

Computer Science Professional Science Masters Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the prerequisites to enter the program?

Three classes: CS 258 Computer Science III, CS 336 Networking I, and CS 360 Databases

Note however that CS 258 has two prerequisites CS 200 and CS 257. Industry experience can sometimes substitute for these. Check with the professor offering the class if you are unsure whether your background is sufficient.

2. Degrees from India are three years in length. Will these degrees be recognized for admission to the CS program?

Yes, if they are evaluated to be equivalent to a Bachelor's degree. You can have your degree evaluated from any of the NACES members (www.naces.org) but we generally recommend AACRAO (www.aacrao.org) or WES(www.wes.org).

3. To obtain visa documents from the US embassy, I need to show a letter of conditional admittance. Does your University provide conditional admissions?

If you fill out the graduate application, forward your transcripts, send three letters of recommendation, and write a short essay of your goals, we can issue conditional acceptance pending acceptable TOEFL and GRE scores.

4. Do the graduate only classes need to be all from the major department?

Yes, they must all be either CS 581, CS 582, or CS 583; at least one from each.

5. What are the eight credits of problem solving classes?

These will eventually be Mathematics-based classes designed for the SOU PSM programs in various disciplines. CS 515 is available now for you to satisfy this requirement. It is a topics class that can be taken for repeat credit. Systems analysis will also satisfy problem solving credit as long as you didn't take it as an undergraduate.

6. What is the research class?

In the future, SOU will create a class where students of different backgrounds collaborate to solve an interdisciplinary problem. For now, you will register for CS 501. You, with your advisor's help, will design a single term project. At the end of the term, you will create a research paper that will subsequently be available to your defense committee.

7. How do I register for the research class?

The project course number is CS 501. You will fill out an Irregular Registration form with your advisor. It should describe the internship or the research, specify well-defined deliverables, and list resources used. These could be software tools, books, manuals, etc. Your advisor, the

department chair, and the dean must sign this form. After you get all appropriate signatures, complete the process by taking the completed form to the registrar.

8. What if there are not enough CS graduate only classes offered?

In this case, we will consider some of the split classes as graduate only. For example, CS 515 is considered graduate only in Fall 2010. However, it cannot satisfy both the graduate only and problem solving requirements.

9. Which classes can students be pass/no?

The internship (CS 509) is the only class that can be pass/no pass.

10. Which 400/500 level classes can graduate students take?

Graduate students can take any of the 400/500 classes that they didn't take as an undergraduate student.

11. How do I find an internship?

We will provide a list of local employers that provide internships. You will need to contact them and arrange an interview. Internships from non-local companies are also possible. In the case where it is not possible to find an internship, you can do a research project. However this route should only be taken in rare cases. You should begin thinking about your internship as early in your degree program as possible.

12. How does internship hours map to credit hours?

Three hours per week maps to one credit.

13. Can I satisfy my internship working for my current employer?

Yes, but the internship related work needs to be well-defined with measurable deliverables.

14. When can I register for the internship?

Before you can register for the internship, you must have an advising committee in place, have a sponsoring company, and approval by your committee. You must also complete your mid-term evaluation before registration.

15. How do I register for the internship?

It is done using the irregular registration form. The course number is CS 509 Practicum. On this form, make sure to include a general description of the practicum, well-defined deliverables, and the software packages and documentation that you will be working with. You also need a letter from the company describing the internship. During the internship, we will need bi-weekly status reports from your supervisor.

16. Can the internship be completed in a single quarter?

Yes, but it is not generally recommended. It would require at least 24 hours per week.

17. What is the makeup of a graduate student's committee of advisors?

The student chooses who serves on this committee. Two advisors must come from Computer Science faculty, one of which is your principle advisor. The third advisor comes from the business/management component of the course of study and must be a professor from which you have taken at least one graduate level class. A fourth advisor is the student's internship supervisor, who is a non-voting member.

18. Can a graduate student's committee have additional advisors?

An additional community advisor is optional, but should be closely familiar with the student's project. This advisor participates in the evaluation process, but does not vote or attend the meeting to vote on whether the student's defense is acceptable. All advisors, including the community advisor, sign the thesis page.

19. How do I schedule my defense?

After completing the research class and the internship, send the research paper resulting from the research class and the report from your internship to your defense committee. Your advisor will help you to schedule a date for your defense.

20. What should I do to prepare for my defense?

Review your research and internship work. Your advisor will also give you a heads up of additional material from which questions can originate; they can relate to the graduate courses that you completed.

21. What is the format for the oral defense?

There is a public and a private part. The student will first give public presentation describing the internship and may also include the student's research paper. Computer Science students can attend this presentation, which will be between forty-five minutes and an hour long. Following the presentation, there will be a fifteen minute break. A comprehensive oral exam follows and this could be another hour or more in length. The oral exam will be a private session between the student and his advisors. The questions might, and usually do, go beyond the project and thesis, and relate to the student's coursework. Following the defense, the advisors meet to determine if the student's defense is acceptable, or if more work must be done.

22. Is the defense restricted to questions about the internship?

No. Defense questions normally focus more on the internship and your research paper. However, it is customary that at least twenty percent of the questions will relate to any topic covered in the

student's coursework.

23. Can I switch from an oral defense to a written exam? What is the procedure?

The PSM requires a public oral defense.

24. Does the graduate representative need to sign the project approval page?

No! The School Area Masters Handbook is incorrect.

25. Where do we get the report of the examining committee?

The graduate representative brings the report to the oral exam, and returns it to the dean's office. All committee members and the graduate representative sign this form.

26. How do I qualify to be a graduate assistant?

Graduate assistants are awarded as they are available. They normally awarded by seniority to full time graduate students. In other words, students who have been in the program the longest will have preference as long as their grades are satisfactory. In case of equal seniority, assistantships will be awarded to the students that the department considers to be the most deserving.

27. How do I apply for an assistantship?

Make your interest known to the graduate coordinator and e-mail your resume to him. A student can be a graduate assistant for a maximum of three terms.

28. What are the graduate assistant responsibilities?

Graduate assistants must provide six hours per week of CS department related work for 80% tuition remission plus a stipend. The graduate coordinator and graduate assistants mutually agree on the times when this work is to be done. For 100% tuition remission, students must provide twenty hours per week of department related work. Graduate assistants must leave flexibility in their schedule so an agreeable work schedule is possible. Graduate assistants must also attend, and be on time, to all meetings called for by the graduate coordinator. This will normally be one meeting sometime during the first week of each quarter.

29. What is the procedure for establishing graduate assistant contracts?

After the graduate assistant agrees to the work schedule to assist the department, the graduate coordinator fills out the necessary paperwork. The first time that a student becomes graduate assistant, they need to go to the payroll department and fill out the necessary forms. This process requires a valid id and driver's license. Graduate assistants should also have a resume on file in the School of Science.

Graduate assistants should monitor their SOU e-mail account for notice that their contract is ready. When it is, they need to sign it and return it to the appropriate department.

SOU pays graduate students once per month. The first paycheck will be at the end of October.

30. How many quarters can a graduate student be a graduate assistant?

Normally, there is a three quarter limit. The department can hire a graduate student separately for additional quarters if funds allow.

31. Is the graduate assistant tuition remission or the stipend taxable?

The tuition remission is not taxable. The stipend is taxable. The graduate assistant will receive a w-2 at the end of the year.

32. Are there limitations on the number of credits that graduate assistants can take?

Graduate assistants must enroll for at least nine credits to satisfy the full time requirement. They must successfully complete all courses for which they are enrolled. It is not advisable for graduate assistants to enroll for more than twelve credits.

33. Can graduate assistants drop a class?

Graduate assistants may NOT get any incompletes or withdraw from their classes. They must also get a grade of B or better in each class to remain a graduate assistant.

34. What are the benefits of being a graduate assistant?

The work experience gained through being a graduate assistant can be a valuable asset when looking for a job.

35. Can graduate students teach as an adjunct instructor?

Occasionally, we have needs for adjunct instructors. Graduate students can be considered for these positions. The department chair makes these decisions.

36. What happens if I get a grade under a C?

If a student takes a course for which a grade is earned that is lower than a C, that course will not count for graduate credit. The student must retake the class if it was on his/her program plan.

37. How do I change my graduate advisor?

Make sure that your new advisor is up to speed and accepts your internship and degree plan. The new advisor and committee members must re-sign the forms associated with the Program Plan and the Mid-Term Evaluation. Submit copies of the re-signed documents to the Computer Science department coordinator before submitting to the dean.

38. What is the department policy concerning incomplete grades for internship and research courses?

The principle advisor must give a letter grade before the students can enroll again for either CS

501 or CS 509. This policy forces students, with help from faculty, to break up their project or thesis into manageable pieces; our experience shows that this policy leads to faster progress.

39. How do I get off of probation status?

Students on probation status have twelve credits to raise their grade point average to 3.00. If this is not possible, it will take special permission from the dean to prevent the student from being dropped from the program. Students cannot graduate with a grade point average under 3.00.