Frequently Asked Questions, for Current Students

1. How do I transfer graduate credits from another academic institution?

Graduate credits from other institutions are approved as part of your overall degree plan as laid out in your Graduate Degree Plan (GDP). When you file your GDP and it is signed by your advisor and the director of graduate studies, the transfer of credits takes place. For PhD students there is no limit on the number of courses you may transfer, but they must be approved. In general, no more than 20 course credits from another institution will be approved for transfer. For MSME students you may transfer up to 40% of your coursework with approval. To get approval, you must complete a GDP in conjunction with your advisor. On the form, list the courses you wish to transfer as they appear on your original transcript; do not convert to equivalent courses. All transfer work is contingent on the approval of your advisor and the director of graduate studies.

2. If I have completed all required formal coursework, which courses do I register for in order to complete my degree if I am working as an RA, TA, or fellowship student?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MSME student</th>
<th>PhD Student</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ME 8777</strong> - Master’s thesis credits. These credits are for MS Plan A students. You need to take a minimum of 10 thesis credits, but can take more. These credits do not replace the required 20 credits of formal course work. They cannot be used for a Plan B or transferred for the PhD.</td>
<td><strong>ME 8888</strong> - Doctoral thesis credits. These credits are for PhD students. You need to take a minimum of 24 thesis credits, but can take more. These credits do not replace the required 38 credits of formal course work.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ME 8333</strong> - MS FTE (Full Time Equivalency) class. This course number is used to maintain your full-time status once you have completed all other course requirements. You only register for one credit, but are considered to be a full time student. In order to register for ME 8333 you need to apply to the Graduate School a semester in advance.</td>
<td><strong>ME 8444</strong> - PhD FTE (Full Time Equivalency) class. This course number is used to maintain your full-time status. This course number is used to maintain your full-time status once you have completed all other course requirements and thesis credits. You only register for one credit, but are considered to be a full time student.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ME 8794</strong> - MSME Directed Research. These credits are for MS Plan B students. You may take up to 4 credits towards your Plan B project. These credits cannot be used towards a Plan A or PhD.</td>
<td><strong>ME 8666</strong> - Pre-thesis credits. These are credits you take if you have completed all required course work and have not passed your Preliminary Oral Exam. These credits cannot be applied towards your degree. Students who believe they need to take pre-thesis credits are encouraged to explore reduced course load (RCL) if they are international students, to minimize the number of pre-thesis credits they must take.</td>
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For students enrolling in GRAD 0999-see question 3
3. How do I maintain active status as a graduate student if I am not taking formal courses or working as an RA or TA?

The Graduate School requires students to be registered each fall and spring semester to maintain active status with the Graduate School. If you are inactive with the Graduate School you will be discontinued, and be required to fill out a Change of Status form for readmission. There are several options to keep your status active:

Students with RA or TA appointments should identify the proper courses to enroll in in the chart above (under the answer to question 2). For students without such appointments, GRAD 0999 is a zero credit/no fee class that will maintain your active status with the Graduate School. However, it will not maintain your full-time status for anything else such as a paid appointment (RA or TA), visa status, or deferred student loans. International students can get a waiver from ISSS to register for GRAD 0999, but must check with ISSS before registering. Students are limited to two registrations of GRAD 0999, anything further requires permission of DGS. In general, the department of mechanical engineering only allows students to enroll in GRAD 0999 for two consecutive semesters. Students without any form of appointment longer than this may want to look into a leave of absence.

4. Can I audit classes?

You may audit classes while in the Graduate program. You will be billed for audited courses; yet they will not count toward your required classes. Audited course credits do not count toward the minimum 6-credits to be considered full time. To maintain your visa or assistantship status, you must be registered for 6 credits in addition to any audited courses. For these reasons, auditing courses is not encouraged by the department.

In addition, if you are auditing classes, and your total course load exceeds 14 credits (full-time maximum credit load) you will be billed for all credits over 14; these credits are not covered by RA, TA, or fellowship appointments. For example, if you are registered for 12 credits and you audit one 4 credit class you will be billed for 16 credits. If you hold an assistantship, you will be billed and must pay any credits above 14. We advise you to consult your academic advisor when registering for classes.

5. How do I switch from the MSME to PhD?

Transferring from the MSME to PhD program involves completing a Change of Status form with the Graduate School. Please note that this form is somewhat misnamed; to switch from the MSME to PhD degree the change of status from is technically an entirely new online application to the PhD program, and it will be evaluated for admission. Provided you have a letter from a faculty member that he or she is willing to work with you as an advisor and support you as an RA (not a TA), along with an updated SOP, the change of status form will be accepted for admission to the PhD program. Otherwise, the application will be placed in a pool and compared to new PhD applications from outside the University. However, if you were admitted to the MS program through the integrated program you will need to submit a copy of your GRE scores.
6. When can I register for thesis credits as a PhD student?
You may register for thesis credits after you pass the Preliminary Oral exam. Please see John Gardner in the mechanical engineering office after you have scheduled your preliminary oral exam (e-mail gardn032@umn.edu or set up an appointment) to learn more about thesis credit sign up at that time.

7. Can I get a MS degree if I am a PhD student?
Yes. It is every PhD student's option to obtain a MSME degree. To do so, simply file a GDP form for the MSME degree as well as the PhD. Once the GDP form for both degrees is approved you will need to have an approved committee to obtain the appropriate paperwork to defend the MSME as well as the preliminary oral exam.

8. Do the courses that I take as an MSME student count towards the 38 credits for a PhD?
All the credits for an MSME may be counted toward the PhD course requirements except for ME8777, ME8794. All credits are subject to approval on the GDP form.

9. Can I make changes to my GDP form?
Yes. File a petition form to request changes in course work to your GDP. If you wish to change your committee members, please reassign your committee online. Please note, petitions are approved rather quickly, while the original GDP can takes weeks for approval. For this reason we ask that you file your GDP within your first year of graduate studies.

10. What should I register for if I am still working on research after I am done with my thesis credits?
Please see Question #2.

11. Will my stipend change after I finish all my coursework and thesis credits?
Yes, provided you maintain the same appoint level. The semester after you have completed your 24 PhD thesis credits, you can register for ME 8444. This course is used to maintain your full-time status once you have completed all other course requirements. You only register for one credit, but are considered to be a full time student. You will receive an increase in your stipend. Keep in mind that you must register for ME 8444 and cannot register for any other courses. Exceptions cannot be made to the rules regarding ME 8444.

12. I am enrolled as a PhD student, but I want to get a Plan A masters degree and then change to a new thesis topics and/or faculty advisor for my PhD. Do I need to fill out any forms or formally change my status?
If you wish to change advisors and research topic, you should consult with your present advisor, the director of graduate studies, as well as your new advisor to help you make an easy transition. There is no special form other than the degree plan forms for the MS and PhD.
13. What's the difference between a 25% and 50% appointment?

A 50% appointment is considered a “full” appointment as it provides an annual stipend in excess of $28,000 and full tuition coverage. With a 25% appointment you receive half this stipend and half of tuition is covered. You additionally qualify for in-state tuition. Both appointment levels provide health insurance. For Graduate Health insurance please see the following page:

http://www.shb.umn.edu/twincities/graduate-assistants/graduate-assistant-health-plan.htm

14. If I am registered for GRAD 0999 or less than 6 credits, do I still get library, recreation center, e-mail privileges, etc.?

You will want to contact the office providing the service you are seeking to inquire about minimum registration requirements as these privilege rules do change year-to-year.

15. I received a MS or PhD degree from the University of Minnesota, how do I apply to the Mechanical Engineering program?

For students who received a graduate degree from the University of Minnesota you do not need to complete a new application. However, you will need to file a Change of Status Form which is extremely similar to the online application with the Graduate School Admissions Office.

16. When I go to fill out the Change of Status Form I see there is an Express Readmit, can I just complete that form?

The ME program does not allow Express Readmits. You will need to complete the Change of Status Form for us to review.