# 2023 – 2024 MS in Computer Science Graduate Program Handbook

## Georgia Institute of Technology

*Last Revised – December 2023*

# Table of Contents

**(Hyperlinked)**

# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to assist prospective and current graduate students within Georgia Tech's Master of Science in Computer Science (MSCS) Program. This handbook will detail program requirements, policies, procedures, and resources available to better promote student success. The information within this handbook does not supersede policies and procedures specified within Georgia Tech's General Catalog and Student Handbook. Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures for any major program or home department they are a member of in addition to the General Catalog.

Students are encouraged to seek guidance and advisement from the Academic Advisor within their Program of Study. Academic Advisors can escalate an inquiry to a higher authority, or may direct the student to another contact or campus resource as needed. **Students should not rely on other students to inform them of policies and procedures.** This can lead to missing important information and deadlines. **It is ultimately the student's responsibility to know and follow all rules and regulations for degree completion.**

The Georgia Institute of Technology General Catalog can be reviewed at:

http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/

# Academic Policies

Georgia Tech students are responsible for knowing the following academic policies and information:
● Academic Catalog
● Academic Honor Code
● Student/Faculty Expectations
● Expectations of Advisors and Advisees

# Degree Requirements

Please review the MSCS Program degree requirements here.

1. The MSCS degree will be earned with 30 hours which may consist of a combination of coursework and research hours.
2. Students must complete one specialization which consists of 15-18 hours of coursework. There are 11 total specializations to choose from, but a student may only graduate with one. **All specialization courses must be completed with at least a "B" grade.**
3. The remaining 12-15 hours consists of non-specialization coursework which may be any 6000+ level CS/CSE course. Please see #8 below for additional options to satisfy free electives. **Free elective courses must be completed with at least a "C" grade.**

4. By default, students will be placed on the Course Option, which is purely 30 hours of coursework.
5. If a student registers for CS 6999 (MS Project), DegreeWorks will update to the Project Option which requires 9 hours of CS 6999.
   a. Pursuing the Project Option entails up to 6 hours of free electives needed in combination with 9 Project Hours.
6. If a student registers for CS 7000 (MS Thesis), DegreeWorks will update to the Thesis Option which requires 12 hours of CS 7000.
   a. Pursuing the Thesis Option entails up to 3 hours of free electives needed in combination with 12 Thesis Hours.
7. **Students must maintain a 3.0 Cumulative GPA to remain in "Good Standing" within the program as well as to graduate.**
   a. **All courses taken for a letter grade will contribute towards a student's GPA, even if the course is not required for the MSCS degree.**
8. A maximum of six hours may be taken at the 4000-level and/or with a subject code other than CS or CSE. This gives students the flexibility to use other areas of interest outside of CS/CSE towards their degree.
   a. This means at least 24 of the 30 credits must be 6000+ level CS/CSE coursework.
9. Students must complete the degree within six years as per Georgia Tech policy mentioned [here](#).
10. If a student has previously completed courses at Georgia Tech, specifically undergraduate/graduate Computer Science (CS) or other CS-related coursework, they will be responsible for researching whether the course(s) are "equivalent" to MSCS courses as these credits cannot count toward their MSCS degree.
    a. Students should review the CoC [Equivalent Courses](#) page to review if any previously completed coursework would result in not receiving credit for certain graduate-level coursework.
11. Review the [MSCS Program Specializations](#) page to review all 11 specializations and the specific coursework that may be taken to satisfy each.

# MSCS Program Rules

- GPA – Students must achieve a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 to graduate, and no course grades below a "C" will be allowed to count toward graduation. All grades labeled below as core and elective courses within a student's specialization must be a "B" or better.
- A maximum of 6 hours may be taken at the 4000-level and/or with a subject code other than CS or CSE. See exceptions under the Project and Thesis options below.
- Pass-Fail and Audit – All courses applied to the M.S. CS degree must be taken for a letter grade, other than thesis hours.

- The maximum total credit hours of Special Problems (CS or CSE 89xx) that may be applied toward the M.S. CS degree is 3. These research courses must be within the CoC.
- There is no maximum number of Special Topics (CS or CSE 88xx) courses that may be used towards the degree.
- Each student must complete the requirements for one specialization.
- No coursework at the 1000, 2000, or 3000 level will count toward the MSCS degree.

MSCS Program Rules

# MSCS Program Completion Options

Per the MSCS Overview Page, students have three options to complete their degree requirements. **All options consist of completing 30 credits**.

1. Course Option
    a. 30 hours of coursework (No MS Project or MS Thesis hours)
    b. At least 24 credits must be CS/CSE coursework at at the 6000-8000 level.

2. Project Option
    a. 21 hours of coursework and a 9-hour project (CS 6999). The student must obtain advance approval of the project proposal by their CoC Project Advisor and MSCS Program Director. If needed, the student's academic advisor can provide more information.
    b. Minimum CS/CSE course hours required at 6000-8000 level – 15*

3. Thesis Option
    a. 18 hours of coursework and a 12-hour thesis (CS 7000). The student must obtain advance approval of the thesis proposal by their CoC Thesis Advisor and MSCS Program Director. If needed, the student's academic advisor can provide more information regarding the thesis process.
    b. Minimum CS/CSE course hours required at 6000-8000 level – 15*

*May not include CS 6999 or CS 7000 hours

# Project Option vs Thesis Option

The Project Option consists of 9 credits, typically completed over 1-3 semesters. It will be the student's responsibility to find a College of Computing faculty member to be their Project Advisor and to work under their supervision on a particular topic of research. The Project Advisor will issue a letter grade for the work completed which will allow the student to receive credit. Deadlines, deliverables, and all project requirements should be determined between the student and Project Advisor.
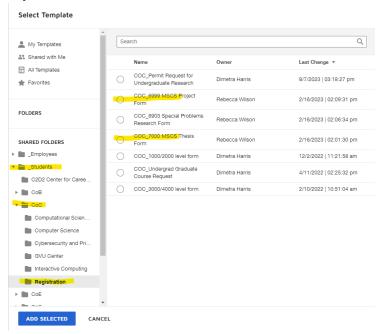
The Thesis Option consists of 12 credits, typically completed over two or more semesters. The student will formulate a topic of research they'd like to pursue and seek approval for that topic. While the student is completing their thesis work, they would formulate a Thesis Review Committee consisting of their Thesis Advisor and College of Computing faculty members – **the committee must have at least three members total: the Thesis Advisor and at least one other committee member must be CoC faculty**. The student will submit their thesis work to their review committee prior to graduation and will receive credit for the Thesis Option if it is approved. Students can review more information including the Thesis Manual and required forms on Georgia Tech's [Theses & Dissertations](#) page.

Project Option credits **cannot** be converted to Thesis Option credits, or vice versa. The Project Option is taken for a letter grade while the Thesis Option is taken on a pass/fail basis.

To initially register for CS 6999 or CS 7000, students will visit the MSCS Registration Information page [here](#) and complete the 6999 MSCS Project Form or 7000 MSCS Thesis Form along with their Project/Thesis Advisor. If led to DocuSign, a screenshot is provided below to find the appropriate form. Once complete, the form will be sent to MSCS administration for review. If approved, a permit will be issued for the course so the student can register. The specific 5-digit Course Reference Number (CRN) for the course should be listed on the form so the permit may be issued. As a result, this form should be submitted **AFTER** course offerings are viewable for the upcoming semester. This form only needs to be completed the first time a student registers for CS 6999 or CS 7000. For the following semesters, the student should contact their advisor to receive a permit to continue their Project/Thesis.

In the initial submission of the 6999 MSCS Project Form, the student must provide a Project Proposal which will be signed by the Project Advisor and approved by the MSCS Graduate Coordinator. The Project Proposal should be approximately two pages long and detail an overview of the project, its objectives, timeline of work, and final deliverables.

**Note: Both CS 6999 and CS 7000 are variable credit hour courses. Please see "Variable Credit Hour Courses" below for more information.**

# Registration Time Tickets

A student's time ticket will determine the specific date and time they can to begin to register for classes. Students may review Georgia Tech's Academic Calendar to learn when time tickets will open for any given semester.

To check a time ticket assignment, please follow the directions on the Registrar's website: https://registrar.gatech.edu/registration/time-tickets.

*Please note that time tickets are issued by the Registrar's Office and are assigned based on earned hours.*

Please keep in mind that graduate students may not be the first group to register, as undergraduate students and specific student groups may receive priority registration (Presidential Fellows, Office of Disability Services, members of the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC), military veterans, etc.) Therefore, it is not uncommon for MSCS students' time tickets to begin a few days after the general registration period opens. **This will not prevent students from attaining a full-time schedule by the end of Phase II Registration.**

# Registration Holds

1. Once a student's account is activated, they must check to see if they have any holds that may prevent registration. Instructions on how to view holds are available here.

2. If students have a hold on their account, they **MUST** clear it before they can register for classes. **Students must contact the department who placed the hold, as the department who placed the hold is the only department who can remove the hold.**

**Common Holds**

- Graduate Admissions Hold – The Office of Graduate Education is missing documentation (e.g. final official transcript). If students have questions regarding these documents, they should contact the Office of Graduate Education by visiting their website or calling 404-894-1610.
  - Students may mail documents to the Office of Graduate Education:

  Office of Graduate Education
  Georgia Institute of Technology

631 Cherry Street, Room 301
Atlanta, GA, 30332-0321

- ○ If an institution releases official transcripts electronically, please send them to transcripts@grad.gatech.edu – **transcripts must come directly from the institution, not the student.**

- Lawful Presence Hold – Only the documents listed on Graduate Education's Lawful Presence page can be used to clear this hold. For questions, please contact grad.ask@grad.gatech.edu.

- Immunization Hold – If students have any questions regarding this hold, they should contact immunizations@health.gatech.edu or 404-894-1432.

- Financial Agreement Hold – A Financial Agreement hold is initially placed on all students' accounts. This hold will prevent registration; however, students can clear the hold immediately in OSCAR prior to their registration period. On the Registration menu, select "Financial Responsibility Agreement". After reading and understanding the agreement, students will enter their initials and click "Submit". Successfully completing this task clears the hold from the account and will allow students to continue with registration. For questions, please contact the Bursar's Office at bursar.ask@gatech.edu.

# Course Surveys / Permit Requests

The Atlanta Campus MSCS Program uses a permit request process to issue permits that allows students to register or waitlist for a specific course. Students may receive up to four CS/CSE graduate course permits during Phase I Registration. This limit on permits is necessary to prevent students from immediately registering for the maximum number of classes and hoarding courses which in turn prevents other students from registering.

Permit requests will be conducted through Course Surveys which will be sent by the MSCS Advising Administration via email to all returning MSCS students prior to Phase I Registration and to new students prior to Phase II Registration. The Course Survey will detail a list of courses being offered for the upcoming semester and students will have the ability to choose their top four desired courses. **A permit being issued does not guarantee a student will get into a desired course, but simply allows the student to register or waitlist for a course.**

# Declaring Your Specialization

It is highly recommended students declare their specialization **PRIOR** to completing their Course Survey. This may increase the priority the student receives for classes that are needed to complete their specific specialization compared to students that desire to take the class sheerly out of interest. Having a declared specialization also allows the student's academic advisor to review the student's progression in satisfying all degree requirements and allows the advisor to assist with course recommendations or potential substitutions for a specialization.

A student can declare a specialization which differs from the one on their application for admission. Although a student can take coursework that could be used towards multiple specializations, **a student may only be credited for completing one specialization**.

To declare a specialization, please follow the instructions below:
- Go to https://oscar.gatech.edu/.
- Sign in using GT credentials via the "Secure Access Login" link.
- Click on "Students" tab.
- Scroll down and select "Change Program Concentration."
- Scroll down to "Current/Future Program of Study" section and select the bubble next to "MS in Computer Science."
- Click "Select Program."
- This provides access to the "Major Concentration" field where students need to select their MS specialization from the drop-down menu.
- Click "Submit Changes."

**Note: Students cannot declare their specialization during Phase I Registration.**

# ***MSCS Student Registration Dates & Information***

Students should bookmark and review the MSCS Program's Registration Dates & Information Page prior to registration each semester. This page is updated before Phase I and Phase II registration each semester to give details on the overall registration process for CS/CSE graduate courses.

# Registering for Courses on Other Campuses

Students can only register for classes on their assigned campus. For example, Atlanta Campus students cannot register for Online Campus courses, and Online Campus students cannot register for Atlanta Campus courses. **The registration system does _not_ allow students to mix campuses.**

# Preparing for Registration

- Please note that **all** times and deadlines are based on the Eastern time zone.
- Registration dates can be found on the Academic Calendar on the Registrar's website, but MSCS-specific dates and information can be found on the MSCS Registration Dates &

Information page. Please bookmark this page to use for each semester within the MSCS Program.

- Students should review their time tickets to see the exact date and time their registration period begins and ends for each phase of registration.
- Students will **NOT** be able to add/drop classes **AFTER** 4:00pm ET on the final day of Phase II Registration. A student's schedule should be finalized by this time.

# Registering for Classes

1. Once a specialization is declared, review our MSCS Program Specializations page to view the specific courses that may be taken to satisfy a particular specialization's requirements. **Each specialization requires at least 15 credits, so it is highly recommended to take at least one or two courses towards the specialization's requirements each semester.**

2. Students may view which courses will be available for a specific semester within OSCAR.

   a. Click Schedule of Classes
   b. Enter Term and Submit
   c. Subject – Select **Computer Science** for CS courses or **Computational Science & Engineering** for CSE courses. Some specializations accept a select few non-CS/CSE courses within ECE (Electrical & Computer Engineering), INTA (International Affairs), ISYE (Industrial & Systems Engineering), MATH (Mathematics), etc. However, most students will primarily need CS/CSE coursework.
   d. Campus – Select Georgia Tech – Atlanta (**Remember, MSCS students cannot take online classes**)
   e. Click Class Search at the bottom of the page.

3. Selecting the appropriate Subject and Campus will yield results reflecting every course being offered on the Atlanta Campus for that subject. Students can compare the required courses for their specialization to what is being offered for the upcoming semester. This will allow students to make an informed decision as to which courses they should request permits for when the Course Survey are sent.

4. Registration is first come, first served, so students should register as soon as their time ticket opens. If a class is full, a student should add themselves to the waitlist.

   Waitlist Instructions

5. For detailed registration information and instructions, please visit the Registrar's Registration Assistance page. Students may use this page for steps to confirm their enrolled courses as well as to review waitlist positions.

6. We strongly encourage new students to take no more than 12 credits during their first semester. This will better allow the student to manage and balance their time dedicated towards each course. Graduate courses often require more time, focus, and effort compared to undergraduate courses, so it is recommended for students to pace themselves wisely during their first semester to ensure their best chance to succeed.

7. If a student tries to register for a course and receives an error message, please refer to the Registrar Office's Error Messages page for an explanation as to what the message means.

# Registering for Non-CS/CSE Courses

Per MSCS Program Rules, students may use up to six credits 4000-level coursework and/or coursework with a subject code outside of CS/CSE towards their MSCS degree.

Many courses outside of CS/CSE may have restrictions as to which students may register i.e., level restrictions or major restrictions. Students may review the Registrar's Permits and Overloads page to review methods and contacts to seek permission to register for a course under a specific subject code.

# Variable Credit Hour Courses

Certain courses within the MSCS Program have adjustable credit hours. For example:

- CS 6999 – MS Project
- CS 7000 – MS Thesis
- CS/CSE 8903 – Special Problems

If a student registers for any of these courses, the hours will begin at 1-credit by default. Students are required to manually adjust the hours to the desired amount when registering for these courses. Failure to do so can result in a student not being considered full-time or on track for graduation.

**Master's Project - 23367 - CS 6999 - A01**

**Associated Term:** Spring 2024
**Registration Dates:** Nov 06, 2023 to Jan 12, 2024
**Levels:** Graduate Semester, Undergraduate Semester

Georgia Tech-Atlanta * Campus
Unsupervised Laboratory* Schedule Type
1.000 TO 9.000 Credits
**Grade Basis:** L
View Catalog Entry

Students may follow instructions here to update variable course hours.

# Waitlisting Courses

Please review the Registrar Office's Waitlist page for an in-depth review as to the policy and process of waitlisting for courses. Students may add themselves to a course's waitlist if it is currently full in hopes a seat may become available. If a seat becomes available, the first student on the waitlist will have 12 hours to add the course before the next student in line has an opportunity to add the course. As a result, it is important for students on waitlists to monitor their student email account for the notification that a seat has become available. **Advisors cannot move students to a higher position on a course's waitlist or overload a student into a course.**

**Each semester, all waitlists are deactivated on the final morning of Phase II Registration.** This allows all students to add courses that have available seating and no restrictions.

# Checking Waitlist Position

Students may visit the Registrar's website for step-by-step instructions on how to view their waitlist position.

Please note the following:

- When a course is crosslisted with another course, the registration system reflects a total number for everyone on both waitlists so students cannot view their specific position. However, the waitlists are separate, meaning the larger waitlist position shown is not a student's true position within their course section.
- MSCS Advising cannot register students for courses and/or add students to waitlists. Students must follow the procedures that have been outlined in this document, or the Registrar's website, to add themselves to a course's waitlist.
- Please **DO NOT** email professors to seek permission to enroll in and/or waitlist for their course(s), as professors have no control over this.

# Waitlist Deactivation Period

On the final day of Phase II Registration, all waitlists will be cleared to allow students to enroll in courses with available seating and no restrictions. This is referred to as the "free for all" registration period which ends at 4PM ET.

# Accessing Courses

Course materials will become available within Canvas during the first week of classes. Academic advisors do not have information or control as to the exact moment course materials will be made available. Individual faculty are responsible for activating their courses within Canvas.

If a student registers for a course during the first week of classes, it may take up to 24 hours before the course can be accessed within Canvas. If the student still has no access after this time passes, they should contact canvas@gatech.edu.

# Dropping / Withdrawing from a Course

A student can only **drop** a course during an active registration period. Dropping a course will entirely remove the course from the student's record as if the student never registered. The course will **not** appear on the student's transcript. The last opportunity to add/drop courses from a student's schedule is by 4PM ET on the final day of Phase II Registration each semester. Please review the Academic Calendar for specific dates each semester.

A student can **withdraw** from a course after Phase II Registration closes and before the Withdrawal Deadline listed on the Academic Calendar. Withdrawing from a course will result in a "W" appearing for the course on a student's transcript, indicating the student initially attempted the course but needed to withdraw. A "W" has no impact on one's GPA.

For step-by-step instructions on how to drop/withdraw from a course, please visit the Registrar Office's Withdrawal and Dropping Courses page. **If a student drops or withdraws from a course, they should check their schedule afterwards to confirm the change was processed.**

- If a student withdraws from all courses during the term, this is referred to as a "full withdrawal." The student may be eligible for a partial refund as a result. Please refer to the Bursar Office's Refund Calendar for more information.
- If a student is still active in at least one course after withdrawing, they would **not** be eligible to receive a refund.

**\*\*\*A "full withdrawal" does NOT mean a student is dropped or ineligible from the MSCS Program. It simply means the student withdrew from all of their courses for the term.\*\*\***

# Enrollment Requirements for International Students

The Office of International Education has an Enrollment Requirements page to assist our international students in maintaining F1 and J1 eligibility throughout their college career at Georgia Tech. It is a general rule of thumb that international students must maintain full-time status during each Fall/Spring semester of attendance – a minimum of 12 hours is needed to be considered full-time. Summer semesters are considered vacation periods so a student will not be expected to maintain full-time status if they decide to take additional coursework during the term unless the Summer semester is the student's first term within the Atlanta Campus MSCS Program. International students can potentially be approved to take less than full-time hours via an Academic Reduced Course Load, which will be discussed in the Academic Reduced Course Load section below.

# International Students – Withdrawing from a Course

While withdrawing from a course can certainly allow a student to preserve their GPA, it can potentially have a negative impact on international students' visa eligibility. For example, full-time status is required for international students – actively attending at least 12 hours of coursework. If an international student takes only 12 hours and withdraws from a 3-hour course, the student would be in violation of F1/J1 enrollment requirements as they would no longer be actively full-time.

There are specific policies and procedures that may allow an international student to attend below full-time which may be found on OIE's Enrollment Requirements page.

- Summer Terms
- Academic Reduced Course Loads
- Medical Reduced Course Loads

# Academic Reduced Course Loads

An international student that is required to maintain full-time status may seek an Academic Reduced Course Load **ONLY** during their first semester and their graduating semester. It often occurs that a student may not need 12 hours to complete their remaining degree requirements in their graduating semester, so a Reduced Course Load may be granted to allow the student to only take what is needed to complete their degree. An international student may seek a Reduced Course Load during their first Georgia Tech semester for any of the following academic reasons:

- Initial Difficulty with English Language
- Initial Difficulty with Reading Requirements
- Unfamiliarity with American Teaching Methods

# Grade Modes / Grade Mode Change Requests

There are three types of Grade Modes for courses at Georgia Tech – Letter Grade, Pass/Fail, and Audit. **All three grade modes may contribute towards a student's full-time status**, **but MSCS students must take courses for a letter grade if they wish to use the credits towards their degree** – Thesis credits (CS 7000) are the only exception as they can only be taken on a Pass/Fail basis.

The vast majority of MSCS courses will have a Grade Mode of Letter Grade by default. Students should review the Academic Calendar to view the deadline to change a course's Grade Mode to Audit, or Pass/Fail. A student may change a course's Grade Mode within BuzzPort during an active registration period. The deadline to change a Grade Mode to Audit is the final day of Phase II Registration each semester, while the deadline to change a Grade Mode to Pass/Fail normally coincides with the deadline to withdraw from a course. After Phase II Registration closes, a student may submit a Grade Mode Change Form to request a course's Grade Mode to be updated to Pass/Fail or to Letter Grade. **Please review the course offerings within OSCAR** to view each course's options for Grade Modes to see if a request is possible.

Grade mode options may vary semester to semester. Students must review their specific course section to see which grade modes are offered. See the "Grade Basis" section of a course for the grade mode options.

# Withdrawing vs Grade Mode Change

A student struggling in a particular course may have the initial instinct to withdraw from the course. This is certainly a viable option for some students, but for international students and/or students with a GRA or GTA position that must maintain full-time status, withdrawing may have a negative impact if it causes the student to fall below 12 registered hours. If a student is considering withdrawing, they should reach out to their advisor to discuss additional options (e.g. changing a course's grade mode to Pass/Fail). If a course is taken on a Pass/Fail basis, it allows the student to participate in the course and maintain full-time status with no negative impact on the student's GPA. **Keep in mind only courses taken for letter grade will count towards the MSCS degree** except for Thesis credits.

# Fully Withdrawing from Courses

There are times when a student must withdraw from all courses for a variety of reasons. This is known as a "full withdrawal". **Withdrawing from all courses will <u>not</u> cause the student to lose eligibility within the MSCS Program**. If a student fully withdraws from courses, they will be ineligible to return to school the following semester by default. The purpose of this policy is to allow the student time to ensure any obstacles hindering their academic performance are behind them and that they are ready to continue with their studies upon returning. It is possible for a student to return in the immediate semester following fully withdrawing by submitting a [Petition to the Faculty Request](#) to indicate their desire to return early and to confirm their academics will not be negatively impacted going forward.

For a full review of Georgia Tech's withdrawal policy, please review the Registrar's Office page for [Withdrawal and Dropping Courses](#).

# Leave of Absence / Application to Return

Students may have extenuating circumstances that require them to miss multiple semesters (e.g. military service). In this instance, a student can apply to take a Leave of Absence. The student will submit an application to request a Leave of Absence and, if approved, eventually an "Application to Return" once the student is ready to return to Georgia Tech. The Office of the Registrar is responsible for reviewing and approving Leave of Absence applications.

For a full review of the Leave of Absence policy, steps to take, and access to appropriate applications - please review the Registrar's Office [Leave of Absence](#) page.

## Course Transfer Credit

Per Georgia Tech's [Transfer of Credit Policy](), students within a 30-hour degree program may receive up to six hours of transfer credit for graduate-level courses taken at an institution accredited by a Canadian or U.S. regional accrediting board, or at a foreign school or university that has a signed partner agreement with Georgia Tech. **These six credits cannot have counted towards a previously earned degree.**

Students should review this policy and consult with their Academic Advisor regarding the transfer credit evaluation process.

## Double Counting Credits

Students pursuing two Master's degrees at Georgia Tech can only share six credits between degrees – per Georgia Tech's [Double Counting Credits Policy](). This ensures that both degrees consisted of at least 24 unique credits earned at Georgia Tech.

## Not Receiving Credit – Equivalent Courses

Some 4000-level courses taught within the College of Computing have graduate course equivalents. If a student has already received course credit for one of the 4000-level courses on the [Equivalent Courses]() list, they will **NOT** receive credit towards MSCS degree requirements if the listed graduate equivalent course is also taken. **It is the student's responsibility to ensure they do not register for a course for which they cannot receive credit.**

If an undergraduate level course has a cross-listed/equivalent graduate level course, MSCS students need to take the graduate level course.

## DegreeWorks & Degree Audits

- Students can review their degree requirements and monitor their academic progress by logging into [DegreeWorks](). This may be done after a student declares their specialization, or at least performs a What-If Analysis to reflect requirements within a specialization of interest.

- Students should review their DegreeWorks at least four times a semester:
  1. Before registration to review courses that may be used towards program requirements.
  2. After registration to ensure courses apply to their program requirements.
  3. After final grades are posted.
  4. Any time changes are made to their schedule/record.

- If a student makes a change to their schedule or record, it can take DegreeWorks up to 24 hours to reflect any change.

- It is possible that DegreeWorks may not pull a course correctly. Therefore, students should refer to the MSCS Program Rules and MSCS Specialization Requirements and compare it to their DegreeWorks. If an update is needed, this is typically made once the student has applied to graduate and their advisor has completed their first degree audit. Earlier updates can potentially occur once a student has completed a course, and the final grade is reflected within DegreeWorks. Examples of coursework that may not pull automatically can include approved specialization substitutions, non-CS/CSE course, 4000-level coursework, etc.

- It is the student's responsibility to monitor their DegreeWorks and inform their advisor of any discrepancies and/or inaccuracies found.

# Online Application for Graduation (OAG)

Once a student completes all degree requirements, they are obligated to graduate and earn their degree. Students should review the Registrar's Online Application for Graduation (OAG) page to **submit a petition to graduate one semester prior to degree completion** (Ex: if planning to graduate in Spring, a student should submit their OAG in the preceding Fall semester). This allows time for the student and advisor to review degree needs and resolve lingering course requirements. Review Georgia Tech's Academic Calendar for OAG deadlines. If a student has previously applied but did not graduate, the previous OAG must first be deactivated to allow the student to reapply for the updated term.

Students may review their degree status within DegreeWorks. Several degree audits will be performed by both MSCS Program staff and the GT Registrar's Office from the time a student submits their OAG and through graduation. Below are examples of the messaging displayed once a student initially applies and throughout their graduating semester.

**Graduation Information** – Term/Year - MSCS-CS: Active Application - Received, Pending Evaluation

**Graduation Information** – Term/Year - MSCS-CS: Active Application – On Track to Grad, 2$^{nd}$ Audit

**Graduation Information** – Term/Year - MSCS-CS: Active Application – Degree Awarded

**Do not be alarmed by "Pending Evaluation"** as this is simply the first step in the auditing process.

# Commencement Information

For all things related to Commencement including dates, submitting RSVPs, regalia purchase info, and the ceremony schedule – review the GT Commencement page.

Students with questions regarding Commencement may email the Commencement Office at events@gatech.edu with a detailed description of their issue. Students should include their name, degree level, and GT ID# for faster responses.

Review the Diplomas Information page for all information pertaining to receiving a diploma, replacing a diploma, certifying a Georgia Tech transcript and diploma, etc.

# Graduate Program Extension Request

International students have specific [Enrollment Requirements](#) that must be followed in order to qualify for CPT, OPT, and making satisfactory progress towards degree completion. For an F1/J1 student that has joined the MSCS Program with no prior credits earned, a typical window of two academic years is given to earn an MSCS degree. This allows international students to complete their degree over two sets of Fall/Spring semesters, with at least one Summer semester in between. **Given the MSCS Program only requires 30 credit hours, this time limit should give students ample opportunity to complete all degree requirements.**

On the rare occasion an international student is unable to complete all degree requirements within their final semester, a Graduate Program Extension Request may be submitted within iStart to **attempt** to be approved for at least one additional semester to complete lingering degree requirements. An extension request should only be submitted for academic purposes such as:

- A student had to withdraw from or failed a class to salvage their GPA, thus creating a lingering degree requirement.
- A student had a delay in research that hindered completion of the MS Project or MS Thesis and needs additional time to complete either.
- A student changed their major and has degree requirements that cannot be completed prior to their I20 expiration date.

**There are several examples of why an extension request should not be submitted and cannot be approved. They include, but are not limited to,**

- **The desire to participate in an internship in the student's final semester.**
- **The desire to take additional coursework when all degree requirements have been met.**

# Graduate Internship Program

Georgia Tech's [Graduate Internship Program](#) provides graduate students with the opportunity to work with industry and government leaders in their respective areas of study. Eligibility for the program is based on academic achievement at Georgia Tech. There is no tuition associated with the Graduate Internship Program, nor are there any required fees.  If students are participating in a full-time internship, they are provided full-time enrollment status through registration in an audit credit Graduate Internship course. This permits students to retain all privileges of full-time enrolled students while on work assignments.

Students interested in participating in the Graduate Internship Program should review their [Application Process and Deadlines](#) page.

Questions related to the Graduate Internship Program should be directed to [grad-internship@gatech.edu](mailto:grad-internship@gatech.edu).

# Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is an authorization issued by the International Student & Scholar Office (ISSS) within OIE that permits F-1 students to participate in off-campus experiential learning opportunities. During the CPT authorization, the student must be enrolled in an academic course that guides their experience and measures their learning outcomes. **CPT is not available after a student completes degree program requirements.**

International students should review OIE's Curricular Practical Training (CPT) page to view eligibility requirements, steps to apply, etc.

Any questions related to CPT eligibility should be directed to an OIE representative. Students can find contact info / request an appointment with an OIE advisor here.

# Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a benefit of the F-1 visa program that allows students to pursue experiential learning opportunities in the U.S. that directly relate to their program of study. While an OIE Designated School Official (DSO) recommends a student for OPT, it is the student who must apply for the work permit with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). If the OPT benefit is approved, USCIS will issue an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Students can utilize this benefit once per education level. There are three types of OPT: pre-completion OPT, post-completion OPT, and the 24-Month STEM OPT extension.

International students should review OIE's Optional Practical Training (OPT) page to view eligibility requirements, steps, to apply, OPT info session schedules, etc.

Any questions related to OPT eligibility should be directed to an OIE representative. Students can find contact info / request an appointment with an OIE advisor here.

# Declaring MSCS as a Secondary Major for PhD Students

Some PhD students may wish to pursue an MSCS degree as they move through their PhD program. Students who wish to do so should contact Rebecca Wilson (rwilson@cc.gatech.edu).  Students must have taken some CS/CSE coursework to be considered.

# Changing Major to MSCS

MSCS only accepts change of major applications once per year during the normal admissions cycle. Students interested in changing majors to MSCS should submit a Statement of Purpose that explains why they want to make this change by February 1 (the Fall admissions deadline).  The Statement of Purpose can be sent to Mrs. Rebecca Wilson – rwilson@cc.gatech.edu. Decisions will be made each April

along with the traditional applicants for the next Fall term.  Students MUST have completed some CS/CSE classes to be considered for approval.

# GTA / GRA Positions

Graduate students may seek a Graduate Teaching Assistantship or a Graduate Research Assistantship while pursuing their MSCS degree. More information may be found on Georgia Tech's Assistantships page. Assistantships are an opportunity for students to gain useful experience that may be applicable to their future career while also receiving a tuition waiver and monthly stipend. More information pertaining to monthly stipends for Graduate Assistantships can be found here.

There are specific rules a student must follow to maintain eligibility for an assistantship:

- Maintain full-time status (at least 12 hours). Please review Graduate Education's Hiring & Supervision page for more information.
    - The GTA/GRA position itself can count 3 hours towards a student's full-time status in Fall/Spring semesters and 6 hours towards a student's full-time status in Summer semesters.
    - At least 9 hours of coursework must be taken on a letter grade or pass/fail basis during Fall/Spring semesters. At least 6 hours of coursework must be taken on a letter grade or pass/fail basis during a Summer semester.

Important Notes for GTA/GRA Positions

- A GTA/GRA position is **NOT** guaranteed.
- MSCS advisors do **NOT** manage or assist with the hiring process and are unable to give insights as to open positions, applicants' qualifications, timelines for hiring, etc.
- It is our understanding, that the College of Computing (CoC) emails all returning MSCS students a GTA application and information within a few business days after the schedule of classes has been made available. Important semester dates can be found on the Academic Calendar.
- Students interested in receiving more information about CoC GTA opportunities should monitor their GT email inbox and junk/spam folders.
- At this time, there is no formal application for CoC GRA positions. Students interested in becoming a GRA should inquire about possible opportunities directly with faculty.
- GTA/GRA positions are audit based courses which can contribute towards a student's full-time status, but they will **NOT** count towards a student's MSCS degree.
- If a student is a visa holder and has questions about their visa/I-20, enrollment requirements/status, etc. their first point of contact should be an OIE advisor to ensure they are complying with visa rules, laws, policies, procedures, regulations etc.
- **Professors should NOT be directly contacted regarding potential openings for GTA positions.**

# Email Etiquette & Expectations

When sending an email to a faculty or staff member within the MSCS Program, it is important to adhere to the following:

1. Students should always provide their Student ID# in the form of xx1234567

2. Always be respectful.

3. Give faculty or staff at least 48 hours to respond to an inquiry before considering sending a follow-up message.
   a. **Keep in mind many Georgia Tech employees, particularly staff members, have working hours between 8:00am – 5:00pm ET Monday through Friday**. This means an email may not be checked in the evenings or on the weekends. For example, **if a student sends an email at 5:30pm on Friday, it likely will not be seen until after 8:00am on the following Monday.** The student should not consider sending a follow-up email until approximately Wednesday as emails are typically answered in the order they were received. **Please give faculty and staff ample time to reply to inquiries during working hours.**

# Campus Resources

Georgia Tech has many campus resources designed to help students achieve academic success as well as having a positive and memorable experience throughout their college journey. Below is a list of featured campus resources students may take advantage of. Please check Georgia Tech's Academic Resources page for more resources than what is highlighted below.

Financial Assistance

- Office of Scholarships & Financial Aid
- OIE – Financial Assistance for International Students
- Graduate Internship Program
- GTA/GRA - Assistantships

Health & Wellness

- Stamps Health Services
- Center for Mental Health Care & Resources
- LGBTQIA Resource Center
- Campus Recreation Center

Academic / Career Resources

- Georgia Tech Career Center
- College of Computing Career Services
- Georgia Tech Library
- Massive Open Online Courses

# **Georgia Tech Directory Information**

| Department & Website | Contact Information | Reason(s) to Contact |
|---|---|---|
| **Bursar's Office**<br>https://www.bursar.gatech.edu/ | **Phone**: (404)-894-4618<br>**Email**: bursar.ask@business.gatech.edu | Questions about tuition/fees, payments, refunds, 1098-T forms, etc. |
| **BuzzCard Center**<br>https://www.buzzcard.gatech.edu/ | **Phone**: (404)-894-2899<br>**Email**: Please complete the online webform here. | Questions regarding student BuzzCards. |
| **Campus Recreation Center (CRC)**<br>https://crc.gatech.edu/home | **Phone**: (404)-385-7529<br>**Email**: Please complete the online webform here. | Access to the CRC and other related resources. |
| **College of Computing Career Development**<br>https://www.cc.gatech.edu/computing-career-services | **Schedule an Appointment:**<br>https://gatech.joinhandshake.com/login | Questions regarding on-campus and virtual career fairs, in addition to help with job searching, interviewing, networking, career planning, and professional development. |
| **Commencement Office**<br>https://commencement.gatech.edu/ | **Phone**: (404)-385-2638<br>**Email**: events@gatech.edu | Information regarding upcoming Commencement ceremonies. |
| **Dean of Students Office**<br>https://studentlife.gatech.edu/ | **Phone**: (404)-894-6367<br>**Email**: studentlife@studentlife@gatech.edu | Student-support services, especially when students are facing extenuating circumstances. |
| **Georgia Tech Athletics**<br>https://ramblinwreck.com/ | **Phone**: (404)-894-5447<br>**Email**: tickets@athletics.gatech.edu | Information regarding Georgia Tech athletic events. |
| **Georgia Tech Career Center**<br>https://career.gatech.edu/<br><br>**Graduate Student Website**<br>https://career.gatech.edu/graduate-car | **Phone**: (404)-894-3320<br>**Email**: careercenter@gatech.edu | This is the central career services office that serves all students at the Institute. They offer services that allow students to explore careers, to prepare for the job market, and to connect with employers. Students can utilize their |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | workshops, career fairs, and the job and internship board. |
| **Office of Disability Services**<br>https://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/ | **Phone**: (404)-894-2563<br>**Email**: dsinfo@gatech.edu | Disability services for students needing support, resources, and/or accommodations. |
| **Office of Graduate Education**<br>https://grad.gatech.edu/ | **Phone**: (404)-894-1610<br>**Email**: grad.ask@grad.gatech.edu | Admissions-required documents such as undergraduate/graduate transcripts, English proficiency scores, clearing the lawful presence requirement, etc. |
| **Office of Information Technology**<br>https://www.oit.gatech.edu/ | **Phone**: (404)-385-5555<br>**Email**: Please submit a ticket with OIT at https://www.oit.gatech.edu/contact-us | Questions regarding technical support for Institute-related services. |
| **Office of International Education**<br>https://www.oie.gatech.edu/ | **Phone**: (404)-894-7475<br>**Email**: info@oie.gatech.edu | Resources and services for international students. |
| **Office of Scholarships & Financial Aid**<br>https://finaid.gatech.edu/ | **Phone**: (404)-894-2000<br>**Email**: finaid@gatech.edu | Questions regarding FAFSA, financial aid eligibility, financial aid disbursements, etc. |
| **Office of Student Integrity**<br>https://osi.gatech.edu/ | **Phone**: (404)-894-2566<br>**Email**: osi@mail.gatech.edu | Academic integrity issues or concerns. |
| **Registrar's Office**<br>https://registrar.gatech.edu/ | **Phone**: (404)-894-4150<br>**Email**: comments@registrar.gatech.edu | Transcripts, enrollment verifications, updating personal information, etc. |
| **STAMPS Health Services**<br>https://health.gatech.edu/ | **Phone**: (404)-894-1420<br>**Email**: Submit a Webform at https://health.gatech.edu/contact-us/ | Student health insurance, immunizations, healthcare-related services, etc. |
| **Technology Services Organization**<br>https://support.cc.gatech.edu/ | **Phone**: (404)-894-7065<br>**Email**: helpdesk@cc.gatech.edu | Questions regarding technical support or departmental-related services. |
| **Veteran's Services**<br>https://registrar.gatech.edu/veterans-s | **Phone**: (404)-894-4150<br>**Email**: veterans@registrar.gatech.edu | Serves as a liaison between GT veteran students and the Department of Veteran Affairs regarding VA-related educational benefits. |

Welcome to Georgia Tech and to the MSCS Program!

We hope the information provided throughout this handbook has been helpful. For additional questions and concerns regarding the MSCS Program's policies or procedures, please contact your academic advisor.

We look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

MSCS Advising
College of Computing
Georgia Institute of Technology