THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE KNOXVILLE

Online Master's of Computer Science

Admissions Frequently Asked Questions

https://tiny.utk.edu/mscs_faq_admissions

Q: Do you have a checklist of things I should know before taking your online courses?
A: Yes! Click here for a checklist. You do not need to know everything listed here, but you should have been exposed to most of it. If you find yourself looking up all of the topics, you are probably not prepared for our courses.

Q: Can I apply if I don't qualify or if I don't have a CS background?
A: Yes! You will be required to take the prerequisite courses below before you start taking graduate-level courses. They are intended to prepare you to do well in graduate-level CS courses. See Online MSCS Spin-up Courses for more information. **NOTE:** You cannot be admitted for the summer semester if you need spin-up courses. They are only offered in the fall and spring semesters.

Q: What are the GPA requirements?
A: Students who have attended a US institution must have at least a 3.0 GPA (below a 3.0 but above a 2.7 GPA requires letters of recommendation). Students who have attended an international institution must have at least a 3.3 GPA (below a 3.3 GPA but above a 3.0 GPA requires letters of recommendation).

Q: Should I take the GRE?
A: No. We do not require your GRE scores, and even if you submit your GRE scores, we do not consider them.

Q: Do I need letters of recommendation?
A: Only if your GPA is low or you want to use work experience to qualify for your computer science background. Your letters of recommendation MUST document your CS acumen! We get a lot of generic "he or she is a good person", but we need to know you can succeed in a graduate program.

Q: If I request letters of recommendation, what should I ask to be in them?
A: The letter of recommendation must document your CS acumen. General statements do not help us determine if you are a good candidate for our degree program.

Q: What should I put in my personal statement?

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A: You should put information about yourself and your goals. This helps us understand who you are as a person.

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Concentrations Frequently Asked Questions

https://tiny.utk.edu/mscs_faq_concentrations

Q: Do I have to have a concentration or can I have more than one concentration?
A: Students must have exactly one (1) concentration. There is no option to have multiple concentrations or no concentration at all.

Q: Can I change my concentration?
A: Yes. You will need to file a change of program form with the graduate school. This goes through the same process as admissions. There is no fee to change concentrations only. However, if you change majors, you will be required to pay a $30 fee.

Q: Can I switch to the in-person program?
A: Yes. You will need to file a change of program form with the graduate school. **WARNING**: the online and in-person programs have different graduate requirements!

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Online vs. In-Person Frequently Asked Questions

https://tiny.utk.edu/mscs_faq_inperson

Q: When should I choose online over in-person?
A:

- Online requires you to choose one of three concentrations. If you are not interested in a concentration, you must select the in-person option.
- Online is designed around working professionals. The class sessions are held at 1800 - 2000 (eastern).
- Online only has a course-only option. If you are interested in a research track, such as a project or a thesis, you must choose in-person.
- Assistantships are not currently available for the online program. If you are interested in a research assistant or teaching assistant position, those are only available in-person.
- Graduate courses taken at UTK will count towards the online or in-person requirements.
    - If you change from online to in-person, the online courses you took will count for the in-person program, and vice versa.
- WARNING: In-person requirements are completely different from the online requirements.

Favor Online	Favor In-person
• You are working full-time. • You prefer evening class times. • You need the flexibility offered by the online program. • You would like to control the speed of your degree by taking more or fewer courses per semester. • You would like to have a concentration in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence/machine learning, or software engineering.	• You can come to campus. • You would like to have a research or teaching assistantship. • You would like a research track option, such as a project or a thesis. • You prefer morning or afternoon class times. • You prefer a vanilla CS degree (without a concentration).

NOTE: These are just recommendations for the typical student. If you have special considerations, please let your advisor know.

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Courses Frequently Asked Questions

https://tiny.utk.edu/mscs_faq_courses

Q: How can I plan my degree from start to finish?
A: We recommend you use our degree planner (Online MSCS Degree Planner) and review the online MSCS schedules Online MSCS Course Schedules

Q: How do I register for courses?
A: Please see https://onestop.utk.edu/registration-records/class-registration/

Q: I see more courses listed on MyUTK than the Online MSCS schedule, why?
A: MyUTK shows both online and in-person courses.

Q: I see an online course, but I get an error message about my campus code.
A: Even if a course is offered online, it may be for in-person students only. This is because MyUTK enforces a "campus code". Online students are KPV whereas in-person students are K.

Q: I need to take a break from a semester. What are the consequences?
A: Students must register for fall and spring semesters, but the summer is optional. If students miss a fall or spring semester, they are automatically withdrawn from the program. Students who are withdrawn from the program must reapply.

Q: I see words like PLANNING or DRAFT on the online schedule. What do these mean?
A: Please see our course legend that describes these words.

Q: Can I retake a course?
A: Up to two courses may be repeated in an entire degree program. Only D or F may be repeated. Retaking a course does not override the grade, and the original grade is calculated in your GPA.

Q: Can I withdraw with a "W"?
A: Each semester has deadlines associated with withdrawing from a course with a "W", you will need to withdraw via MyUTK before that deadline. Withdrawing earlier in a semester may result in you getting back more of the tuition/fees you paid to take the class.

Q: How do I withdraw from a course?
A: If the course is the only course you're taking, you have to do a "total withdrawal" even in the summer semester. MyUTK will let you withdraw from all but one course. (See https://onestop.utk.edu/registration-records/withdraw-or-leave/ for more information).

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Courses Frequently Asked Questions

https://tiny.utk.edu/mscs_faq_courses

Q: Should I take a low grade or withdraw from a course I'm having trouble with?
A: Students must maintain a cumulative 3.0 GPA to remain enrolled in our program. If a student goes below a cumulative 3.0, he or she will be placed on academic probation. If you are on academic probation for more than one semester, you will be dropped from the program.

Q: The catalog description of a course is not very helpful. Is there a place I can go to look up information about a course?
A: Yes! We regularly update information about our courses here: Course Information (you must log-in using your UT NetID and password). New courses or courses not taught frequently might not be included in this list.

Q: Where do I go to get information about a course I'm taking, including assignments and the syllabus?
A: All online courses use Canvas: https://utk.instructure.com

Q: How do I register for the spin-up (background) courses?
A: Same way you register for your normal courses. See https://courses.stephenmarz.com/mscs#spinup for more information.

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Graduation Frequently Asked Questions

https://tiny.utk.edu/mscs_faq_graduation

Q: What forms do I have to complete in order to graduate?
A: You must apply to graduate via MyUTK and you must submit an admission to candidacy form.

Q: When do I have to submit my admission to candidacy form?
A: Due dates are listed here: Due Dates

Q: I already submitted my admission to candidacy form, but I need to make changes.
A: Changes require a revised admission to candidacy form documenting courses you dropped or added. Revision to Admission to Candidacy

Q: I withdrew from a course, but I applied for graduation and submitted my admission to candidacy form. What should I do?
A: Your graduation will be cancelled by the graduation specialists. You will need to reapply for graduation in your new graduation semester. You will also need to submit a revised admission to candidacy form.

Q: The name of a course I took changed names. Will this course still count?
A: Yes. The number is what's important. If the name changes, but the number doesn't, it's the same course. We rename courses to give better context to what they teach.

Q: I want to graduate in the XX semester, but I need another core or focus area courses. Can one be substituted?
A: No. The requirements are fairly strict, and there are no substitutions. Students should be careful and use our degree planner to make sure this doesn't happen.

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Graduation Frequently Asked Questions

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Commencement Ceremony

Q: What Master's hood color should I wear for the commencement ceremony?
A: Gold

Q: Are there honors cords for high-GPA students?
A: No. Unlike undergraduates, MS graduates do not have distinction cords.

Q: What regalia should I buy, and where can I buy it?
A: You will need to purchase two things from the UT Volshop:

1. UT Masters Gown Package: https://www.utvolshop.com/UT-Masters-Gown-Package
2. UT Masters Hood (Gold): https://www.utvolshop.com/UT-Masters-Hood

Q: Where can I get more information about the commencement ceremony?
A: The department does not coordinate the commencement ceremony, and we lack a lot of information about its procedures. Instead, coordination is done by UT. See https://commencement.utk.edu for more information. Email commencement@utk.edu for any questions about the ceremony.

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International Frequently Asked Questions

https://tiny.utk.edu/mscs_faq_international

Q: Where can I get information about visas or other international affairs?
A: Division for Global Engagement: https://global.utk.edu

Q: Can I take online classes in a different country?
A: Yes! The only difference is that all times will be listed as Eastern, so you will need to make the time zone conversion.

Q: Do I need to attend the live sessions even if I'm out of the country?
A: Mostly, yes. However, if there are extenuating circumstances, contact your professor to see if anything can be worked out.