

GENERAL DEGREE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Winter Enrichment Program

Satisfactory participation in KAUST's Winter Enrichment Period (WEP) is mandatory. WEP courses do not earn credit towards the degree.

Cumulative Grade Point Average

A minimum GPA of 3.0 must be achieved in all coursework. Individual courses require a minimum of a B- for course credit.

Transferring Credits

A student may petition to transfer graduate credits from another university, upon approval of the program. The curriculum committee in consultation with the admissions committee has final authority to approve or deny the petition. The following rules apply:

- Credits in courses with grades below B⁺ will not be transferred.
- Each student's application will be reviewed by the curriculum committee and on a case-by-case basis.
- Up to two courses not to exceed six credits may be transferred for M.S. credit. Up to six courses not to exceed a total of 18 credits may be transferred for Ph.D. credit.
- Transfer of credits will not be considered if the credits were earned more than two years prior to admission to KAUST.

Course Transfer and Equivalency

Graduate credit hours taken from any KAUST program may be applied to other KAUST graduate programs under the guidelines of the degree program for which the student is admitted. Graduate courses taken from another university or KAUST program that are equivalent in level and content to the designated courses in a major track may be counted toward meeting the major track requirement if their equivalence is confirmed by the program chair.

Policy for Adding and Dropping Courses

A course may be added during the first week of the semester. Students may add courses after the first week with the permission of the instructor. Instructors have the right to refuse admission to a student if the instructor feels that the student will not have the time to sufficiently master the material due to adding the course late. A course may be dropped without penalty at any time during the first two weeks of the semester. Between the second and eighth week, students can drop a course but the course will appear on the student's transcript with the grade of "W" (withdraw). After the eighth week of a full semester, courses may be dropped only under exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Course Instructor, the Program Chair and the Registrar.

Program Planning

It is the sole responsibility of the student to plan her/his graduate program in consultation with her/his advisor. Students are required to meet all deadlines. Students should be aware that most core courses are offered only once per year.

Program Descriptions

The Master's and Doctoral degree program requirements listed below represent general university-level expectations. The specific details of each degree requirements are outlined in the descriptions of the individual degree programs.

MASTER'S PROGRAM DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Admissions

Admission to the M.S. program requires the satisfactory completion of an undergraduate B.S. degree in a relevant or related area, such as Engineering, Mathematics or the Physical, Chemical and Biological Sciences.

General Degree Requirements

The M.S. degree at KAUST is a 36-credit program that is designed such that most students who enter the program with suitable prior training will finish in three semesters plus the intervening summer. Degree requirements are divided into three sections: (1) Core Curriculum; (2) Elective Curriculum; and (3) Research/Capstone Experience.

- (1) Core Curriculum (9-15 credits): This portion of the degree program is designed to provide a student with the background needed to establish a solid foundation in the discipline over and above undergraduate studies.
- (2) Elective Curriculum (9-15 credits): This portion of the degree program is designed to allow each student to tailor his/her educational experience to meet individual research and educational objectives. Depending upon the program and the objectives, this may be met by added coursework or by additional research experience.
- (3) Research/Capstone Experience (12 credits): The details of this portion of the degree program are also uniquely determined by the student and his/her advisor and will involve a combination of research and other capstone experiences that build on the knowledge gained in coursework.

At least thirty-six (36) degree credits must be completed in graduate-level courses and research projects. These courses should be 200-level or above and must be approved by the program advisor.

Thesis Requirements

Thesis: The M.S. thesis reports on original research conducted under the supervision an affiliated faculty member within the chosen degree program. A list

of affiliated faculty for each degree program can be found at <http://www.kaust.edu.sa/academics/faculty-affiliations.html>. Thesis format requirements are described in the KAUST Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines (<http://libguides.kaust.edu.sa/theses>).

Committee: Each student must form a thesis committee, which is tasked with reading and evaluating the results of the thesis research. In addition to the faculty member supervising the research, who will be the committee chair, the committee must have at least two additional members. The choice of those members should be made in consultation with the student's supervisor. Committee members need not be from within the student's degree program, but at least two of the three members must be full-time KAUST faculty members. Once a committee has been proposed, the student is required to complete the Thesis Committee Form and submit it to the Program Chair and Dean for approval. At the discretion of the degree program, students may be required to present a public seminar discussing their research as part of the evaluation process. For a list of eligible faculty advisors, see: <http://www.kaust.edu.sa/academics/faculty-affiliations.html>.

Students may select a KAUST faculty member from another program to act as a research advisor (for either thesis or directed research), but must provide a one-page description of the research and an explanation of how such research would be relevant to the degree program. Upon approval by the program and the Dean, the faculty member would be allowed to act as an affiliated faculty member and advisor for the student.

DOCTORAL PROGRAM DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Admissions

Ph.D. students apply for and enter a specific degree program. A faculty advisor is either immediately designated (in the case of a student being recruited by a specific faculty member) or temporarily assigned; in the latter case, the student is expected to identify a research advisor by (at the latest) the end of the first year. There are two phases and associated milestones for PhD students: (i) a qualification phase with a candidacy milestone and (ii) a dissertation phase with a final defense milestone.

General Degree Requirements

Qualification and advancement to candidacy are contingent upon: (i) successfully passing Ph.D. coursework, (ii) designating a research advisor, and (iii) writing and orally defending a research proposal. Individual degree programs may, at their discretion, also require a comprehensive examination (probing coursework and knowledge of other relevant subject areas). Possible outcomes include pass, failure with complete retake, failures with partial retake, and failure with no retake. The maximum allotted time for advancement to candidacy for a student

entering with an MS degree is two years; three years for the B.S. degree entry option.

Coursework

A minimum of six credit hours of Ph.D. coursework at KAUST (300- or 400-level) is required (*not including Directed Research*) beyond the MS degree. For students who enter with a B.S. degree, 30 additional credit hours are required, equivalent to MS degree coursework and can include a thesis. However, individual degree programs may, at their discretion, require a higher number of credit hours (*including Directed Research*).

Some degree programs may require a diagnostic entrance exam as a basis for admission, and students may be required to complete additional coursework depending on their degree-granting institution. If the M.S. degree is from a subject other than the Ph.D. degree program, there may be additional courses required and specified by the advisor.

Dissertation Research Credits

Besides coursework (6 or more credit hours), 60 credits of dissertation research (Course Code: 397) must be earned during the first (proposal preparation and defense) and second phases of the Ph.D. program. A full-time workload for PhD students is considered to be 12 credit hours per semester (courses and 397) and 6 credit hours in summer (397 only). There is a minimum residency requirement (enrollment period at KAUST) of 2.5 years for students entering with an M.S. degree, 3.5 years for students entering with a B.S. degree. The maximum enrollment period is 5.0 years, extendable upon approval of both the faculty research advisor and the division dean.

Candidacy

Achieving Ph.D. candidacy is contingent upon successfully passing a qualification examination, generally consisting of acceptance by the research advisor of a written research proposal and successfully passing an oral examination. Details should be confirmed in the individual degree program material. For a list of eligible faculty advisors for any degree program see: <http://www.kaust.edu.sa/academics/faculty-affiliations.html>. Passing the qualification phase is achieved by acceptance of all committee members of the written proposal and a positive vote of all but, at most, one member of the oral exam committee. If more than one member casts a negative vote, one retake of the oral defense is permitted if the entire committee agrees. A conditional pass involves conditions (e.g., another course in a perceived area of weakness) imposed by the committee, with the conditional status removed when those conditions have been met. Once constituted, the composition of the qualification phase committee can only be changed upon approval by both the faculty research advisor and the division dean.

Dissertation and Dissertation Defense

The final (dissertation) phase of the Ph.D. program involves submission, acceptance and an oral defense of the written dissertation. The thesis format requirements are described in the KAUST Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines (<http://libguides.kaust.edu.sa/theses>).

The result of the defense will be made based on the recommendation of the committee. There are four possible results: (1) Pass: the student passes the exam and the dissertation is accepted as submitted; (2) Pass with revisions: the student passes the exam and the student is advised of the revisions that must be made to the text of the dissertation; (3) Failure with retake: normally this means the student must do more research to complete the dissertation. The student must revise the dissertation and give another oral examination within six months from the date of the first defense; and (4) Failure: the student does not pass the exam, the dissertation is not accepted, and the degree is not awarded.