



CEE Graduate Studies Policy

(Effective August 2020)

Mississippi State University's Bagley College of Engineering offers programs of study leading to Masters and Doctoral degrees in Civil Engineering through the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering (CEE) with specializations in the following areas:

- Construction Engineering and Management
- Construction Materials Engineering
- Environmental Engineering
- Geotechnical Engineering
- Structural Engineering
- Transportation Engineering
- Water Resources Engineering

The basic requirements for graduate studies and degrees are established by Mississippi State University (MSU) and are found in the Graduate Bulletin. Additional requirements and procedures established by the CEE Faculty are described below. Where there is a conflict, the Bulletin takes precedence.

For further information on programs and courses offered through CEE, see the departmental web site:

<http://www.cee.msstate.edu>

or email the Graduate Coordinator:

CEE-Grad-Coord@lists.msstate.edu

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APPLICATION PROCESS

The Office of the Graduate School (OGS) is responsible for the application process for all academic departments at MSU. The application form and required documentation can be found on their website (www.grad.msstate.edu). In the upper right-hand corner is an “Apply Online Now” button. In general applicants should submit the following materials (subject to change) and other forms may be required by the OGS and the CEE:

- Statement of purpose—describing why the applicant wishes to undertake graduate study, what area they are most interested in pursuing, and any faculty they are most interested in working with.
- Official transcripts—from all schools attended.
- Letters of recommendation (3)—it is preferred that two of the three come from academic references.
- GRE scores —required for all applicants who do not have an EAC/ABET-accredited civil, construction or environmental engineering degree.
- English test scores (TOEFL or IELTS) — required for all applicants who do not have a degree obtained from a US institutions, or from an institution in a country where English is the first language, or one which certifies English as the instructional language.

Because MSU uses centralized processing of graduate application, all questions pertaining to the application process and all application materials should be directed to the OGS. The CEE has been assigned a point of contact for admissions to assist applicants with such questions.

Prospective students can check the status of their application at any time by logging into the system.

The OGS notifies applicants of admission decisions, not the CEE or the CEE Graduate Coordinator. Therefore, direct all questions regarding decision notifications to the OGS as CEE or Graduate Coordinator cannot and will not release that information.

Admission decisions are made independently of funding decisions. Therefore, admission to the program does not mean funding is available or will be offered.

REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS

Applications for the on-campus Master of Science (M.S.) in Civil Engineering degree program, and all campuses for the Doctor of Philosophy in Engineering with a Civil Engineering Concentration (Ph.D.) degree program are reviewed three times a year, as listed in the following table:

| Beginning Semester | Deadline |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Fall | March 15 |
| Spring | September 15 |
| Summer | January 15 |

Applications for the off-campus M.S. in Civil Engineering degree program may be considered for review up to two months after the above deadlines.

Note - These deadlines differ from university published deadlines and are specific to the CEE to provide timely feedback on application status and appropriate resource allocation.

The OGS will provide all complete, submitted applications to the Department for review. Applicants should allow a minimum of two weeks for processing of their materials. As such, applicants should plan accordingly to have their application reviewed in sufficient time to attend in their desired semester. Any applications not received by the Department from the OGS by these dates are automatically reviewed in the next cycle. The CEE review process will take about two weeks. Notification of admission decisions from the OGS may add a week to this.

ADMISSION

Applicants are admitted to graduate study in the CEE upon approval of the OGS, the Departmental Graduate Coordinator, and the Department's Graduate Faculty. Admission is based on the criteria listed below.

Admission requires that the applicant be accepted by a faculty member in their sub-discipline area who is willing to serve as their major professor. Applicants are encouraged contact appropriate faculty after completion of the application.

There is not a minimum required GRE score for admission as the admission decision is not based on any one single factor. However, the score should be competitive and successful applicants to the CEE graduate program typically have a GRE score of 157 or higher on the Quantitative Reasoning section of the exam. (Note: GRE test scores are only valid for five years.)

Regular Admission Requirements

Degree Requirements

Regular admission requires that the applicant have a Bachelor of Science (B.S.), Master of Science (M.S.), or Master of Engineering (M.E.) in Civil Engineering. The qualifying degree program must provide the applicant with the core competencies of the sub-discipline in which the applicant wishes to focus their graduate studies. Students not meeting those requirements may be eligible for a contingent admission.

GPA Requirements

The minimum grade point average (GPA) required for regular admission to the CEE graduate program is 3.0 (A = 4.00). These are generally calculated on all coursework completed in obtaining the Bachelor of Science degree, but alternative evaluations on the last 65 hours of undergraduate coursework and the GPA of prior graduate degrees will also be considered.

English Proficiency Requirements

For applicants required to demonstrate English proficiency, they must obtain a minimum TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) score of 79 IBT. As an alternative, an international student may take the IELTS (International English Language Testing Systems) exam on which they must obtain a minimum score of 6.5.

Assistantships

Those receiving regular admission are eligible to receive a Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Graduate Research Assistantship, or Graduate Research Fellowship.

Contingent Admission Requirements

Applicants failing to meet the requirements for regular admission may be considered for contingent admission. Contingent admission may be granted under the following conditions:

Degree Requirements

Applicants who have undergraduate or graduate degrees in engineering-related disciplines may be admitted on contingent status.

GPA Requirements

The minimum GPA required for contingent admission to the CEE graduate program is 2.75 (A = 4.00).

English Proficiency Requirements

For applicants required to demonstrate English proficiency, they must obtain a minimum TOEFL score of 69 IBT. As an alternative, an international student may take the IELTS exam on which they must obtain a minimum score of 6.0.

If the applicant fails to achieve the minimum score for regular admission, satisfactory completion of an “English as a Second Language” (ESL) course, ESL 5323, will be required.

Assistantships

Those receiving contingent admission are eligible to receive a Graduate Teaching and Graduate Research Assistantships. Within the first award enrollment period, the student must satisfy the requirements to obtain regular admission status. An assistantship award will be terminated if these requirements are not met.

Changing to Regular Admission

To be removed from contingent status, the student must successfully complete the specified requirements defined by their graduate committee with a grade of B or better for each course. Upon completion of the specified requirements, removal of the student from the contingent status will be documented in the Department through a letter by the major adviser co-signed by the Department Graduate Coordinator. This letter will be placed in the student’s file, and OGS is made aware of the change of status.

Provisional Admission Requirements

Applicants failing to meet the requirements for regular or contingent admission may be considered for provisional admission. Provisional admission may be granted under the following conditions:

Degree Requirements

Applicants who have undergraduate or graduate degrees in engineering-related disciplines may be admitted on provisional status.

GPA Requirements

The minimum GPA required for contingent admission to the CEE graduate program is 2.50 (A = 4.00).

English Proficiency Requirements

For applicants required to demonstrate English proficiency, they must obtain a minimum TOEFL score of 53 IBT. As an alternative, an international student may take the IELTS exam on which they must obtain a minimum score of 4.5.

If the applicant achieves a TOEFL score of 61 or above, or IELTS score of 5.5 or above, satisfactory completion of two ESL courses, ESL 5120 and ESL 5323, will be required. If not, satisfactory completion of ESL 5110, ESL 5120, and ESL 5323 will be required.

Assistantships

Those receiving provisional admission are not eligible to receive a Graduate Assistantship.

Changing to Regular Admission

To be removed from provisional status, the student must complete their ESL requirement and earn a 3.0 GPA or higher on the first nine graduate credit hours taken after admission to the CEE graduate program and apply to their Program of Study. Transfer credits cannot be used to satisfy this requirement.

Upon completion of the specified requirements, removal of the student from the provisional status will be reported to OGS through a letter by the major adviser co-signed by the Department Graduate Coordinator.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The graduate student has primary responsibility for understanding, and fully complying with, all MSU and CEE graduate policies regarding degree requirements and performance expectations relative to completing assignments as applicable to their graduate degree. It is also their responsibility to inquire and resolve any questions they may have regarding these same policies and performance expectations.

Academic Probation

Once admitted to the CEE graduate program, a student who fails to maintain a satisfactory academic record in terms of GPA, research progress (as applicable) and examinations will be on academic probation. At the end of each semester, CEE will evaluate the records of all CEE graduate students. A student not meeting graduation requirements may be placed on probation if any of the following conditions exist. Remediation of the deficiency and removal from probation requires action as defined below:

| Deficiency Resulting in Probation | Remedial Action Required for Removal from Probation |
|--|--|
| The overall GPA on all graduate credit hours completed drops below 3.0 | Achieve an overall GPA of 3.0 or above on all graduate credit hours completed within the next nine credit hours completed |
| Obtaining a grade below C on a course on the Program of Study | Earn a grade of B or above on the course in which the lower grade was received or the course replacing it on the Program of Study |
| Obtaining a grade of "U" in a research course (i.e., CE 8000 or CE 9000) | Earn a grade of "S" the next time research course hours (i.e., CE 8000 or CE 9000) are taken by complying with the remedial actions set forth by the major professor |
| Failing to pass an examination administered by the graduate committee (i.e., thesis defense, comprehensive exam, qualifying exam, preliminary exam, or dissertation defense) | Retake and pass the examination within the timeframe set forth by the graduate committee at the time it was failed |

The student will be advised in writing of their academic probation and remedial actions that they need to take to be removed from probation.

Dismissal

At the end of each semester, CEE will evaluate the records of all CEE graduate students. A student may be dismissed from the CEE graduate program if:

- They were admitted on contingent status due to deficiencies in prerequisite coursework and fails to make satisfactory progress toward completion of prerequisites.
- They were admitted on provisional status and makes less than a B in completion of the first nine hours of graduate studies.
- They were on academic probation and is unable to meet all requirements for good academic standing by the completion of the next nine credit hours of progress toward the degree.
- The student makes a grade of D or F in a graduate or undergraduate course attempted while in the CEE graduate program.
- A student making a second U grade.
- A student fails to achieve satisfactory results following the second attempt of any examination administered by the graduate committee.

The student will be advised in writing of their dismissal. Justification for the action will be included in the letter of notification. To appeal their dismissal, the student must submit in writing a request for reconsideration to the department's Graduate Coordinator. The request for reconsideration must be submitted within thirty days of the date of the letter of notification and provide detailed justification as to why the dismissal should be reversed.

Reapplying

Graduate students who have not registered for courses during three consecutive regular semesters (i.e., fall and spring semesters) will need to submit a new application to the Graduate School and be readmitted before they resume graduate studies.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The requirements for completing a graduate degree as offered through the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering are detailed below. A Master of Science in Civil Engineering and a Doctor of Philosophy in Engineering with a concentration in Civil Engineering are available.

Master of Science (M.S.) Program of Study

1. Students cannot graduate while on provisional status, contingent status, or academic probation.
2. Masters students may elect either the thesis or non-thesis option. The minimum credit hours that must be satisfactorily completed for either option is tabulated below:

| | Minimum Credit Hours Required | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| | Course Hours | Research Hours | Total Hours |
| Thesis Option | 24 | 6 | 30 |
| Non-Thesis Option | 33 | 0 | 33 |

3. In addition to the total course credit hour requirements summarized above, specific course credit hour requirements exist for Civil Engineering (CE) courses, Full Graduate (7000- and 8000-level) courses, and Engineering courses exist and are tabulated below:

| | Minimum Credit Hours Required | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| | CE | CE Full Graduate | All Full Graduate | Engineering |
| Thesis Option | 12 | 9 | 12 | 15 |
| Non-Thesis Option | 18 | 12 | 15 | 18 |

4. Furthermore, there are a maximum number of specific courses allowed on the Program of Study as summarized in the table below:

| | Maximum Number Of Course Credit Hours Allowed | | | |
|-------------------|---|------|--------------|----------|
| | Business | 7000 | Unclassified | Transfer |
| Thesis Option | 6 | 6 | 9 | 9 |
| Non-Thesis Option | 6 | 6 | 9 | 9 |

5. A graduate student cannot graduate with more than six credit hours of C grades earned for all courses since admission to the program, including those outside the program of study.

6. A student cannot graduate with an Incomplete (“I”) grade, regardless of whether it is on the program of study or not. The Incomplete grade must be rectified so that a grade can be assigned, and an overall GPA determined for graduation eligibility.
7. Students electing the Thesis Option M.S. are expected to prepare at least one manuscript acceptable to the major professor for peer-reviewed journals or conferences.
8. Thesis students are expected to successfully pass their thesis defense as administered by their graduate committee.
9. Non-thesis students must successfully pass a comprehensive (exit) examination administered by the graduate committee. The format for this examination will be one of two options as agreed to by the student and graduate committee:
 - a. Project and examination - A project will be completed as a Directed Individual Study (up to six credit hours) in partial fulfillment of the degree requirements. A written report on the project will be submitted and a formal oral presentation of the work will be made to the graduate committee. The comprehensive examination results will be based on the committee’s inquisitive evaluation of this work.
 - b. Examination only – An inquisitive review of all graduate coursework and core competency areas will be conducted by the graduate committee. The format and content of the exam is at the discretion of the committee and the comprehensive examination results will be based on the committee’s evaluation of the student’s performance.
10. The time limit on credits earned that can be accepted toward fulfilling the requirements for a Master of Science degree is eight years. The years are counted from the semester and year of admission. Example: If a master’s student was admitted in spring 2018, the student’s time expires in fall 2025. Extensions may be requested of the Graduate School with reasonable justification and if the coursework in question is still relevant to the field of study.
11. Transferred credits are those earned at another university. Shared credits are defined as those credits earned in another graduate program at MSU that are now being applied to an additional graduate degree program at MSU. As approved by the student's committee, a maximum of 12 credit hours of the coursework requirement can be met with transfer credits. Transferred credits shall not be previously used to satisfy the requirements of an earned degree. Also, with committee approval, up to 12 credit hours of the program may be shared between degree programs at the same level. The total of shared and transfer credit applied to the coursework requirement cannot exceed 12 credit hours. Students who transition from an Unclassified Admission status into the degree program may apply up to nine hours taken while Unclassified regardless of whether they are transferring or sharing credits. Thesis research credit hours cannot be transferred unless there is an MOU in place that governs the student’s situation.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Program of Study

1. Students cannot graduate while on provisional status, contingent status, or academic probation.
2. For students with an acceptable M.S. degree, a minimum of 24 hours of coursework approved by their committee and a minimum of 20 hours of research (CE 9000) are required.

3. For students admitted without an acceptable M.S. degree (i.e., Direct Admission Ph.D. students), there are three degree options as outlined in the table below. In addition, of the courses completed, the following minimums are required:
 - 12 hours in CE courses, nine of which are at the Full Graduate level,
 - 12 hours at the Full Graduate level, and
 - 15 hours in Engineering.

| Case | Degree(s) Awarded | Required Minimum Credit Hours Completed | Total Minimum Credit Hours Completed |
|------|----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | Ph.D. and Non-Thesis Option M.S. | 57 coursework 20 dissertation (CE 9000) | 77 |
| 2 | Ph.D. and Thesis Option M.S. | 48 coursework 6 thesis (CE 8000) 20 dissertation (CE 9000) | 74 |
| 3 | Ph.D. Only | 48 coursework 20 dissertation (CE 9000) | 68 |

4. A graduate student cannot graduate with more than six credit hours of C grades earned for all courses since admission to the program, including those outside the program of study.
5. A student cannot graduate with an Incomplete (“I”) grade, regardless of whether it is on the program of study or not. The Incomplete grade must be rectified so that a grade can be assigned, and an overall GPA determined for graduation eligibility.
6. Students are required to pass three examinations:
 - Qualifying Exam (Entrance Exam) – This examination is taken before completion of nine credit hours of coursework beyond M.S. (thirty credit hours of coursework for Direct Admission Ph.D. students) after admission to the program. The examination will be in a format specified by the student’s major professor. The student’s major professor may require that the exam be taken earlier, given reasonable notice. The student must be enrolled during the semester in which the exam is taken.
 - Written Preliminary Exam – This examination is taken after the student completes, or is within six credit hours of completing, the coursework on the Program of Study approved by the graduate committee at the time of the examination. The examination will be in a format specified by the student’s graduate committee.
 - Oral Comprehensive Exam – This examination is taken after the Written Preliminary Exam. After successfully passing the Written Preliminary and Oral Comprehensive Exams, the student becomes a Ph.D. Candidate. The examination will be in a format specified by the student’s graduate committee.
7. The student is required to produce and defend a dissertation. The student must submit a draft dissertation to the graduate committee at least two weeks before its defense. The student must subsequently defend the dissertation, acceptably address all comments, and required changes

in the document and submit a final dissertation acceptable to the graduate committee, MSU Library, and the Office of the Graduate School.

8. From the work completed during Ph.D. studies, students are required to prepare at least two manuscripts suitable for submission to peer-reviewed journals and acceptable to the major professor.
9. The time limit on credits earned that can be accepted toward fulfilling the requirements for a Ph.D. is five years following satisfactory completion of the Preliminary and Comprehensive Exams. Extensions may be requested of the Graduate School with reasonable justification and if the coursework in question is still relevant to the field of study.
10. Transferred credits are those earned at another university. Shared credits are defined as those credits earned in another graduate program at MSU that are now being applied to an additional graduate degree program at MSU. As approved by the student's committee, a maximum of 50% of the coursework requirement can be met with transfer credits. Transferred credits shall not be previously used to satisfy the requirements of an earned degree. Also, with committee approval, up to 50% of the required credit hours of the program may be shared from a previous doctoral degree program. The total of shared and transfer credits applied to the coursework requirement cannot exceed 50% of the requirement. Students who transition from an Unclassified Admission status into the degree program may apply up to nine hours taken while Unclassified regardless of whether they are transferring or sharing credits. Dissertation research credit hours cannot be transferred unless there is an MOU in place governing the student's situation.

EXCEPTIONS AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Exceptions and substitutions to the above policies as requested by a student's major professor and graduate committee require the approval of the Graduate Coordinator and Department Head.