

**Student learning outcomes.** Graduates of the MS-DSEN program will be able to:

SLO 1. incorporate theoretical mathematical and statistical principles to design and implement solutions to data analytics problems;

SLO 2. use practical computing technologies to design and implement data-driven solutions;
SLO 3. apply data science and engineering methods to at least one domain of real-world applications; and
SLO 4. deliver written and oral presentations to technical and non-technical audiences during the design and implementation phases of data science and engineering projects.

## 14.2 Admission Requirements

Apply through the Graduate School.

How applications are reviewed is described in Section 2.1. Outstanding CSSE undergraduates may also enter the Data Engineering option through the Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's program (Section 2.10).

**Background you need.** Applicants should have a solid background in computer science, software engineering, mathematics, or a closely related quantitative field, with undergraduate coursework or equivalent proficiency in:

- *computing:* a high-level programming language such as Python, C++, or Java; data structures and algorithms; database design, SQL, and data management; and basic operating systems and computer architecture; and
- *mathematics:* single- and multivariable calculus; linear algebra (matrix operations, vector spaces, linear transformations, eigenvalues and eigenvectors); and probability and statistics (basic probability, distributions, and statistical inference).

If you lack some of this background, you may still be considered for admission, but you may be required to take foundational or bridge courses before the advanced data science courses.

## 14.3 Degree Requirements

Table 14.1 shows the requirements for the Data Engineering option. The official requirements are in the Bulletin: Data Science and Engineering — MS.

**Table 14.1** MS-DSEN, Data Engineering option

| Requirement | Hours | Subtotal |
|---|---|---|
| **Foundational courses** | | |
| COMP 6120 Database Systems I | 3 | |
| COMP 6130 Data Mining | 3 | |
| COMP 6630 Machine Learning | 3 | |
| STAT 6000 Intermediate Statistics for Data Science | 3 | |
| STAT 6600 Probability and Statistics for Data Science | 3 | |
| STAT 6650 Statistical Learning | 3 | 18 |
| **Electives** | | |
| COMP courses numbered 6000–8999 | 6 | |
| Courses in any subject numbered 6000–8999 | 3 | 9 |

| Requirement | Hours | Subtotal |
|---|---|---|
| **Capstone** | | |
| COMP 7980 Capstone Engineering Project | 3 | 3 |
| **Total (minimum)** | | **30** |

**Table 14.2** MS-DSEN, Data Science option (Department of Mathematics and Statistics)

| Requirement | Hours | Subtotal |
|---|---|---|
| Foundational courses (the same six as in Table 14.1) | 18 | 18 |
| STAT courses numbered 6000–8999 | 6 | |
| Courses in any subject numbered 6000–8999 | 3 | 9 |
| STAT 7940 Capstone Project | 3 | 3 |
| **Total (minimum)** | | **30** |

**Notes on the requirements (Data Engineering option).**

- *Electives.* Of your three electives, at least two must be graduate COMP courses. You choose them with the Director of Graduate Programs, who is also your advisor of record.
- *Capstone.* COMP 7980 is required and letter-graded. Before you register, get a faculty member's agreement to supervise your project, then submit the department's CSSE request form for research hours and capstone (COMP 7980, 7990, 8990) (Section 3.8). Each term's registration email names the faculty contact for MS-DSEN capstone projects.
- *Grades.* Every course must be taken for a letter grade. You must keep a cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0 (Section 3.2).
- *Courses at the 6000 level.* If you took the 5000-level version of a 6000-level course, substitute another graduate course as directed by the program (Section 3.6).
- *Transfer credit and time limit.* You may transfer up to 15 hours (Section 3.5), and coursework must be completed within six years (Section 2.8).

**Your advisor of record.** If you have completed COMP 7980 under a CSSE professor by the time you file your CTEC form, list that professor as your advisor of record. Otherwise, list the Director of Graduate Programs (Table 4.1).

## 14.4 Options and How to Choose

The program has two options and no thesis option. The Data Engineering option (CSSE) and the Data Science option (Department of Mathematics and Statistics) share the six foundational courses and differ in electives and capstone. They are options, not official concentrations.

The 12-hour GCRT-DENG certificate consists of four of the foundational courses: COMP 6120, 6130, and 6630, plus one of the three STAT courses (Chapter 15).

## 14.5 Examinations and Milestones

The MS-DSEN has no final examination. In the Data Engineering option, your milestones are:

1. complete the six foundational courses;
2. complete 9 hours of electives, at least 6 of them in COMP;
3. complete COMP 7980, the capstone project;
4. in the term before you graduate, file the CTEC form naming your advisor of record, with no other committee members (Section 8.2 and Table 4.1); and
5. apply for graduation in the same term (Section 8.3).

## 14.6 Plan of Study and a Typical Path

The Graduate School does not require an official plan of study, but you should lay one out and use it to register. Start from the department's sample MS-DSEN plan of study (Section 3.7). For advice on which courses to take and when, ask the Director of Graduate Programs.

Full-time students usually take 9 hours in each fall and spring term, so the 30-hour degree takes about two years (four terms), or three terms plus a summer. In the Data Engineering option, a typical path is project based: complete the required courses, then COMP 7980, the capstone project. In the term before you graduate, file the CTEC form with your advisor of record (Table 4.1).

**When courses are offered.** COMP 6120, STAT 6000, and STAT 6600 are usually offered in fall and spring, and COMP 7980 in fall, spring, and summer. Electives, such as special topics courses (COMP 6970 and COMP 7970) and advanced STAT courses, rotate from term to term. Check current and upcoming offerings in AU Access under *My Academics*, *Look Up Classes*.

## 14.7 Dual Degree with MS-CSSE

You may earn both the MS-DSEN (Data Engineering option) and the MS-CSSE. Some credit hours count toward both degrees, depending on the order:

- *MS-DSEN first (recommended):* complete the 30-hour MS-DSEN, then transfer 9 hours into the 33-hour MS-CSSE non-thesis option.
- *MS-CSSE first:* only 6 hours transfer into the MS-DSEN.

Because more hours transfer, starting with the MS-DSEN saves tuition. Either way, the Graduate School requires that at least 24 hours, or half the hours the degree requires if that is more, be unique to each degree and taken at Auburn. To add a program, see Section 2.9.

## 14.8 Satisfactory Progress

To make satisfactory progress, you must:

- keep a cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0 and stay in good academic standing (Sections 3.2 and 3.4);

- complete the required courses and the capstone (Section 14.3);
- file the CTEC form with your advisor of record (Table 4.1);
- keep the enrollment your situation requires and stay continuously enrolled (Sections 2.4 and 2.5); and
- finish within the six-year time limit (Section 2.8).

## 14.9 Checklist: Admission to Graduation

For the Data Engineering option:

**Table 14.3** MS-DSEN checklist (Data Engineering)

| | Requirement | When | How |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Getting started** | | | |
| ☐ | Lay out a plan of study | First term | Sample plan of study: MS-DSEN, Data Engineering concentration |
| **Making progress** | | | |
| ☐ | Six foundational courses (COMP and STAT) | As offered | Table 14.1 |
| ☐ | 9 hours of electives (at least 6 in COMP) | Throughout | Section 14.3 |
| ☐ | COMP 7980 capstone project | As agreed with your supervisor | CSSE request form for research hours and capstone (COMP 7980, 7990, 8990) |
| ☐ | Keep a GPA of at least 3.0 | Every term | Section 3.2 |
| **One term before graduating** | | | |
| ☐ | File the CTEC form (advisor of record) | Term before | Committee, Transfers, Exceptions and Candidacy (CTEC) form |
| ☐ | Apply for graduation | By the calendar deadline | AU Access, My Academics |
| ☐ | Review the master's completion checklist | Term before | Master's completion checklist |
| **Final term** | | | |
| ☐ | Clear incomplete grades and holds | 3 weeks before graduation | Section 3.1 |

# Graduate Certificates

## 15.1 Overview

CSSE offers three graduate certificates, each available on campus or online:

- the Graduate Certificate in Artificial Intelligence Engineering (GCRT-AIEN), 12 hours;
- the Graduate Certificate in Data Engineering (GCRT-DENG), 12 hours; and
- the Graduate Certificate in Cybersecurity Engineering (GCRT-CYBE), 9 hours.

You may earn a certificate while you pursue a CSSE graduate degree. Certificate courses count toward both the certificate and your degree, so depending on your program you may be able to earn one without taking any extra courses. If you have already completed a certificate's courses, you may still enroll in the certificate retroactively and earn it.

**Contacts.**

- GCRT-AIEN: the Director of AI Engineering Programs.
- GCRT-DENG: the Director of Graduate Programs.
- GCRT-CYBE: the Director of Cybersecurity Engineering Programs.

Contact details are in Key Contacts.

## 15.2 Certificate Requirements

**Table 15.1** Certificate requirements

| Course | Hours |
|---|---|
| **Graduate Certificate in Artificial Intelligence Engineering (GCRT-AIEN)** | |
| COMP 6600 Artificial Intelligence | 3 |
| COMP 6630 Machine Learning | 3 |
| COMP 6130 Data Mining | 3 |
| One approved AI elective | 3 |
| *Total* | *12* |
| **Graduate Certificate in Data Engineering (GCRT-DENG)** | |
| COMP 6120 Database Systems I | 3 |
| COMP 6130 Data Mining | 3 |
| COMP 6630 Machine Learning | 3 |

| Course | Hours |
|---|---|
| One of STAT 6000 Intermediate Statistics for Data Science, STAT 6600 Probability and Statistics for Data Science, or STAT 6650 Statistical Learning | 3 |
| *Total* | *12* |
| **Graduate Certificate in Cybersecurity Engineering (GCRT-CYBE)** | |
| COMP 6350 Digital Forensics | 3 |
| COMP 6370 Computer and Network Security | 3 |
| COMP 7370 Advanced Computer and Network Security | 3 |
| *Total* | *9* |

The official requirements are in the Bulletin: Bulletin: Artificial Intelligence Engineering — Graduate Certificate, Bulletin: Data Engineering — Graduate Certificate, and Bulletin: Cybersecurity Engineering — Graduate Certificate, MS.

**The AI Engineering certificate.** The GCRT-AIEN is open to anyone with a bachelor's degree from an institution of recognized standing in computer science, software engineering, or another STEM discipline, or with relevant professional experience in programming, computing, and mathematics. The AI elective comes from the department's list of approved AI electives (Table 12.2); ask the Director of AI Engineering Programs for the current list.

## 15.3 Adding a Certificate

1. *Talk with your advisor.* If you are a PhD student, consult your major professor. If you are a master's student, contact the Director of Graduate Programs.
2. *File a curriculum change form* (domestic students or international students) that *adds* the certificate. Keep your current program; do not replace it.
3. *After your major professor or the Director of Graduate Programs signs the form,* email the signed PDF to the Director of Graduate Programs.
4. *International graduate assistants* also ask the Manager of Academic Programs for an IGAA statement, then email the approved curriculum change form and the IGAA statement to the Graduate School.

See also Table 2.4.

## 15.4 Grade Rules for Certificates

You must keep a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 in your certificate coursework. A grade of C or better counts toward a certificate; a D does not. If a grade of C brings your certificate GPA below 3.0, you must repeat that course. For the general grade rules, see Sections 3.1 and 3.2.

All requirements for a graduate certificate must be completed within six years (Section 2.8).

**Transfer credit.** With the approval of the program faculty and the Graduate School, you may use a limited amount of coursework from another accredited university toward a certificate. Transfer credit may not exceed 40 percent of the hours the certificate requires (4.8 of 12 hours,

or 3.6 of 9 hours, so in practice one three-hour course), and the program may allow less. The course must fall within the certificate's time limit and carry a grade of B or better, and you must provide an official transcript and evidence that the course is comparable to a graduate course in the certificate program.

## 15.5 Graduating with a Certificate

A certificate is awarded through the graduation process, like a degree:

- *Apply for graduation* for each certificate, separately from your degree. Apply in the term before the one in which you will finish the certificate's requirements. For example, if you will finish at the end of a fall term, apply during the preceding summer (Section 8.3).
- *No CTEC form* is needed for a certificate.
- *UNIV 4AA0.* After processing your application, the Graduate School registers you for the CRT section of UNIV 4AA0 (Section 8.4).

# Forms

This appendix lists the forms named in this handbook, what each is for, and when you need it. Each form name is a link. All Graduate School forms are also in the Graduate School's Graduate School forms directory.

**Table A.1** Forms for all students

| Form | Purpose | When | See |
|---|---|---|---|
| CTEC form | Names your committee or advisor of record; requests transfer credit and exceptions | Master's: term before graduating. PhD: before the general oral exam | Section 4.4 |
| Graduation application (AU Access) | Applies to graduate with a degree or certificate | Term before graduating | Section 8.3 |
| Curriculum change form (domestic, international) | Changes or adds a program, option, or certificate | When you change programs | Section 2.9 |
| Directed study approval form | Approves COMP 7930 or COMP 8930 | When you register | Section 3.8 |
| CSSE research-hours request | Registers you for COMP 7980, 7990, or 8990 | To register | Section 3.8 |
| Health insurance waiver | Opts out of the graduate student health plan, with comparable coverage | By the waiver deadline | Section 5.10 |
| Walk request | Takes part in commencement in another term | Before that commencement | Section 8.7 |
| Loan deferment form | Supports deferring student loans | As needed | Section 9.9 |
| Departure Agreement Form | Records your authorship choice and the materials you transfer when you leave a research group | Before you leave the group | Section 6.3.1 |
| Engineering Online proctor form | Approves a proctor for an online course | When a course needs a proctor | Section 3.9 |

**Table A.2** Forms for international students

| Form | Purpose | When | See |
|---|---|---|---|
| Reduced Course Load (RCL) request (Office of International Programs) | Enrolls below full time in your final term | By the 8th class day | Table 2.3 |
| ABT request (GRAD 6AA0) | Enrolls below full time while finishing a thesis or project | By the 8th class day, each term | Table 2.3 |
| IGAA statement | Documents an assistantship for an international student; issued by the Manager of Academic Programs | With a new or changed assistantship or program | Section 5.4 |
| CPT authorization (OIP) | Authorizes off-campus work or an internship | Before the work starts | Section 5.13 |
| OPT application (OIP) | Authorizes practical training related to your degree | As advised by OIP | Section 5.13 |

**Table A.3** Thesis and dissertation forms

| Form | Purpose | When | See |
|---|---|---|---|
| General oral examination request (PhD) | Requests the proposal defense | Before the examination | Section 10.5.2 |
| Dissertation First Submission Approval Form (PhD) | Starts the dissertation workflow | Calendar deadline | Table 8.1 |
| Master's Thesis Final Examination Report and ETD Publishing Approval Form | Reports the final defense and approves the thesis | Calendar deadline | Table 8.1 |
| AUETD submission | Submits the final thesis or dissertation | Calendar deadline | Section 8.5 |
| Survey of Earned Doctorates (PhD) | National survey that doctoral graduates complete | With the final ETD submission | Table 8.1 |



# Milestones and Deadlines by Program

This appendix summarizes, for each program, what you must do and when. Exact dates change every term: see the Graduate School calendar and the kinds of deadlines in Table 8.2. Every student must also keep a cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0 (Section 3.2) and clear all incomplete grades at least three weeks before graduating (Section 3.1).

## B.1 Doctor of Philosophy in Computer Science and Software Engineering (PhD-CSSE)

**First year**
Find a major professor; complete RCR training; take the core courses and earn a B or better in each (qualifying examination; complete before the general oral examination).

**Usually the second year**
Publish or submit your first paper; file the CTEC form a few weeks before the general oral examination; pass the general oral examination by the end of the second year.

**After the general oral examination**
You are a candidate (ABD); register for COMP 8990 each term (at least 24 hours in all).

**Every year**
Take part in the annual progress review.

**Before you request the final oral examination**
Meet the publication requirement.

**Term before graduating**
Apply for graduation; review the doctoral completion checklist.

**Graduation term**
First submission and format check; final oral examination; AUETD submission and Survey of Earned Doctorates, each by its calendar deadline.

See Tables 10.2 and 10.4.

## B.2 Master of Science in Computer Science and Software Engineering (MS-CSSE)

**Early**
Lay out a plan of study; take the core courses. Thesis option: find a major professor, complete RCR training, and form your committee.

**Throughout**
Complete your electives. Thesis option: complete 6 hours of COMP 7990.

**Term before graduating**
File the CTEC form; apply for graduation; review the master's completion checklist.

**Graduation term, thesis option**
Format check; final defense and report form; AUETD submission, each by its calendar deadline.

**Graduation term, non-thesis option**
No final examination.

See Table 11.5.



## B.3 Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence Engineering (MS-AIEN)

**Early**
Lay out a plan of study; take the core courses (COMP 6130, 6600, 6630) as they are offered.

**Throughout**
Complete 21 hours of approved AI electives.

**Term before graduating**
File the CTEC form with the Director of AI Engineering Programs as advisor; apply for graduation.

**Graduation term**
No final examination.

See Table 12.3.

## B.4 Master of Science in Cybersecurity Engineering (MS-CYBE)

**Early**
Lay out a plan of study; ask which electives are approved.

**Throughout**
Complete COMP 7500, the six required cybersecurity courses, 9 hours of approved electives, and the COMP 7980 capstone.

**Term before graduating**
File the CTEC form with the Director of Cybersecurity Engineering Programs as advisor; apply for graduation.

**Graduation term**
No final examination.

See Table 13.2.

## B.5 Master of Science in Data Science and Engineering (MS-DSEN)

**Early**
Lay out a plan of study.

**Throughout**
Complete the six foundational courses, 9 hours of electives (at least 6 in COMP), and the COMP 7980 capstone.

**Term before graduating**
File the CTEC form naming your advisor of record; apply for graduation.

**Graduation term**
No final examination.

See Table 14.3.

## B.6 Graduate Certificates

**Any time**
Add the certificate with a curriculum change form; you may add it retroactively.

**Term before you finish the requirements**
Apply for graduation with the certificate. No CTEC form is needed.

**Final term**
The Graduate School registers you for UNIV 4AA0 (section CRT).

See Sections 15.3 and 15.5.

# Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

**ABD (all but dissertation)** A PhD candidate who has passed the general oral examination and has only the dissertation left (Table 2.3, Section 10.5.3).

**ABM (Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's)** A program that lets CSSE undergraduates count up to nine hours toward both a bachelor's and a master's degree (Section 2.10).

**ABT (all but thesis)** The request that lets a master's student who is finishing a thesis or project enroll in GRAD 6AA0 below full time (Table 2.3).

**Advisor of record** The one-member committee of a course-based master's student, named on the CTEC form (Section 4.2).

**AU Access** Auburn's student portal, used for registration, the graduation application, and records (Section 2.3).

**AU Alert** Auburn's emergency notification system, which sends text, voice, and email alerts (Section 9.7).

**AUETD** Auburn's electronic theses and dissertations database, where the final thesis or dissertation is submitted (Section 8.5).

**AUInvolve** Auburn's directory of student organizations (Section 9.5).

**Bulletin** The Auburn University Bulletin, the official statement of degree requirements and Graduate School policy for each academic year (Section 1.4).

**Candidacy** The status a PhD student reaches after passing the general oral examination (see ABD).

**Capstone (COMP 7980)** The Capstone Engineering Project, a letter-graded project course required in the MS-CYBE and MS-DSEN programs (Section 3.8).

**CITI** The online training system used for RCR and research security training (Section 6.1).

**Committee (supervisory or advisory committee)** The faculty who guide your program and conduct your examinations (Section 4.3).

**CPT (Curricular Practical Training)** Work authorization for international students for internships and other off-campus work that is part of the curriculum (Section 5.13).

**CRT, GR1** Sections of UNIV 4AA0: CRT for certificates, GR1 for degrees (Section 8.4).

**CTEC form** The Committee, Transfers, Exceptions and Candidacy form, also called the committee selection form (Section 4.4).

**Curriculum change form** The Graduate School form for changing or adding a program, option, or certificate (Section 2.9).

**DegreeWorks** The online tool that shows your progress toward your degree requirements (Section 2.3).

**Directed study (COMP 7930, COMP 8930)** A one-on-one course in which a professor coaches you on a topic (Section 3.8).

**Director of Graduate Programs (GPO)** The faculty member who oversees the department's graduate programs (Key Contacts).

**E-Bill** Your student account bill, managed by Student Financial Services (Section 9.9).

**ETD** Electronic thesis or dissertation (Section 8.5).

**Final defense** See final oral examination.

**Final oral examination** The examination in which a PhD student defends the dissertation, or a thesis-option master's student the thesis (the comprehensive oral examination); also called the final defense. Course-based master's programs have none (Section 8.5).

**FTE (full-time equivalent)** The size of an assistantship appointment; 0.50 FTE is 20 hours a week (Section 5.5).

**GA, GRA, GTA** Graduate assistant, graduate research assistant, and graduate teaching assistant (Section 5.1).

**GCRT-AIEN, GCRT-DENG, GCRT-CYBE** The department's graduate certificates in AI Engineering, Data Engineering, and Cybersecurity Engineering (Chapter 15).

**General oral examination** The PhD proposal defense, in which you present your proposed dissertation research to your committee (Section 10.5.2).

**GND, GPR** Graduate non-degree and graduate provisional admission classifications (Section 2.1).

**GRAD 6AA0** A non-credit course that counts as a full course load for eligible ABD and ABT students (Table 2.3).

**GTUFS** The Graduate Tuition Fellowship System, which shows how many tuition-fellowship hours you have used and have left (Section 5.9).

**IGAA** The International Graduate Assistantship Award statement, issued for international graduate assistants (Section 5.4).

**Incomplete** A grade that must be removed within six months and at least three weeks before you graduate (Section 3.1).

**Major professor** Your faculty advisor, who chairs your committee (Section 4.1).

**Manager of Academic Programs** The department staff member who handles registration for research and directed-study courses and assistantship paperwork, and provides academic advising for MS-AIEN and MS-CYBE students (Key Contacts).

**OIP** The Office of International Programs (Section 9.3).

**OPT (Optional Practical Training)** Work authorization for international students for practical training related to their degree (Section 5.13).

**Qualifying examination** For the PhD, fulfilled by earning a B or better in each of COMP 7270, 7300, and 7500; there is no separate examination (Section 10.5.1).

**RCL (Reduced Course Load)** Permission from the Office of International Programs to enroll below full time (Table 2.3).

**RCR (Responsible Conduct of Research)** Required CITI training for everyone who takes part in research (Section 6.1).

**SED** The Survey of Earned Doctorates, completed by doctoral graduates (Section 8.5).

**TD** The grade normally entered for COMP 7990 and COMP 8990 research credit (Section 3.1).

**Time ticket** Your registration start time, shown in AU Access (Section 2.3).

**Tuition fellowship** Tuition support that comes with a qualifying assistantship (Section 5.9).

**UNIV 4AA0** The zero-hour graduation registration the Graduate School adds in your graduation term (Section 8.4).

**University Reader** A Graduate Faculty member from outside CSSE who evaluates a PhD dissertation and attends the final oral examination (Section 4.3).

**W, WF** Grades for a course you withdrew from: W carries no grade penalty; WF counts in the GPA as an F (Section 2.6).

# Policy and Web Source Index

This appendix lists every web page linked in this handbook, with its full address, so that printed copies remain usable.

## Auburn University Bulletin

| Resource | Full web address |
|---|---|
| Bulletin: Computer Science and Software Engineering — PhD | https://bulletin.auburn.edu/thegraduateschool/graduatedegreesoffered/computerscienceandsoftwareengineeringmswemsphd_major/computerscienceengr_phd/ |
| Bulletin: Graduate School, doctoral degrees | https://bulletin.auburn.edu/thegraduateschool/doctoraldegrees/ |
| Bulletin: Computer Science and Software Engineering — MS | https://bulletin.auburn.edu/thegraduateschool/graduatedegreesoffered/computerscienceandsoftwareengineeringmswemsphd_major/computerscienceengr_ms/ |
| Bulletin: Artificial Intelligence Engineering — MS | https://bulletin.auburn.edu/thegraduateschool/graduatedegreesoffered/aiengineering_ms/ |
| Bulletin: Data Science and Engineering — MS | https://bulletin.auburn.edu/thegraduateschool/graduatedegreesoffered/computerscienceandsoftwareengineeringmswemsphd_major/datascienceandengineering_major/ |
| Bulletin: Graduate School, master's degree program | https://bulletin.auburn.edu/thegraduateschool/themastersdegreeprogram/ |
| Bulletin: Graduate School registration (continuous enrollment, leave of absence, transfer of credit) | https://bulletin.auburn.edu/thegraduateschool/registration/ |
| Bulletin: Artificial Intelligence Engineering — Graduate Certificate | https://bulletin.auburn.edu/thegraduateschool/graduatedegreesoffered/aiengineering_gcrt/index.html |
| Bulletin: Data Engineering — Graduate Certificate | https://bulletin.auburn.edu/thegraduateschool/graduatedegreesoffered/dataengineering_gcrt/index.html |
| Bulletin: Cybersecurity Engineering — Graduate Certificate, MS | https://bulletin.auburn.edu/thegraduateschool/graduatedegreesoffered/cybersecurityengineering_ms/ |
| Auburn University Bulletin (home) | https://bulletin.auburn.edu/ |
| Bulletin: Graduate School policies | http://bulletin.auburn.edu/thegraduateschool/other/ |
| Bulletin: Graduate School academic progress (grades, academic standing, advisors, progress reviews) | https://bulletin.auburn.edu/thegraduateschool/academicprogress/ |
| Bulletin: Graduate assistantships and fellowships | https://bulletin.auburn.edu/thegraduateschool/graduateassistantshipsandfellowships/ |

| Resource | Full web address |
|---|---|
| Bulletin: tuition and fees (including the graduate assistant student services fee) | https://bulletin.auburn.edu/generalinformation/financialinformation/basicchargesrevisedmay/ |

## Auburn University Policies

| Resource | Full web address |
|---|---|
| Student Academic Honesty Code | https://auburnpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=12252&PageId=460625&Search=academic%20honesty |
| Code of Student Conduct | https://studentaffairs.auburn.edu/acsc/policies-processes/code-of-student-conduct/index.php |
| Policy Against Discrimination and Harassment | https://auburnpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=12468&PageId=461699 |
| Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy | https://auburnpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=12470&PageId=461701 |
| Student Academic Grievance Policy | https://auburnpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=12373&PageId=461564 |
| Student academic grievance: file a new grievance (Auburn sign-in) | https://auburn.edu/academic/provost/academic-grievances/students/ |
| Report a Concern (Office of Audit, Compliance and Privacy) | https://aub.ie/ReportIt |
| Student Policy eHandbook | http://www.auburn.edu/student_info/student_policies/ |
| Office of Equal Opportunity Compliance | https://auburn.edu/administration/eoc/ |
| Office of Accessibility | https://accessibility.auburn.edu/ |
| Auburn Cares medical withdrawal page | https://studentaffairs.auburn.edu/acsc/medical-withdrawals/ |
| Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) requirements | https://research.auburn.edu/research-administration/compliance/ori/rcr/index.php |
| Accessing your Auburn CITI training account | https://research.auburn.edu/research-administration/compliance/CITI-SSO.php |
| Research misconduct (Office of Research Integrity) | https://research.auburn.edu/research-administration/compliance/ori/scimisconduct.php |
| Office of Research Integrity and Compliance | https://research.auburn.edu/research-administration/compliance/index.php |
| Guidance for Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence | https://www.auburn.edu/administration/oacp/dicp/aiguidance.php |
| Laboratory Visitors Policy | https://auburnpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=12314&PageId=461422 |
| Health and Safety Considerations Policy | https://auburnpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=12519&PageId=461825 |
| Patent Policy | https://auburnpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=12580&PageId=462098 |
| Policy Governing the Creation of Copyrighted Material | https://auburnpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=12582&PageId=462101 |

| Resource | Full web address |
|---|---|
| Institutional Review Board (IRB) for research with human subjects | https://research.auburn.edu/research-administration/compliance/irb/index.php |
| Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) | https://research.auburn.edu/research-administration/compliance/iacuc/index.php |
| Policy on Credit for Directed Studies | https://auburnpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=12590&PageId=462109 |
| Graduate School Policy on Academic Integrity and Student Conduct | https://auburnpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=12309&PageId=461417 |
| Policy on Graduate Assistant Title IX and Discrimination Policy Training | https://auburnpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=12335&PageId=461450 |
| Policy on Readmission | https://auburnpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=12601&PageId=462121 |
| Withdrawal and Resignation of Enrollment Policy | https://auburnpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=12606&PageId=462126 |
| Email Policy | https://auburnpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=12430&PageId=461655 |
| Policy on the Confidentiality of Student Records (FERPA) | https://auburnpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=11858&PageId=459189 |
| Change of Major or Curriculum Policy | https://auburnpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=12553&PageId=462047 |



## Graduate School

| Resource | Full web address |
|---|---|
| Graduate School calendar (deadlines) | https://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/academic-resources/graduate-school-calendar.php |
| Graduate Student Resource Guide | https://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/academic-resources/handbook.php |
| Graduate School forms directory | https://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/academic-resources/forms-directory.php |
| Graduate School: current students | https://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/index.php |
| Graduate School: fellowships and funding | https://graduate.auburn.edu/admissions/tuition-funding/funding/index.php |
| Guidelines for Graduate Assistantships | https://graduate.auburn.edu/admissions/tuition-funding/funding/guidelines-graduate-assistantships.php |
| Graduate student health insurance | https://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/health-and-wellness/health-insurance.php |
| Graduate student health insurance waiver request | https://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/health-and-wellness/insurance-waiver.php |
| Graduate student health insurance online enrollment form | https://students.care26.com/ |
| Graduate School: health and wellness | https://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/health-and-wellness/index.php |

| Resource | Full web address |
|---|---|
| Graduate School: professional development | https://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/professional-development/index.php |
| Graduate School: programs and awards | https://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/programs-awards/index.php |
| InterConnect | https://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/interconnect/index.php |
| Loan deferment form (GRAD 7AA0/8AA0) | https://graduate.auburn.edu/_assets/pdf/grad-7aa0-8aa0-form.pdf |
| Graduate School: apply for admission | https://graduate.auburn.edu/admissions/apply.php |
| International Graduate Assistantship Award (IGAA) statement | https://gradforms.auburn.edu/AssistantshipAwardStatement.aspx |
| Human Resources: graduate assistant hiring and background checks | https://www.auburn.edu/administration/human_resources/student_employment/graduate-hiring.php |
| Committee, Transfers, Exceptions and Candidacy (CTEC) form | https://aub.ie/ctec |
| On Track for Graduation | https://aub.ie/on-track-graduation |
| Master's completion checklist | https://aub.ie/masters-checklist |
| Doctoral completion checklist | https://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/academic-resources/doctoral-checklist.php |
| Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Guide | https://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/academic-resources/etd.php |
| ETD samples and templates | https://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/academic-resources/etd-guide-samples.php |
| Graduate School new student orientation | https://graduate.auburn.edu/admissions/orientation.php |
| Airport pick-up service registration (Graduate School) | http://aub.ie/gradshuttle |
| Relocation guide for new graduate students | https://aub.ie/relocation-guide |
| Graduate School: matriculation | https://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/academic-resources/matriculation.php |
| Graduate School contact points | https://graduate.auburn.edu/about-us/staff-contacts.php |
| Graduate School advising appointments page | https://graduate.auburn.edu/current-students/academic-resources/meetings/index.php |
| Request for the Report on the General Oral Examination | https://gradforms.auburn.edu/forms/form-c.aspx |
| Doctoral Dissertation First Submission Approval Form | https://gradforms.auburn.edu/forms/DoctoralDissertationFirstSubmission.aspx |
| Master's Thesis Final Examination Report and ETD Publishing Approval Form | https://gradforms.auburn.edu/forms/MSTExamRpt.aspx |
| AUETD (Auburn University Electronic Theses and Dissertations) | https://etd.auburn.edu |
| Guidelines for Graduate Tuition Fellowships | https://graduate.auburn.edu/admissions/tuition-funding/funding/guidelines-for-graduate-tuition-fellowships.php |
| Graduate Tuition Fellowship FAQs | https://graduate.auburn.edu/admissions/tuition-funding/funding/graduate-tuition-fellowship-faq.php |

| Resource | Full web address |
|---|---|
| Graduate School: tuition and fees | https://graduate.auburn.edu/admissions/tuition-funding/tuition-fees.php |
| Curriculum change form (domestic students) | https://gradforms.auburn.edu/CurriculumChangeDomestic.aspx |
| Curriculum change form (international students) | https://gradforms.auburn.edu/CurriculumChangeIntl.aspx |
| GRAD 6AA0 thesis/non-thesis with project registration request (ABT form) | https://gradforms.auburn.edu/forms/form-abt.aspx |

## Registration and Records

| Resource | Full web address |
|---|---|
| AU Access, My Academics | https://auaccess.auburn.edu/web/auaccess-home/my-academics |
| Office of the Registrar | https://www.auburn.edu/administration/registrar/ |
| Ordering transcripts (Office of the Registrar) | https://auburn.edu/administration/registrar/transcript.php |
| Commencement walk request form | https://auburn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0PYroSWiDNirY9M |
| Registration (time tickets) schedule (Office of the Registrar) | https://www.auburn.edu/administration/registrar/secure/time_tickets/registration_sched.php |
| Tiger Scheduler | https://tigerschedule.auburn.edu/ |
| Student Business and Account Services | https://ba.auburn.edu/student-business-account-services/ |
| Student Financial Services | http://www.auburn.edu/administration/business-finance/sfs/index.html |
| Engineering Online testing services and proctor form | https://eng.auburn.edu/online/student-resources/testing-services |

## International Students

| Resource | Full web address |
|---|---|
| International student health insurance (Office of International Programs) | http://www.auburn.edu/academic/international/isss/insurance/ |
| Office of International Programs | https://www.auburn.edu/academic/international/ |
| International student orientation (Office of International Programs) | https://aub.ie/oip-orientation |
| Information for new international arrivals | https://aub.ie/oip-arrival |
| Curricular Practical Training (CPT) information | https://www.auburn.edu/academic/international/isss/cpt-info.php |
| Optional Practical Training (OPT) information | https://www.auburn.edu/academic/international/isss/opt-info.php |

| Resource | Full web address |
|---|---|
| Office of International Programs: International Student and Scholar Services | https://www.auburn.edu/academic/international/isss/ |

## Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering

| Resource | Full web address |
|---|---|
| Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering website | https://eng.auburn.edu/csse/ |
| CSSE Accelerated Bachelor's/Master's (ABM) program | https://eng.auburn.edu/csse/academics/graduate/future-graduate-students/bs-ms-program.html |
| CSSE sample plans of study (all templates) | https://aub.ie/plans-of-studies |
| Sample plan of study: PhD, entering with a bachelor's degree | https://aub.ie/plan-of-study-PhD4BS |
| Sample plan of study: PhD, entering with a master's degree | https://aub.ie/plan-of-study-PhD |
| Sample plan of study: MS-CSSE, artificial intelligence focus | https://aub.ie/plan-of-study-AI |
| Sample plan of study: MS-CSSE, data engineering focus | https://aub.ie/plan-of-study-DE |
| Sample plan of study: MS-CSSE, software engineering focus | https://aub.ie/plan-of-study-SWE |
| Sample plan of study: MS-CSSE, game development focus | https://aub.ie/plan-of-study-GAME |
| Sample plan of study: MS-AIEN | https://aub.ie/plan-of-study-AIEN |
| Sample plan of study: MS-DSEN, Data Engineering concentration | https://aub.ie/plan-of-study-DSEN |
| Sample plan of study: MS-CYBE | https://aub.ie/plan-of-study-CYBE |
| CSSE graduate course offerings | https://aub.ie/course-offerings |
| CSSE syllabus bank | https://aub.ie/syllabus-bank |
| CSSE request form for research hours and capstone (COMP 7980, 7990, 8990) | https://aub.ie/csseresearchhours |
| CSSE guideline on registering for directed study (COMP 7930/8930) | https://aub.ie/csse-directed-studies |
| Approval for Independent Study / Directed Readings form | http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/forms/ind_study.pdf |
| Sample CSSE dissertation proposal in LaTeX (Overleaf) | https://www.overleaf.com/read/cyzqxxttbtfw |
| Sample proposal-defense slides (shared folder from the Director of Graduate Programs) | https://auburn.box.com/s/g4egwy3nwio4plt7rlz587rhg35puwui |

| Resource | Full web address |
|---|---|
| Sample CSSE thesis and dissertation in LaTeX (Overleaf) | https://www.overleaf.com/read/jzstdjmwrfbf |
| Interview programming questions (shared folder from the Director of Graduate Programs) | https://auburn.box.com/s/8f9rcnv5s3qj1dnlerwt7g2g3fx2isi7 |
| Sample resumes (shared folder from the Director of Graduate Programs) | https://auburn.box.com/s/mlloortnlwab2sn7geilu6vyprkk79e8 |
| CSSE new graduate student orientation information | https://aub.ie/csse-orientation |
| CSSE new graduate student orientation slides | https://aub.ie/csse-orientation-slides |
| CSSE new graduate student orientation recording (Zoom) | https://aub.ie/csse-orientation-recording |
| CSSE faculty and research interests | https://aub.ie/csse-faculty |
| CSSE graduate programs | http://aub.ie/csse-graduate |
| CSSE Graduate Program AI Assistant (Claude) | https://aub.ie/CSSE-GPO-Claude |
| CSSE Graduate Program AI Assistant (Gemini) | https://aub.ie/CSSE-GPO-Gemini |
| Director of Graduate Programs: virtual office (Zoom) | https://auburn.zoom.us/my/xiao.qin |

## Other Resources

| Resource | Full web address |
|---|---|
| Auburn University Libraries | https://www.lib.auburn.edu/ |
| University Writing | https://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/university-writing/ |
| Miller Writing Center | https://auburn.edu/academic/provost/university-writing/miller-writing-center/ |
| University Writing: programs for graduate students | https://auburn.edu/academic/provost/university-writing/graduate-programs/ |
| Student Counseling and Psychological Services | http://www.auburn.edu/scs |
| Office of Information Technology | https://auburn.edu/oit/ |
| Biggio Center | https://biggio.auburn.edu/ |
| Off-campus housing search (Auburn University) | https://offcampushousing.auburn.edu |
| Auburn Realty | https://www.auburnrealty.com |
| First Realty | https://www.auburnrentals.com |
| Northcutt Realty | https://www.northcuttrealty.com |
| Graduate Student Council | https://auburn.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/GSC/ |
| GSC Travel Fellowship application | https://aub.ie/GSC_travel_fellowship |

| Resource | Full web address |
|---|---|
| Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) student chapter at Auburn | https://auburn.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/acm |
| Graduate student organizations (Samuel Ginn College of Engineering) | https://eng.auburn.edu/current-graduate-students/professional-development/graduate-student-organziations.html |
| AUInvolve (student organization directory) | https://auburn.campuslabs.com/engage/ |
| Auburn University Emergency Management | https://auburn.edu/administration/emergency/index.php |
| Campus Emergency Guide (action steps by emergency) | https://auburn.edu/administration/emergency/campus-emergencies/index.php |
| Alerts and notifications (AU Alert, sirens, weather radios) | https://auburn.edu/administration/emergency/emergency-notifications/index.php |
| AU Alert sign-up | https://auburn.edu/aualert |
| Campus emergency updates | https://auburn.edu/emergency/ |
| Phi Kappa Phi honor society (Auburn chapter) | https://aub.ie/phi_kappa_phi |
| Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED) | https://sed-ncses.org/ |
| Auburn University Alumni Association | https://alumni.auburn.edu/ |
| Engineering Career Development and Corporate Relations | https://eng.auburn.edu/cdcr/ |
| Graduate Student Career Guide (University Career Center) | http://aub.ie/gsg |
| Employment and wage verification (i2Verify) | https://www.auburn.edu/administration/hr/records/wage-employment-verification.php |
| Engineering internships (Career Development and Corporate Relations) | https://www.eng.auburn.edu/cdcr/undergraduate/internships |

# Revision History

This appendix records each edition and revision of the handbook. The handbook is reviewed every year (see *How This Handbook Is Maintained* in Purpose, Authority, and Scope). The version and date of this copy are in the footer of every page.

**Table E.1** Revision history

| Version | Date | Changes |
|---|---|---|
| 1.1 | November 2, 2026 | Revisions in response to faculty comments (October 2026): the PhD publication requirement for students admitted after November 2, 2026 (peer review, first authorship, predatory venues, higher standards set by advisors and committees); the CSSE Statement on Authorship (who "the major professor" is, former members' right to decline authorship, co-authors outside CSSE); and the CSSE rules on generative AI (co-authors' AI policies). Clarifications from the Director of Graduate Programs (November 2026): PhD transfer credit, research and project hours from a master's degree, equivalent core courses, online study, assistantship and fellowship limits. New Appendix G: Departure Agreement Form. Approved by the CSSE graduate faculty. |
| 1.0 | October 14, 2026 | First edition of the CSSE Graduate Student Handbook, 2026–2027: a combined handbook and one edition for each program. Created with Claude Code (Anthropic), reviewed and verified by the Director of Graduate Programs, and approved by the CSSE graduate faculty. Includes the CSSE statements on authorship and on generative AI, approved by the Graduate Programs Committee the same day. |

# Frequently Asked Questions

Each answer below is a short pointer. The section cited gives the full rule and its source.

## Enrollment and registration

**Where do I find orientation information?**
See Section 2.2, which also has a first-term checklist.

**How do I register for courses?**
In AU Access, when your time ticket opens (Section 2.3).

**How many hours must I take each term?**
It depends on whether you are an international student or a graduate assistant (Section 2.4).

**Can I take online courses?**
Yes, with approval; international students may count at most three online hours toward full time (Section 3.9).

**Can I take a term off?**
Domestic students may skip one of the three terms each year without a leave of absence; international students may take off only a summer. Check your assistantship or aid first (Sections 2.5 and 2.7).

**How do I withdraw for medical reasons?**
Contact Auburn Cares first (Section 2.6).

**How do I drop or withdraw from a course?**
See the drop and withdrawal deadlines and their effects (Section 2.6).

**How do I change or add a program, option, or certificate?**
File a curriculum change form (Section 2.9).

## Courses and grades

**Does a C count toward my degree?**
Yes, but your cumulative GPA must be at least 3.0 (Sections 3.1 and 3.2).

**What if I fail a course?**
A required course must be repeated; an elective may be replaced (Section 3.3).

**Does retaking a course raise my GPA?**
It can, but both the original and the new grade count in your GPA (Section 3.2).

**How much credit can I transfer?**
Usually up to 15 hours for a master's degree (16 in the MS-CSSE non-thesis option and the

MS-CYBE); for the PhD, up to 30 hours, and from another institution less than half of the hours on your plan of study (Section 3.5).

**I took the 5000-level version of a required 6000-level course. Now what?**
Take a substitute course and record it on your CTEC form (Section 3.6).

**What is the difference between COMP 7930, 7980, 7990, and 8990?**
See Table 3.3.

**Do I need an official plan of study?**
No, but you should make one with your advisor (Section 3.7).

## Advising, committees, and examinations

**Can I choose my own major professor?**
Yes (Section 4.1).

**Whom do I list as advisor on the CTEC form?**
See Table 4.1 for course-based master's programs; otherwise your major professor (Section 4.4).

**Can an outside member serve on my committee?**
Yes, as an additional member (Table 4.2).

**How do I schedule my proposal defense (general oral examination)?**
Follow the steps in Section 10.5.2.

**What is the PhD publication requirement?**
If you were admitted after November 2, 2026: two published peer-reviewed papers, or one published and one submitted to a peer-reviewed journal, as first author and not in predatory venues. If you were admitted earlier: the requirement in effect at your admission. Either way, meet it before you request the final oral examination (Section 6.3).

**Do course-based master's programs have a final examination?**
No (Section 8.5).

## Assistantships and money

**How do I get a teaching assistantship?**
Assistantships are competitive; current students are nominated by their major professor (Section 5.2).

**How many hours does my tuition fellowship cover?**
Up to 110% of the hours your degree requires (Section 5.9).

**Can non-thesis master's students receive a tuition fellowship?**
No (Section 5.2).

**Can distance students receive an assistantship or a tuition fellowship?**
No (Section 5.2).

**Does my tuition fellowship cover online courses?**
No (Section 3.9).

**Who can explain a charge on my E-Bill?**
The office that issued it (Table 9.4).

**How do I do a summer internship as an international student?**
Obtain CPT and register as required (Section 5.13).

## Graduation

**How do I apply for graduation?**
File the CTEC form (master's), then the graduation application, the term before you graduate (Sections 8.2 and 8.3).

**What if I do not finish in the term I applied for?**
Your application moves to the next term automatically (Section 8.3).

**How do I earn a graduate certificate?**
Add it, then apply for graduation with it (Chapter 15).

**When will I receive my diploma?**
Generally 9 to 10 weeks after graduation, by mail (Section 8.7).

**Where do I find thesis and dissertation templates?**
See Section 8.5.

## Getting help

**Whom do I ask about a department question?**
See Table 9.1 and Key Contacts.

**How will I be warned about an emergency or severe weather?**
Sign up for AU Alert (Section 9.7).

**Which student organizations should I know about?**
The Graduate Student Council and the CSSE ACM chapter (Section 9.5).

**Do PhD students have to attend a seminar series?**
No (Section 10.3).

**Where do I take a concern or complaint?**
See Table 7.1.

**Is it safe to work late in a lab?**
Follow the safety advice in Section 6.5.

# Departure Agreement Form

Complete this form before you leave a research group (Section 6.3.1, item 6). You and your major professor both sign it, and a signed copy goes in your departmental file.

### 1. Student and departure

**Student's name** _____ **Departure date** _____

**Degree program** _____ **Major professor** _____

**Research group** _____ **Email after you leave** _____

### 2. Research materials being transferred

List your dissertation or thesis work and any other research materials you are transferring to your major professor or research group, such as data, code, drafts, and notebooks.

_____

_____

### 3. Authorship of publications based on this research

Choose one option.

- ☐ **Option (a).** I agree to be listed as an author on papers from the project that use my contributions, and I authorize my major professor to prepare and submit those papers. I may still decline a particular paper in writing before it is submitted; my major professor will send me the manuscript at least 7 days before submission.
- ☐ **Option (b).** I do not want to be listed as an author on future papers from the project. My contribution may be acknowledged instead: ☐ yes ☐ no.

### 4. Data, code, and intellectual property

I understand that the materials listed above remain available to the research group after I leave; that I must continue to follow any data-use, confidentiality, or sponsor restrictions that apply to them; and that ownership of inventions and creative works from this research is governed by the University's Patent Policy and Policy Governing the Creation of Copyrighted Material.

### 5. Signatures

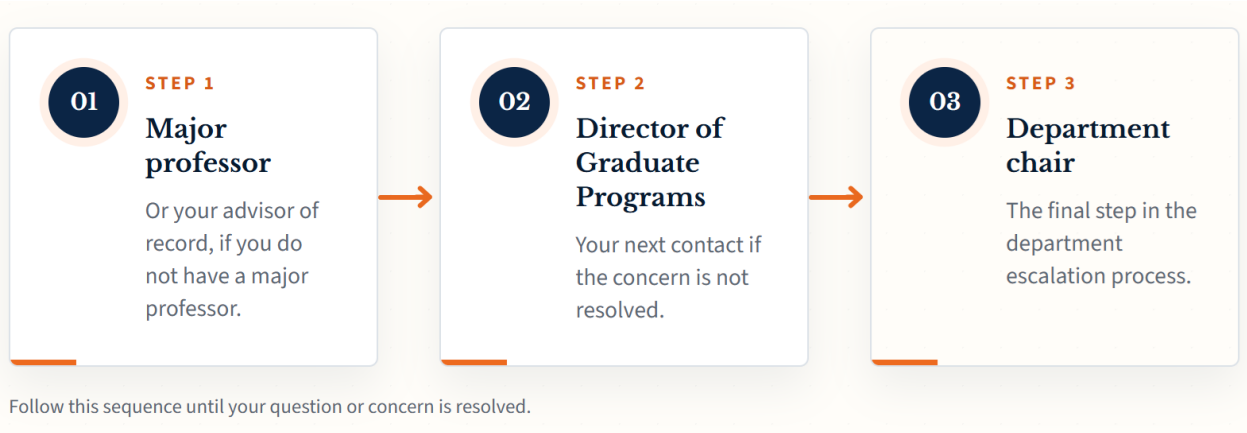
**Student** _____ **Date** _____

**Major professor** _____ **Date** _____

CSSE GRADUATE PROGRAMS

# Questions or concerns?

When you have a question or a concern, work through these steps in order. Contact details are on the Key Contacts page at the front of this handbook.




AUBURN UNIVERSITY
Samuel Ginn College of Engineering

CSSE Graduate Student Handbook
2026–2027 Edition
Version 1.1, November 2, 2026

## Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering

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