

Degree and Certificate Requirements

The following are WPI's minimum requirements for advanced degrees. The general requirements for all advanced degrees must be satisfied to earn any advanced degree. The additional requirements for specific degrees must be satisfied in order to earn the specified degree, regardless of the field in which the degree is earned. Please review department requirements for more specific information.

General Requirements for All Advanced Degrees

All degree requirements must be satisfied before the degree is awarded. Exceptions to general and specific degree requirements or to other rules may be made, but only by the Committee on Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR).¹ Requests for exceptions are to be made by written petition to that committee.

At the time the degree is awarded, the student must have been admitted to the graduate program of the degree-granting program. Administratively, a degree-granting program may be a department or a program.

A minimum of two-thirds of the required graduate credit for an advanced degree must be earned at WPI.

All degree and certificate programs require a minimum program GPA of 3.0.

In applying for graduation, the student must specify by year which graduate catalog contains the rules being satisfied. These rules may be those in place on the date of the student's matriculation, those in place on the date of the student's application for graduation, or those in place in a single graduate catalog in effect between the dates of matriculation and graduation.

After the Application for Degree is submitted, all advanced degrees are subject to the final approval of the Registrar's Office, which determines if the student has satisfied the letter and intent of the requirements for advanced degrees.

The Registrar's Office submits a candidates list to CGSR who make their recommendations for the approval of advanced degrees to the faculty of the institute, which in turn recommends to the president and trustees for their final approval the names of students who should be awarded advanced degrees.

Requirements for the Master of Business Administration and Master of Mathematics for Educators appear under the descriptions of the awarding programs.

General Requirements for the Master of Science and Master of Engineering

The student must obtain a minimum of 30 credit hours of acceptable course, thesis or project work.

If a thesis is required by the student's program, it must include at least 6 credit hours of research directed toward the thesis, in a project resulting in the completion of an M.S. thesis.

A student completing a master's degree with a thesis option is required to make a public presentation of the thesis. Departments may, at their option, extend the presentation to include a defense of the thesis.

The student must obtain a minimum of 21 credit hours of graduate level courses or thesis (18 credit hours for students in the Combined Bachelor's/Master's Program), including at least 15 credit hours of graduate level courses or thesis in the major field of the student. Other courses (to make up the minimum total of 30 credit hours) may include advanced undergraduate courses approved by the student's program. Such courses are normally considered to be those at the 4000 level. The use of advanced undergraduate courses for satisfaction of graduate degree requirements must be approved by the student's program. A 1/3-unit WPI undergraduate course taken for graduate credit is assigned 2 credit hours of graduate credit. A graduate student registered for graduate credit in an undergraduate course may be assigned additional work at the discretion of the instructor.

General Requirements for the Doctorate

The student must demonstrate to the faculty high academic attainment and the ability to carry on original independent research.

The student must complete a minimum of 90 credit hours of graduate work beyond the bachelor's degree, or a minimum of 60 credit hours of graduate work beyond the master's degree, including in either case at least 30 credit hours of research.

The student must establish residency by being a full-time graduate student for at least one continuous academic year.

The student must attain status as a doctoral candidate by satisfying specific degree requirements in the student's field.

The student must prepare a doctoral dissertation and defend it before a Dissertation Committee, at least two of whose members must be from the student's program and at least one of whose members must be from outside the student's program. After a successful defense, determined by a majority vote in the affirmative by the Dissertation Committee, the dissertation must be endorsed by those members of the Dissertation Committee who voted to approve it. The completed dissertation must follow in format the instructions published by the library. After final approval for format of the dissertation, the Provost will notify the Registrar that the dissertation has been approved.

Once a student has satisfied the departmental candidacy requirements, the student will be permitted to enroll for dissertation credits. Prior to completion of candidacy requirements, a student may enroll for no more than 18 credits of directed research.

General Requirements for the Combined Bachelor's/Master's Degree Program

Program Requirements

Only registered WPI undergraduates and WPI alumni (graduated within five years of Bachelor's degree completion) may apply for admission to the combined Bachelor's/Master's programs. To enter, a student must submit an application and required support materials to WPI's Office of Graduate Admissions, preferably in the junior year. Admission to the combined program is made by the faculty of the program that awards the graduate degree. A student in the combined program continues to be registered as an undergraduate until the bachelor's degree is awarded.

While in the combined program, a student may continue to enroll in courses or projects toward the undergraduate degree; the student may also register for graduate courses, projects, directed research or thesis credits toward the master's degree. In order to receive the Bachelor's degree and the Master's degree, all of the requirements for both degrees must be completed.

Students in the combined program may use advanced undergraduate courses to satisfy graduate degree requirements. The academic department decides which courses may be used in this way. Faculty members teaching these advanced undergraduate courses may impose special requirements. Note: no undergraduate credit may be counted toward a graduate business degree.

If the programs awarding the bachelor's and master's degrees are not the same, the program awarding the graduate degree may require that the student's major qualifying project relate in some way to the graduate program's discipline. The graduate program may also make other requirements as it deems appropriate in any individual case. Additional requirements appear within each department's section in this catalog.

In most departments a student may take up to four years of uninterrupted study to complete the Master's portion of the combined Bachelor's/Master's program. There are exceptions, however, so students are advised to discuss their timetable with the appropriate advisor or graduate coordinator. See department description for full information.

Students who stop registering for classes for an extended length of time may be asked to petition the Committee for Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR) to continue their program of study.

Credit Equivalence and Distribution

A student in the combined program may, within the program limit and with prior approval, use a limited number of the same courses toward the bachelor's and master's degrees. No more than 40% of the credit hours required for the Master's degree, and which otherwise meet the requirements for each degree, may be used to satisfy the requirements for both degrees. The limitation is computed from the graduate credit hours for each course. In some departments, students may not double-count more than 30% of their graduate credits. Consult the department entries in the graduate catalog for the requirements of your program.

Double-counted courses are recorded on the transcript using the credit hours/units and grades appropriate at the graduate or undergraduate levels. For students in the combined Bachelor's/Master's program, approved undergraduate courses are assigned graduate credit with a conversion rate of 1/3 WPI undergraduate unit = 2 graduate credit hours, while graduate courses applied toward the undergraduate degree are awarded undergraduate units with a conversion rate of 1 graduate credit hour = 1/6 undergraduate unit.

Planning Your Program

Because combined Bachelor's/Master's program students use some approved courses to satisfy the requirements of both degrees simultaneously, it is crucial for them to plan their curriculum early in their undergraduate career.

The specific course and MQP requirements for a combined Bachelor's/Master's program are determined individually, so students should consult with their own advisor as well as the graduate coordinator in the department in which they plan to pursue their Master's degree early in their Junior year. This consultation, or series of consultations, should produce a slate of approved undergraduate courses that will be used for graduate credit.

A student's advisor and graduate coordinator will also determine what role the MQP will play in the combined Bachelor's/Master's program. Sometimes the MQP provides a foundation for a thesis. In cases where the Bachelor's degree and Master's degree are not awarded in the same field, the MQP usually relates to the graduate program's discipline.

Once the specific course and MQP requirements have been established, students complete a Course Selection Form which is submitted to the relevant department(s) for approval. This written agreement constitutes the set of conditions that must be met for a student to complete the combined Bachelor's/Master's program. They are a plan for completing the requirements for both degrees and they will not supersede or otherwise obviate departmental and university-wide requirements for either degree.

General Requirements for Graduate and Advanced Certificates

Following admission, certificate students will be assigned an academic advisor. Within the first three months of admission, certificate students are required to obtain approval for their Plan of Study from their faculty advisor. The student, the academic advisor and the department will maintain copies of the Plan of Study. Students may initiate written requests to the advisor to modify the program. The student, the academic advisor and the department must retain copies of any approved program modification(s).

Academic policies regarding acceptable grade point averages for certificate students follow the same guidelines as those established for degree-seeking graduate students with the following exception: If a GC or AC student's grade point average falls below 2.5 after completing nine credits, he/she will be withdrawn from the program unless the academic department intervenes.

Satisfactory completion of a GC or AC requires a cumulative grade point average of 3.00 or better (A = 4.0) with individual course grades of C or better. Upon satisfactory completion of the program, students will receive a certificate of Graduate Study or a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study in the chosen discipline. Students are responsible for submitting the signed, completed Plan of Study to the Registrar's Office to receive the certificate.

Admission to a certificate program is not equivalent to admission to a degree program. However, many certificate students eventually choose to pursue a WPI degree program. Students enrolled in a certificate program who would like to pursue a master's or doctorate must meet the application and admission requirements for the specific degree program as described in the Graduate Catalog. All GC and AC course credits will apply to a WPI graduate degree provided that the student is admitted to a graduate degree program and the courses are acceptable to that degree program.

A student admitted into a certificate program who wishes to work toward a second certificate program must apply to that second certificate program for admission. The application fee will be waived for the second application. Courses counted toward one certificate may not count toward any other certificate.

Limitation of Time to Complete Degree

Students must complete degree requirements within the following timelines:

Degree	Time-Limit
Graduate or Advanced Certificate	Within 3 years of matriculation
Master's Degree (M.S., MENG, MME, M.Arch)	Within 5 years of matriculation
M.B.A.	Within 7 years of matriculation
Ph.D.	Within 10 years of matriculation

Approved leaves of absence do not stop the clock for the completion of the degree. Students who require more time to complete their degree must petition the Dean of Graduate Studies to continue.

Transfers and Waivers

A student may petition to use graduate courses completed at other accredited, degree-granting institutions to satisfy WPI graduate degree requirements. A maximum of one-third of the credit requirements for a graduate degree may be satisfied by courses taken elsewhere and not used to satisfy degree requirements at other institutions.

Students should submit their petitions to their academic department or program; once they are approved they are filed with the Registrar.

To ensure that work completed at other institutions constitutes current practice in the field, a WPI program may set an expiration date on transfer credit. After this date, the course may not be counted towards a WPI degree.

Transferred courses are recorded on the student's WPI transcript with the grade CR and are not included in the calculation of grade point averages. Grades earned in Biomedical Consortium courses, however, are recorded on the transcript as if they were taken at WPI itself.

A student who withdraws from a graduate program and is later readmitted may apply courses and other credits completed before the withdrawal toward the degree. The admitting program will determine at the time of readmission which courses taken by the student may be applied toward the degree and the latest date those courses may be applied. There is no limit, other than that imposed by the program, on the number of credits a readmitted student may use from prior admissions to the same degree program.

With the appropriate background, a student may ask permission to waive a required course and substitute a specified, more advanced course in the same discipline. Requests are subject to approval by the student's program and must be filed with the Registrar within one year of the date of matriculation in the program. A program may waive (with specified substitutions) up to three required courses for a single student.

Acceptability of Credit Applicable to an Advanced Degree

Graduate level credit, obtained from courses, thesis and project work, may include:

- Coursework included in the approved Plan of Study.
- Coursework completed at the graduate level and successfully transferred to WPI from other accredited, degree-granting institutions (see Transfers and Waivers).
- Graduate coursework completed at the undergraduate level at WPI and not applied toward another degree.

A maximum of one-third of the credit requirements from one graduate degree, either completed or in progress, at WPI may be used in partial fulfillment of the requirements for another graduate degree at WPI.

No credit may be triple counted for any degree at any level of study.