

# FAQ: M.S. Degree Requirements

## Q: Can I enroll in courses outside of the MatSE department?

**A:** Yes, students may take coursework outside of the department. Please note, any courses taken at the undergraduate 100-level, 200-level, 300-level, and some 400-level courses will not be applied towards overall degree progress. If you are unsure if a course will be counted towards your [MS degree requirements](#), please contact your MS academic advisor.

## Q: Do I need to take MSE 596: Graduate Introduction to Research?

**A:** This course is required if you plan to participate in research activities in any capacity while on the University of Illinois campus. If you do not plan on participating in research, this course is not required. However, it is recommended that all students take the course to familiarize themselves with key research principles, including lab safety, research ethics, hypothesis development, and experimental design. The course is offered for 1 credit hour which counts towards overall [MS degree requirements](#), and towards the required 500-level credits needed for the MS degree.

## Q: Is there a limit to how many hours of MSE 497 or MSE 597: Independent Study that an MS student can take?

**A:** MS students are eligible to participate in research experiences via Independent Study to focus on topics in materials science and engineering under the supervision of a member of the faculty. The course may be taken for 1 to 4 credit hours in a given semester. However, please note, only up to 4 credit hours of MSE 597 may be applied towards overall [MS degree requirements](#).

## Q: What are the implications of taking less than 12 credit hours in one semester?

**A:** Students are encouraged to register for at least 12 credit hours per semester. If on F-1/J-1 status, you must register for at least 8 credit hours to maintain visa status. If you plan to enroll in less than 8 credit hours, please contact ISSS before the semester begins, or before dropping below full-time. Failure to do so may result in the termination of your immigration status. Please check with ISSS regarding your specific situation.

## Q: What do I do if I have a conflict with MSE 595 (colloquium) or MSE 529/559 (hard/soft materials seminar)?

**A:** If you have a conflict with colloquium and/or seminar, please submit the [Non-registration of MSE 595 or MSE 559/529 Waiver](#) petition form via My.MatSE. Primary reasons to request a waiver include having a course conflict or an off-campus internship conflict. Please note this form must be submitted in any instance of needing a waiver. (I.e., if you are on internship for the Fall semester you will need to submit 1 request for colloquium, and 1 request for seminar.) Any instances of non-registration without a waiver must be resolved with the Associate Head of Graduate Studies prior to graduation.

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## Q: What does it mean to be on Academic Warning?

**A:** MatSE and the Graduate College monitors the academic progress of their students, including through annual academic reviews and grade reporting. Factors generally used to assess academic progress for MS include, but are not limited to, performance in course work, satisfactory and timely completion of all milestones as determined by the program, and overall graduate and/or program GPA. When students fail to meet these requirements, MatSE can recommend to the Graduate College that the student be placed on academic warning or dismissed (dropped) by the Graduate College. The Graduate College will review the recommendation. If it is determined that the student will be placed on academic warning, the Graduate College will communicate the length of the warning period and requirements for returning to Good Standing. See Chapter 3.2 of the [Graduate College Handbook](#) for the full policy.

## Q: Where can international students learn about Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT) processes?

**A:** International students on F-1/J-1 status may accept employment under certain conditions or circumstances. [International Student and Scholar Services](#) administers both CPT and OPT requests. Students must first initiate their requests for [CPT](#) or [OPT](#) through the ISSS system. Once the request is received, the MatSE Graduate Programs Office will follow-up with students directly for confirmation and details regarding CPT/OPT requests. Students will receive final notice regarding decision for request of CPT/OPT directly from ISSS.

## Q: How to I apply for a Social Security Number (SSN) as a part of CPT?

**A:** Students should fill out the [Request Letter of Eligibility for SSN e-form in iSTART](#) to request the Letter of Eligibility (if applicable) from ISSS. The ISSS office can mail the document to you, or you can collect it from our office. Please note our processing time for this request is one week, and mailing through USPS takes up to one or two weeks. You may also choose to have ISSS mail your document through express mail. For any question on this process, please contact ISSS.

## Q: Where can I find information on post-grad careers and employment?

**A:** The MatSE department frequently shares employment opportunities via the MatSE Graduate Students Slack #jobs-and-internships. All new students are added to the Slack. If you need assistance accessing the Slack, please contact the MatSE Graduate Programs Office. In addition, [Grainger Engineering Career Services](#) has several resources for job-seeking students. [Handshake](#) is the primary University-affiliated job board for students and recent graduates.