



PAUL M. RADY DEPARTMENT OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING
GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, BOULDER

2024-2025 ACADEMIC YEAR



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Graduate Program Overview

1

1.1 Department Vision

The Department of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Colorado, Boulder (CU) will develop new scientific understanding, launch innovative technologies, and nurture creative engineers who will solve pressing societal challenges to improve health, enhance security, and create a clean and sustainable energy future. Faculty, students, and staff in the department seek to:

- **Be known for high-impact research:** Our faculty are internationally known for strengths in biomedical engineering, renewable and sustainable energy, and materials innovation. We plan to build that same prominence in soft robotics, imaging complex media, and quantum technologies. Our faculty and students will continue to publish in high-impact journals, spin off technology companies, become future faculty, and serve on national advisory boards.
- **Be a national leader in project-based education:** Project-based learning improves training for the practice of engineering, and project-based education provides the best opportunity to connect research and educational activities. Specifically, we will establish our leadership through faculty and student fellowships and awards.
- **Be a national leader in inclusive excellence:** Research shows that diversity in engineering teams and in companies leads to more innovative and successful outcomes. We feel strongly that we all deserve the opportunity to be global leaders in engineering.
- **Support engaged scholarship, an innovative spirit, and a collaborative community including alumni:** Our faculty are recognized nationally and internationally, and our students go on to successful careers in industry, academic, and the public sector. We seek to broaden the impact of our program through outreach and to also maintain close connections with our alumni so that we can be as responsive as possible to current trends in hiring, research, and instruction.

1.2 Graduate Program Mission Statement

The CU mechanical engineering graduate program supports the **department vision** by establishing an environment of respect and inclusive excellence where high-quality instruction, project-based learning, and cutting-edge research are leveraged to educate and nurture the next generation of socially conscious, deeply knowledgeable engineers, scientists, and problem-solvers. We are uncompromising in our belief that respect, inclusiveness, accountability, community engagement, honesty, and a commitment to excellence are the core values of any successful graduate program. These are the values that we work to continuously promote in students,

faculty, and staff, so that our graduates become our greatest ambassadors.

1.3 Degree Programs

With nearly 60 research and instructional faculty members, listed [here](#), our graduate students have access to dynamic and interdisciplinary research and courses within our PhD, master's degree, and certificate programs.

- **PhD Program:** Mechanical engineering PhD students at CU take part in cutting-edge, tier-one research, learning from nationally and internationally recognized faculty. Our research harnesses state-of-the-art experimental, theoretical, and computational approaches to expand the frontiers of technology, while advancing fundamentals in a wide range of disciplines.
- **Master's Degree Programs:** Mechanical engineering master's degree students can take graduate courses and participate in research as part of four different programs.
 - *Master of Science (MS) Professional Program:* The MS Professional Program is our most popular master's degree option, offering exciting opportunities for a wide range of prospective students from diverse backgrounds. It emphasizes project-based and curriculum-driven learning and is targeted at working engineers and undergraduates considering a career in industry.
 - *Master of Science (MS) Thesis Program:* The MS Thesis Program is intended for MS students interested in a short-term research experience, leading to the preparation and defense of a research-based thesis. The program emphasizes education through high-quality research for students interested in careers in industry and the public sector.
 - *Bachelor's Accelerated Master's (BAM) Program:* The BAM degree program offers currently enrolled CU mechanical engineering undergraduate students the opportunity to receive bachelor's and master's degrees in a shorter period of time.
 - *Joint Mechanical and Environmental Engineering BAM Degree Program:* The mission of this joint BAM degree is to equip students with advanced understanding of principles in environmental science, environmental engineering and mechanical engineering. Students earn a bachelor's degree in environmental engineering and a master's degree in mechanical engineering.
 - *Dual Degree Mechanical Engineering and Engineering Management Program:* Students in the MS Professional Program may apply for a dual degree in Engineering Management. This program is intended for students seeking a strong education in both technical and fundamental topics, as well as the unique skills required to be a successful leader in industry and the public sector.
- **Certificate Programs:** Either degree-seeking or non-degree students can enroll in course certificate programs offered by our department. These certificates indicate expertise in a focused topic area and are intended primarily for continuing education and non-traditional students, though they can be pursued as a supplement to the master's or PhD curricula.

1.4 Contact Information and Personnel

The Department of Mechanical Engineering is located in the Engineering Center at CU, with the following physical and mailing addresses:

Physical address ([map](#)):

1111 Engineering Drive
Boulder, CO 80309

Mailing address:

427 UCB
Boulder, CO 80309-0427

Overall administration of the graduate program, review of applications, and admissions decisions are handled by the graduate committee. This committee consists of roughly ten current members of our faculty, as well as our lead graduate teaching fellow, a representative from the Committee for Equity in Mechanical Engineering (CEME) and two graduate student representatives from the PhD and master's degree programs. Faculty on the graduate committee change from year to year and represent a range of different research and educational areas in our department.

During the 2024-2025 academic year, Prof. Daven Henze will serve as Graduate Program Chair. Vera Dorosh is

the Graduate Program Manager responsible for graduate program administration, PhD recruitment/admission, and certificate programs, Anna Guy is the Senior Graduate Specialist responsible for PhD academic advising and administration, Megan Varra is the Graduate Program Specialist who oversees MS recruitment, admission, and advising, and Mary Young provides graduate program support. Pablo Botin is the 2024-2025 Lead Graduate Teaching Fellow.

2024-25 Graduate Leadership, Advising, and Administration:

- **Dr. Daven Henze**, Professor, Graduate Program Chair
daven.henze@colorado.edu, ECME 265
- **Vera Dorosh**, Graduate Program Manager
vera.dorosh@colorado.edu, ECME 107
- **Anna Guy**, Senior Graduate Specialist, PhD Students
anna.guy@colorado.edu, ECME 105A
- **Megan Varra**, Graduate Program Specialist, MS Current and Prospective Students
megan.varra@colorado.edu, ECME 105
- **Mary Young**, Graduate Program Coordinator (part-time)
megrad@colorado.edu
- **Pablo Botín**, Lead Graduate Student Teaching Fellow 2024-2025
pablo.botin@colorado.edu

If you have a question and are not sure who to contact, you can also email megrad@colorado.edu.

1.5 Student Expectations and Policies

A complete list of CU student, faculty, and staff policies, to which the mechanical engineering graduate program rigorously adheres, can be found [here](#). Graduate school policies are available [here](#) and a more comprehensive list of campus policies is available [here](#). Select expectations and policies of greatest relevance to mechanical engineering graduate students are provided in the following sections.

1.5.1 Honor Code Policy

All students of CU are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion).

The University Honor Code and Procedures are accessible via the Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution website and can be viewed [here](#). All Department of Mechanical Engineering graduate students are expected to adhere to this code.

1.5.2 Classroom Behavior Policy

Students and faculty each have a responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to instructors with the student's legal name, but instructors will honor student requests to address them by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Students should advise instructors of this preference early in the semester so that they may make appropriate changes to their records. Additional policy details are available [here](#).

1.5.3 Discrimination and Harassment Policy

CU is committed to providing an inclusive environment where all individuals can achieve their academic and

professional aspirations free from discrimination, harassment, and/or related retaliation based upon protected classes.

CU prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of protected-class status in admission and access to, and treatment and employment in, its educational programs and activities. For purposes of this CU policy, “protected classes” refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation, and political philosophy.

CU takes prompt and effective steps reasonably intended to stop any form of protected-class discrimination and harassment, and related violations, to eliminate any hostile environment, to prevent its recurrence, and as appropriate, to remedy its effects.

At CU, the **Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance** (OIEC) implements this policy and administers related campus procedures. Anyone who encounters an issue or seeks guidance related to this policy should consult with the OIEC. CU Boulder employees who are mandatory reporters (i.e., “Responsible Employees”), including faculty and graduate advisors, must promptly report allegations of protected-class discrimination and harassment, and related violations, as further outlined in the policy.

The full university Discrimination and Harassment Policy can be viewed [here](#).

Instructors are required to observe religious holidays for absences from class and exams, according to the policies outlined [here](#).

1.6 Mental Health and Other Campus Resources

Students with a variety of concerns, such as academics, anxiety, body image, depression, relationships, substance use and more, should contact Counseling & Psychiatric Services (CAPS), which is a confidential, on campus mental health and psychiatric service.

Counseling & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

Website: <https://www.colorado.edu/counseling/>

Phone: 303-492-2277 (24/7 phone)

Location: Center for Community, N352

Office Hours

The Office of Victim Assistance (OVA) also provides free and confidential information, consultation, support, advocacy, and short-term counseling services to CU students, graduate students, faculty and staff who have experienced a traumatic, disturbing or life disruptive event.

Office of Victim Assistance (OVA)

Website: <https://www.colorado.edu/ova/>

Email: assist@colorado.edu

Phone: 303-492-8855 (24/7 phone); after hours press 2 to talk to a counselor

Location: Center for Community, N450

Office Hours

Additional campus resources can be found [here](#) and more general health resources are available [here](#).

1.7 Grievance Procedures

The Graduate School established revised grievance procedures, effective April 1, 2019, that can be found [here](#): **Graduate School Grievance Procedures**. These procedures are intended to provide a process by which graduate students can communicate concerns related to academic issues or academic conflicts. An additional brief guide is available [here](#). Should a student need any assistance with these procedures, they should reach out to their Graduate and/or Faculty advisor, where appropriate.

1.8 Departmental Staff Contacts

A comprehensive list of the financial, advising, communications, human resources (HR), and facilities staff members available to help faculty and students in our department can be found in the [Staff Directory](#). Students can also email megrad@colorado.edu with questions.

1.9 Academic Calendar and Registration Deadlines

Details on the current academic calendar can be found [here](#). Additional information on course add/drop, tuition/fees, and registration deadlines is available from the [Office of the Registrar](#). While the Graduate Program will make every effort to provide general reminders and information about important dates throughout the academic year, students are expected to be aware of any add/drop deadlines and tuition/fees impacts of their enrollment decisions. If you are unsure of the consequences of adding/dropping a course (especially outside of your university designated enrollment window), please reach out to megrad@colorado.edu.

1.10 Helpful Links

Additional resources and information of relevance to prospective and current mechanical engineering graduate students can be found at:

- **University Home Page:** <https://www.colorado.edu>
- **Graduate School:** <https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/>
- **College of Engineering:** <https://www.colorado.edu/engineering/>
- **Department of Mechanical Engineering:** <https://www.colorado.edu/mechanical/>
- **ME Department Calendar:** <https://www.colorado.edu/mechanical/news-events/me-department-calendar>
- **Buff OneCard:** <https://www.colorado.edu/buffonecard/>
- **Bursar's Office:** <https://www.colorado.edu/bursar/>
- **Campus Policies:** <https://www.colorado.edu/policies/>
- **Graduate School Catalog:** <https://catalog.colorado.edu/graduate/>
- **Medical Services:** <https://www.colorado.edu/healthcenter/>
- **Office of Information Technology:** <https://oit.colorado.edu>
- **Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance:** <https://www.colorado.edu/oiec/>
- **Office of the Registrar:** <https://www.colorado.edu/registrar/>
- **Parking and Transportation:** <https://www.colorado.edu/pts/>
- **Recreation Services:** <https://www.colorado.edu/recreation/>
- **Athletics:** <https://cubuffs.com>
- **Local News:** <https://www.dailycamera.com>
- **Elevations Credit Union:** <https://www.elevationscu.com>
- **Regional Transportation District (RTD):** <https://www.rtd-denver.com>



Admissions

2

2.1 Overview

In the Department of Mechanical Engineering, we have a diverse group of graduate students who benefit from—and directly support—an inclusive and supportive educational environment that emphasizes shared excellence. The admissions process plays a critical role in maintaining these values, and we seek to continue growing our graduate program by emphasizing diversity, participation by under-represented groups, community engagement, and technical excellence.

Graduate admissions decisions are made by a committee comprised of the graduate program chair, the graduate advisors, and faculty from the department. When making admissions decisions, this committee conducts a holistic review of all application materials, including the completed application form, grade point averages (GPAs) from prior undergraduate and graduate courses, and transcripts, as well as a statement of purpose, prior job and research experience, and recommendations from individuals who have had an opportunity to observe the ability and performance of the applicant. Although GPA is considered in admissions decisions, it is examined in the broader context of the entire application, also taking into account the quality of the undergraduate institution.

Consistent with our mission to create an inclusive environment, substantial consideration is given to special qualities such as student motivation, undergraduate program, initiative in research, professional engineering experience, diversity in economic, social, or cultural background, employment or other experience, leadership, and perseverance in overcoming personal handicaps or disadvantages.

2.2 Eligibility

2.2.1 PhD and Master's Degree Programs

To be eligible for either the PhD or master's (i.e., Professional MS or MS Thesis) degree programs, students must hold an undergraduate degree in engineering, sciences, or mathematics from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. A complete list of accredited institutions and agencies is available from the [Database of Accredited Post-Secondary Institutions and Programs](#).

Given the technical and quantitative nature of our graduate courses, any such degree should have included—or exceeded—the following course recommendations:

- Undergraduate courses in calculus, linear algebra, and differential equations;
- Two semesters of undergraduate calculus-based physics;

- At least two semesters of upper-division undergraduate courses in engineering or physics.

If an interested student has an undergraduate degree that does not cover these recommended courses, the graduate advising team should be consulted at megrad@colorado.edu prior to applying. If a student has completed prior graduate coursework or a graduate degree that addresses some or all of the above course recommendations, they are fully eligible to apply for either the PhD or master's degree programs, even if the undergraduate degree does not satisfy the recommendations.

Scores from either the general or subject graduate record examination (GRE) are not required or accepted as part of applications to the mechanical engineering graduate program. Note also that students do not need a master's degree to be admitted to the PhD program. Many of our PhD students enroll directly from their undergraduate institution with only a bachelor's degree.

Although we recognize that the GPA alone does not paint a complete picture of an applicant's prior performance and future potential, our most competitive applicants meet the following targets:

- **GPA:** For PhD applicants, the preferred undergraduate and graduate GPA is 3.4 or above, and for master's applicants the preferred undergraduate and graduate GPA is 3.2 or above.

International applicants are also required to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), or the Duolingo English Test (DET). Preferred scores for each of these tests are the following:

- **TOEFL:** The minimum required score is 80, but a score of 90 or above is preferred, particularly for PhD applicants seeking a Teaching Assistant (TA) position.
- **IELTS:** The minimum required score is 6.5, but a score of 7.5 or above is preferred.
- **Duolingo English Test (DET):** The minimum required score is 120.

The TOEFL/IELTS/Duolingo requirement is waived for international applicants for whom English is their native language, or who have completed at least one year of full-time study at a U.S. institution (or at an institution in a country where English is the native language), within two years from the desired admission term. The list of countries exempt from the TOEFL/IELTS/Duolingo requirement can be found [here](#).

2.2.2 Provisional Admission

The CU Graduate School requires applicants to have a cumulative minimum GPA of 3.0 from prior undergraduate and graduate study in order to be accepted into either the PhD or master's degree programs on a non-provisional basis. Occasionally, applicants with below a 3.0 GPA who demonstrate exceptional credentials in the non-GPA components of the application may be offered admission on a provisional basis.

Further information for students admitted on a provisional basis is available [here](#). To meet the standard terms of provisional admission, the student must complete 12 credit hours in two semesters at CU (or equivalent for part-time students) with a 3.00 cumulative GPA. Program faculty may recommend additional or alternative conditions as appropriate.

According to university policy, students admitted on a provisional basis are not eligible to hold an appointment (i.e., a teaching or research assistant position), without special permission, until they fulfill the specific conditions of their provisional admission. Consequently, the department cannot guarantee initial funding availability for applicants admitted on a provisional basis.

2.2.3 Bachelor's Accelerated Master's (BAM) Degree Program

Current CU mechanical engineering undergraduate students who meet the following criteria are eligible for admission to the BAM degree program in mechanical engineering:

- Must have a cumulative GPA of 3.25 or higher;
- Must have no [Minimum Academic Preparation Standards \(MAPS\)](#) deficiencies (Students who matricu-

lated Summer 2023 and after will not need to meet MAPS as a part of BAM admission requirements);

- Must have at least junior class standing (60 credits completed);
- Must have completed four of the following six courses:
 - MCEN 3012: Thermodynamics
 - MCEN 3021: Fluid Mechanics
 - MCEN 3022: Heat Transfer
 - MCEN 3025: Component Design
 - MCEN 3030: Computational Methods
 - MCEN 3032: Thermodynamics 2

Course substitutions listed on the MD Undergraduate Program [curriculum website](#) and cross listed courses in the CU Boulder catalog will be approved for substitution of the above courses for admission purposes. If you are pursuing substitution for courses, please reach out to megrad@colorado.edu before applying.

Students who plan to complete a double major(s) and/or minor(s) are also eligible for admission to the BAM program. In such cases, in addition to the [BAM Intent Form](#), students must submit the BAM Double Major/Minor Certification form, which can be obtained by emailing the graduate advisors at megrad@colorado.edu.

Undergraduate students in the partnership program between CU and Colorado Mesa University (CMU) can be admitted to the BAM degree program if they satisfy the requirements above (or equivalent), if their CU GPA is above 3.0, and if their combined CMU and CU GPA is above 3.25.

2.2.4 Joint Mechanical and Environmental Engineering BAM Degree Program

Any student actively enrolled in the Environmental Engineering B.S. degree program may consider pursuing the BAM degree program, with a master's degree in mechanical engineering, provided that the following requirements have been satisfied:

- Must have a cumulative GPA of 3.25 or higher;
- Must have no [Minimum Academic Preparation Standards \(MAPS\)](#) deficiencies; (Students who matriculated Summer 2023 and after will not need to meet MAPS as a part of BAM admission requirements)
- Must have at least junior class standing (60 credits completed);
- Must have completed the following courses:
 - APPM 2360: Introduction to Differential Equations with Linear Algebra
 - Fluid Mechanics: This requirement may be fulfilled by completion of any one of the following courses:
 - * CHEN 3200 (Chemical Engineering Fluid Mechanics);
 - * CVEN 3313 (Fluid Mechanics);
 - * GEEN 3853 (Fluid Mechanics for Engineers);
 - * MCEN 3021 (Fluid Mechanics).
 - Thermodynamics: This requirement may be fulfilled by completion of any one of the following:
 - * AREN 2110 (Thermodynamics);
 - * CHEN 3320 (Chemical Engineering Thermodynamics);
 - * GEEN 3852 (Thermodynamics for Engineers);
 - * MCEN 3012 (Thermodynamics);
 - * EVEN 3012 (Thermodynamics 1).

Students applying for the BAM program will be eligible to pursue a secondary major(s) and/or a minor(s) and/or certificate(s) at the undergraduate level.

2.2.5 Dual Degree Mechanical Engineering and Engineering Management Program

Students in the mechanical engineering Professional MS program are eligible to pursue a dual master's degree in Engineering Management. Engineering management requires an undergraduate degree in engineering and

a 3.0 or higher GPA from a regionally accredited institution. For full eligibility requirements, please visit the [Engineering Management prospective student page](#). Graduate students in Engineering Management are also eligible for admission to the ME master's degree program, provided that they meet the eligibility requirements outlined in Section 2.2.1.

2.3 Application Requirements

2.3.1 PhD and Master's Degree Programs

For students not currently enrolled as undergraduate or graduate students at CU who would like to be considered for the PhD or master's (i.e., Professional MS or MS Thesis) degree programs, the following items must be submitted (requirements and procedures are provided in Section 2.7 for internal applicants and current students seeking to change degree programs within the Department of Mechanical Engineering and/or CU):

- **Application:** An application must be completed through the official [graduate school admissions website](#). Through this application, students can select the degree program to which they are applying (i.e., PhD or Professional MS), as well as the most relevant focus area (described in more detail for the PhD program in Chapter 4 and for master's degree programs in Chapter 5). Note that the MS Thesis program does not offer direct entry. Students interested in the MS Thesis program should apply to the MS Professional program. If admitted, students can formally switch to the thesis program upon securing a thesis advisor. Also, the choice of focus area is not binding and is intended primarily to assist with application review and balancing student numbers in different areas.
- **Application Fee:** An application fee of \$60 for domestic and \$80 for international applicants must be paid at the time of application. Additional information on application fee waivers is provided in Section 2.3.4.
- **Curriculum Vitae:** A complete academic curriculum vitae (CV) detailing prior education, work, and research experience, as well as honors, awards, publications, conference presentations, and community engagement and outreach activities, must be provided. Helpful guidelines on the creation of academic CVs have been compiled by [Cornell University](#) and the [University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign](#).
- **Personal Statement:** A personal statement must be provided by each student that describes academic and research interests, prior research and professional experience, achievements, and/or additional information that the admissions committee should be aware of. Students applying for the PhD program, and those interested in the MS Thesis program, are encouraged to describe faculty and research groups with whom they are interested in pursuing research. The best personal statements tell a story and do not simply repeat information that can be found on the CV. Rather, the personal statement is where a student can outline their interests, future goals, and how their prior educational, research, and professional experiences have prepared and motivated them to pursue a graduate degree from CU. The specific prompt for the personal statement is the following:
 - *Please upload a document (maximum 2 pages) describing your past work in your proposed or allied fields of study, including but not limited to: non-course educational experiences, teaching, or other relevant employment; community service and outreach; participation in activities and initiatives related to diversity, equity, and inclusion; publications, theses, research in progress, and other scholarly activities; your plans for graduate study and a professional career.*
- **Transcripts:** Unofficial transcripts must be provided from coursework at all post-secondary institutions (including community college courses, courses taken for college credit during high school, and study abroad coursework, even if this coursework shows as transfer credit on another transcript). Applicants offered admission who choose to matriculate at CU will be required to provide official transcripts for all schools attended prior to the beginning of their first semester.
- **Recommendation Letters:** Three letters of recommendation for PhD applicants and two letters of recommendation for MS applicants must be included in the application. Names and contact information for recommendation letter writers are solicited as part of the online application process. The strongest letters come from instructors/professors, research advisors, work supervisors, and others who can provide

detailed comments on the potential of the student to succeed in graduate-level engineering coursework and, for PhD and MS Thesis interested students, research. Letters of recommendation from those outside of academia and/or research, as well as instructors of classes where a student received a poor grade or made little impression, are unlikely to help an application. Letters from family members will not be considered.

- **TOEFL/IELTS/Duolingo Scores:** International students must submit unofficial TOEF, Duolingo or IELTS scores using the institution code 4841 for CU. Once students are admitted, they must then submit official language scores in order to receive an I-20 for their visa application. This requirement is waived for international students who qualify under the following conditions: (a) the student's native language is English, or (b) the student has completed at least one year of full-time study at a U.S. institution (or at an institution in a country where English is the native language), at the time of submission, or within two years from the desired admission term. The list of countries exempt from the TOEFL/IELTS/Duolingo requirement can be found [here](#).

To receive full consideration, all required application materials (including recommendation letters, unofficial transcripts, and unofficial TOEFL/IELTS/Duolingo scores) must be received by the deadlines outlined in Section 2.4.

GRE scores (either general or subject) are not required or accepted as part of a graduate application.

Note that all applicants for master's degrees must initially apply to the Professional MS degree program; direct entry to the MS Thesis program is not offered as it requires a commitment from a research advisor, which typically occurs after a student has enrolled at CU. Additional information on finding a research advisor for both PhD and MS Thesis applicants is provided in Section 2.9.

We recognize that financial support is an important consideration for prospective PhD and master's degree students, and additional detail on offers of admission and funding options in our department is provided in Section 2.6 and in Chapter 3.

2.3.2 Bachelor's Accelerated Master's (BAM) Degree Programs

Eligible students based on the criteria outlined in Sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4, including students in the CU/CMU partnership program, may apply to either the traditional BAM program or the joint mechanical and environmental BAM program by completing the [BAM Intent Form](#). If a student plans to complete a double major, they should also submit the BAM Double Major/Minor Certification form, which can be obtained by emailing the graduate advisors at megrad@colorado.edu. All applications for admission to the BAM program will be promptly reviewed by the mechanical engineering graduate program staff in accordance with the requirements outlined in Sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4.

2.3.3 Dual Degree Mechanical Engineering and Engineering Management Program

Students in the MS Program are eligible to apply for the dual degree in mechanical engineering and engineering management. Admission to the engineering management degree is determined by the Engineering Management department. Please visit the [Engineering Management Program admissions website](#) to learn more.

Current Engineering Management MS students interested in applying for an MS degree in mechanical engineering should consult the internal application procedures outlined in Section 2.7.

2.3.4 Application Fee Waivers

The mechanical engineering graduate program recognizes that the application fee may be a challenge for some applicants. Our program is committed to providing educational opportunities for a diverse range of applicants and strives to waive application fees whenever possible. Please do not hesitate to contact us at megrad@colorado.edu with any questions about the various fee waiver opportunities listed below.

1. Graduate School fee waivers are available for participants in the following programs. If you are affiliated with one of these programs, please email proof of your affiliation to gradadm@colorado.edu before you

apply to receive a waiver.

- AmeriCorps (currently serving)
 - Louis-Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP)
 - McNair Scholars Program
 - Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC) Scholars Program
 - Peace Corps (currently serving)
 - Post-baccalaureate Research Education Program (PREP)
 - Teach for America
 - Leadership Alliance
2. Members of the US military will receive an automatic application fee waiver from the graduate school upon submission of the application.
 3. Domestic PhD candidates with a 3.4 or higher undergraduate GPA who apply for admission prior to November 15, 2024 will receive an automatic application fee waiver upon submission of the application.
 4. Faculty members may request fee waivers for international PhD applicants by sending the name and application number of the international student to megrad@colorado.edu.
 5. Fee waivers are available directly from the department for PhD or master's applicants who are not eligible for the Graduate School fee waiver (see above for requirements for the Graduate School fee waiver), who are a US citizen, US permanent resident, or DACA recipient, and meet any one of the following:
 - The application fee is a financial hardship.
 - The applicant is a first-generation college student.
 - The applicant is/was involved in any organization aimed at increasing access to higher education and/or improving the higher education experience for students from underrepresented backgrounds. Some examples of organizations that meet this requirement include:
 - National Society for Black Engineers (NSBE) members/participants;
 - Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE);
 - TRiO program participant;
 - CU Boulder Guardian Scholars Program;
 - GEM Fellowship applicant;
 - Bill and Melinda Gates Millennium Scholars;
 - CU Boulder's SMART and/or STEM Routes program participant.
 6. Fee waivers are available to any CU Boulder undergraduate student applying to the PhD program.
 7. Fee waivers may be requested for applicants eligible for accommodations via the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Please note that students who chose not to utilize accommodations they were eligible for while an undergraduate are still eligible for a fee waiver.

To request a fee waiver from the department, please email megrad@colorado.edu before you apply. Please include proof of affiliation or an explanation of your eligibility in your email.

2.4 Deadlines

2.4.1 PhD Degree Program

In general, our department accepts PhD applications from external (i.e., anyone not currently enrolled at CU) applicants for the fall term only. To receive full consideration, students should submit all application items noted in Section 2.3.1 by the following deadlines:

- **International applicants:** December 1, 2024
- **Domestic applicants:** December 15, 2024

Note that domestic PhD applicants with a 3.4 or higher undergraduate GPA who apply for admission prior to November 15, 2024 are eligible for an application fee waiver that is automatically applied at the time of application.

In limited cases, external PhD applications may be accepted and reviewed for the spring or summer semesters. Typically, these applicants are transfer students who have already identified a CU PhD advisor. In such instances, the graduate advising team should be consulted at megrad@colorado.edu prior to applying. Applicants in this scenario should plan to ensure submission of all required application documents as soon as possible and no later than one month prior to the anticipated semester of matriculation.

Requirements and procedures for internal (i.e., current CU student) applicants to the PhD program are provided in Section 2.7.

2.4.2 Master's Degree Programs

Master's degree applicants are welcome to apply for either a spring or fall semester start. To receive full consideration, all required application items (including recommendation letters and unofficial transcripts) must be submitted by the following deadlines for each term. International applicants must also submit unofficial language scores from TOEFL, IELTS, or Duolingo. Once an applicant is admitted to our graduate program, they must submit official language scores in order to be granted an I-20:

- **International applicants:** October 1, 2024 (for spring 2025) and February 1, 2025 (for fall 2025)
- **Domestic applicants:** October 15, 2024 (for spring 2025) and February 1, 2025 (for fall 2025)

Requirements and procedures for internal (i.e., currently enrolled CU student) applicants to the master's degree programs are provided in Section 2.7.

Note that direct entry into the MS Thesis program is not permitted. Students interested in the MS Thesis program should apply to the MS Professional program. Upon procuring a thesis advisor, students admitted to the MS Professional program can formally switch into the MS Thesis program.

2.4.3 Bachelor's Accelerated Master's (BAM) Degree Programs

Eligible students interested in applying to any of the BAM programs associated with mechanical engineering can do so throughout the calendar year via the **BAM Intent Form**. Submission of applications is recommended during either the fall or spring semesters of a student's junior year. Specific deadlines for submission of an application to the BAM program are as follows:

- September 25, 2024 for students graduating with their BS in fall 2024;
- January 27, 2025 for students graduating with their BS in spring 2025;
- February 24, 2025 for students graduating with their BS in summer 2025.

Applicants considering applying later in their undergraduate career should familiarize themselves with all deadlines and requirements for progressing from undergraduate to graduate status on the **BAM website**.

2.4.4 Dual Degree Mechanical Engineering and Engineering Management Program

Students currently in the Department of Mechanical Engineering who wish to pursue the dual degree with Engineering Management should reach out to Ms. Kendra Thibeault at kendra.thibeault@colorado.edu for guidance on any deadlines for application.

Students in the Engineering Management Department wishing to pursue the dual degree with mechanical engineering can reach out to the graduate advisors at megrad@colorado.edu with questions. Please also see Section 2.7 for further information on internal applications.

2.5 Recruiting Activities

2.5.1 Graduate Engineering Annual Research and Recruitment Symposium (GEARRS)

The Graduate Engineering Annual Research and Recruitment Symposium (GEARRS) is an annual event that provides an overview of current research within the Department of Mechanical Engineering for a select group of domestic prospective PhD students. This event, which is held annually on the CU campus, offers a platform for the exchange and development of new ideas among members of the Department, industry, and prospective students. Research presentations are delivered by current PhD students and cover a wide variety of topics that

include thermofluid sciences, bioengineering, robotics & controls, materials, micro/nano systems, air quality, and environmental sciences. Additional details on GEARRS can be found at <https://www.cugearrs.com/>.

Prospective students at GEARRS have numerous opportunities to meet with faculty and current students, and attendance at GEARRS is an important step towards finding a potential research advisor. Note that not all students given financial offers will have selected a research group or advisor by the time of matriculation at CU; every year a number of PhD students enter our program and join research groups within their first semester.

Attendance at GEARRS is by invitation only; the Department covers hotel, food and local transportation costs, as well as up to \$325 for airfare costs. During the 2024-2025 academic year, the event will be held in late February 2025; invitations are typically sent out by late-January 2025. The event occurs over a three-day period and consists of presentations from faculty and current students, group meals, lab tours, individual meetings between prospective students and faculty, and recreational activities in Boulder. Information for GEARRS 2025 will be posted, as available, [here](#).

2.5.2 International PhD Applicants

International students are highly valued members of the research, educational, and cultural communities in our department. International PhD applicants who aren't able to join the on-campus GEARRS events will be invited to a remote event in February or March.

In order to facilitate one-on-one contact with potential faculty advisors, particularly strong international PhD applicants will be contacted by mid-January to arrange video meetings with at least one member of the graduate admissions committee. Subsequent video meetings with other members of our faculty are also common.

Most importantly, prospective international PhD applicants are afforded equal consideration to domestic applicants, with respect to both offers of admission and offers of financial support, and we make every effort to maintain high levels of contact with international students.

2.5.3 Master's Degree Program Visit Day

Each year, a select group of master's Degree Program applicants will be invited to campus for a recruiting event, usually in March. Invited students will hear about course offerings and be given the opportunity to ask questions during panel discussions with faculty and current students. Those students interested in pursuing an MS Thesis degree will be given the opportunity to meet one-on-one or in small groups with potential faculty research advisors. A small amount of funding will be available to support travel and accommodations for the MS Visit Day, and this support can be requested at the time of invitation.

2.6 Offers of Admission and Funding

2.6.1 PhD Degree Program

Students applying to the PhD program will automatically be considered for funding as part of the admissions application process. The department is committed to funding PhD students throughout the course of their studies. As such, students offered admission can expect a funding offer that includes a stipend, tuition coverage, dental coverage, and 90% of university health insurance coverage for the next academic year.

If invited, domestic PhD applicants are strongly encouraged to attend GEARRS, and international PhD applicants are strongly encouraged to talk via video conference with a member of the admissions committee.

Funding offers in the first year of the PhD degree take the form of mixed TA/RA appointments. All first-year TA/RA appointments are supported by the department (referred to as "departmental funding") and typically span the duration of the first academic year (i.e., 9 months, from August 15 to May 14). RA appointments may be supported by individual faculty with funding from research grants or externally sponsored projects. RA appointments typically span the duration of the first academic year as well.

A number of incoming and current students also hold external fellowships, for example the National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship. These students are considered "Fellowship" students. In

many cases, this type of funding provides 3 years of support, and the department is committed to providing 1-2 years of additional funding for Fellowship students to complete their PhD degrees.

By the start of the first summer after enrollment, all PhD students are expected to be supported on RA appointments by funding from a research advisor, or by external fellowships. Although the specifics of funding beyond the first year may vary from one student to another, the department is committed to funding all PhD students who are making adequate progress towards their degrees for the duration of their studies. Gaps in PhD student funding after the first year are handled using the [Application for Department Support](#), described in more detail in Section 3.9.

In addition to appointments, PhD students may receive supplementary fellowships from the department or the College of Engineering as part of their funding offer. In most cases, these are one-time awards that can be used towards costs not covered by the TA/RA appointment, such as student fees and room and board costs. Additional detail on fellowships and other financial awards is provided in Chapter 3.

2.6.2 Master's Degree Programs

Generally, master's students are expected to self-fund their studies and, in nearly all cases, are admitted to the MS program with no offer of funding. Specifically, TA and RA funding from the department is reserved for PhD students, although a limited number of MS Thesis students may receive a TA or RA appointment through their research advisor. Such appointments are left to the discretion of the advisor and are not guaranteed even with acceptance or transfer into the MS Thesis program.

In accordance with Graduate School regulations, students in the Professional MS program are not eligible for RA or TA appointments. However, funding opportunities for Professional MS students do exist in the form of hourly employment.

Master's degree applicants are also eligible to receive some departmental scholarships and fellowships. Additional detail on scholarships, other financial awards and hourly employment is provided in Chapter 3.

2.6.3 Offer Acceptance Deadlines

The deadline for applicants to accept offers of admission and funding are:

- **PhD Degree Program:** April 15, 2025
- **Master's Degree Program:** December 1, 2024 (for spring 2025) and April 30, 2025 (for fall 2025)

Note that an offer of either admission or funding is only considered “accepted” if the enrollment deposit is paid, in full, by the above deadlines. If the deposit is not paid and no request for deferral has been made prior to the deadline, the offer will be considered as “declined” and will be rescinded by the department at its discretion.

2.6.4 Deferrals

Students who have accepted an offer of admission to either the PhD or master's programs may request a deferral of their admission for up to one year. Both PhD and MS students may request to defer their admission to either the following fall or spring semester. Deferral requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis and should be communicated by email to megrad@colorado.edu.

Note that students deferring an offer that includes financial support (e.g., a TA appointment) will be required to submit the admissions deposit in order to secure the offer for a future semester. Some sources of funding may not be deferred to future terms, including departmental scholarships. Applicants considering deferment should make sure to clarify the future availability of any funding offer.

2.7 Internal Applicants and Changes of Program

Current CU students, both inside and outside the department, can apply to either our master's or PhD degree programs by completing the [Internal Graduate Program Application Form](#). After completing this form and satisfying the other requirements noted below, applications are reviewed in full by the graduate admissions committee. All candidates for admission, including internal applicants, are evaluated based on the same high

standards of eligibility outlined in Section 2.3.

2.7.1 Transfers within the Department of Mechanical Engineering

Before initiating any program change process, we recommend that students and any faculty member they may be working with reach out to the graduate program directly at megrad@colorado.edu for guidance on these procedures. Requirements for each category of in-department program change are as follows:

- **From BS/BA to Professional MS, MS Thesis, or PhD:** All current CU undergraduate students, including those in mechanical engineering but not in the BAM program, are required to submit applications according to the requirements outlined in Section 2.3 and the deadlines outlined in Section 2.4.
- **From Professional MS (including BAM) to MS Thesis:** Current ME graduate students can be considered for these program changes by completing the [Internal Graduate Program Application Form](#). Submit the form by December 1 to request a spring semester start, April 1 to request a summer semester start and August 1 to request a fall semester start.
- **From MS Thesis to MS Professional:** Same as above.
- **From PhD to MS Professional or MS Thesis:** Same as above.
- **From BAM, Professional MS, or MS Thesis to PhD:** There are two paths by which current mechanical engineering graduate students may apply for transfer into the PhD program, depending on their interest in receiving departmental support as a TA/RA:
 - **With departmental funding:** Students seeking departmental funding must submit the [Internal Graduate Program Application Form](#) by January 15. Applications in this category are accepted only for a fall semester transfer. Students will be considered, in conjunction with all external candidates applying to the PhD program, for a full academic year TA or RA appointment.
 - **Without departmental funding:** For current graduate students not seeking departmental funding because they have a fellowship (e.g., NSF or NDSEG), have secured funding from a research advisor as an RA, or are self-supported, the [Internal Graduate Program Application Form](#) must be completed. For these students, the transfer into the PhD program can be requested for any semester. Submit the form by December 1 to request a spring semester start, April 1 to request a summer semester start and August 1 to request a fall semester start.

For all students transferring into the PhD program, the following items are required in order to submit the [Internal Graduate Program Application Form](#):

- The name and contact information of a current member of the CU faculty (ideally in mechanical engineering) who can comment on the appropriateness of the change into the PhD program. In the case of students transferring into the PhD program without departmental funding, this letter should come from a research advisor who commits to supporting the student for the duration of the PhD.
- A two-page statement from the student outlining research interests, prior research and professional experiences, and reasons for pursuing a PhD degree.
- Unofficial transcripts from CU and all prior undergraduate and/or graduate institutions.
- A current copy of the student's CV. Helpful guidelines on the creation of academic CVs have been compiled by [Cornell University](#) and the [University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign](#).

Note that BAM students are only eligible to transfer into the PhD program if they have already completed their undergraduate degree(s); additional requirements may be applicable as well.

Additionally, BAM students are prevented by university policy from counting any credits towards the PhD degree that were already applied towards both the undergraduate and master's degrees; therefore, additional coursework beyond the requirements for the master's degree will be required.

2.7.2 Transfers within CU

All current CU undergraduate students outside the Department of Mechanical Engineering, but not in the

BS/MS or BAM programs, are required to submit applications according to the requirements outlined in Section 2.3 and the deadlines outlined in Section 2.4. Application fees are waived for these students.

For current graduate students in other departments at CU, transfers into either the master's or PhD degree programs can again be initiated by completing the [Internal Graduate Program Application Form](#). Additionally, all such applicants are required to provide:

- The name and contact information of a current member of the CU faculty who can comment on the appropriateness of the change into the mechanical engineering graduate program. In the case of students transferring into the PhD program without departmental funding, this letter should come from a research advisor who commits to supporting the student for the duration of the PhD.
- A two-page statement from the student outlining reasons for pursuing a degree in mechanical engineering, as well as research interests and prior research and professional experience if the student seeks to transfer into the MS Thesis or PhD programs.
- Unofficial transcripts from CU and all prior undergraduate and/or graduate institutions.
- A current copy of the student's CV. Helpful guidelines on the creation of academic CVs have been compiled by [Cornell University](#) and the [University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign](#).

Students requesting transfer into either 1) the MS program; or 2) the PhD program, without request for department funding (i.e., those with an external fellowship or funding secured directly from the Research Advisor), are eligible to transfer at the beginning of any semester. The [Internal Graduate Program Application Form](#) should be submitted by December 1 for requests to begin during the spring semester, April 1 for requests to begin during the summer semester, and by August 1 for requests to begin during the fall semester.

PhD applicants seeking department funding are only eligible for transfer beginning in a fall semester. In these cases, the form must be submitted by January 15 to be considered for transfer beginning the following fall semester. Students will be considered, in conjunction with all external candidates applying to the PhD program, for a full academic year TA or RA appointment.

Note that these procedures and requirements apply even to students who are changing from another PhD program at CU into the mechanical engineering PhD program.

As with in-department transfers, BAM students are only eligible to transfer into the PhD program if they have already completed their undergraduate degree(s); additional requirements may be applicable as well.

Additionally, BAM students are prevented by university policy from counting any credits towards the PhD degree that were already applied towards both the undergraduate and master's degrees; therefore, additional coursework beyond the requirements for the master's degree will be required.

2.8 Certificate, Non-Degree, and Continuing Education Programs

2.8.1 Mechanical Engineering Certificates

The Department of Mechanical Engineering offers four graduate certificates: 1) Advanced Mechanics and Failure Analysis, 2) Biomedical Engineering, 3) Food Engineering, and 4) Mechanical Design and Product Development.

Internal applicants who are currently-enrolled graduates students or BAM students in graduate standing at CU Boulder in engineering, sciences, or mathematics and have a 3.0 CGPA or higher are eligible to apply by completing this [certificate application form](#).

Nondegree students will need to submit the following application items in the [Nondegree Graduate Certificate Application Form](#).

- Statement of purpose: One page explaining how the graduate certificate will benefit your professional and/or personal interests.
- Resume or CV

- Unofficial undergraduate transcript. If you have a graduate transcript, you may submit that as well.
- Language scores (required only for international applicants)

For more information, please visit the [Graduate Certificates webpage](#), email megrad@colorado.edu, or go to Section 6.4.

2.9 Finding an Advisor

For PhD students, it is extremely helpful to begin your first semester having already picked a research advisor, or to secure one within the first month of classes. Students interested in the MS Thesis program can utilize the resources in the section, but should note that, in nearly all cases, a research advisor is not procured until after matriculation. You can read more about our faculty and their various research interests [here](#).

An excellent opportunity for applicants to meet with potential advisors is during the department's annual GEARRS recruiting event for PhD students and MS Visit Day for students interested in the MS Thesis program. If invited to attend, you will receive the opportunity to meet with faculty whose research interests you. We highly recommend identifying one to three advisors that you would enjoy working with and that are engaged in research that aligns with your interests. When you have identified advisors that you would like to work with, keep the conversations going even after your visit. Professors are happy to talk to prospective students on the phone, through Zoom or by email.

Below are a few tips as you discover what research group is the best fit for you:

- Investigate many different advisors, but keep in mind that some lab websites are not up to date with the most current research, so make sure to email and ask professors about their current work.
- Ask for contact information of lab group members and get their input on the strengths and weaknesses of their lab.
- Ask about what your role as a lab member may look like.
- Share your long-term goal for your PhD, even if you haven't yet figured out how to accomplish that goal. Professors love to hear what you are passionate about.
- Ask questions! Remember it is just as important to find a lab culture that is a good fit for you as it is to find a research topic that is interesting. We recommend asking questions like the following to both faculty and current graduate students.

Questions to ask a potential advisor:

- Are you taking new students?
- What would my role as a lab member look like?
- How many graduate students and post docs are currently in the lab?
- How would you describe the lab culture?
- What makes someone a good fit for this group?
- How would you describe your advising style?
- How would you describe graduate school in general?
- Do you collaborate with other research groups on or off campus?
- Is there funding for the project that I am interested in?
- Do you expect your students to apply for external funding?
- How many years do graduate students in your lab typically TA?
- How often do you meet with your students?
- How often do students attend conferences?
- What professional development opportunities are there in the lab?
- How do you feel about students taking a summer to do an internship?

Questions to ask other graduate students in the lab:

- Is the PI accessible?

- How would you characterize the PI's advising style (e.g. hands on, hands off)?
- Does the lab group do any activities together throughout the year?
- What are other student's technical backgrounds?
- What makes someone a good fit for this lab?
- How did you decide to join this lab?
- What do you like most about working in this lab group?
- Are there aspects of this group culture that you wish you could change?



Tuition, Fees, and Funding

3.1 Overview

We recognize that the cost of studying and living in Boulder is an important consideration for students of all levels. Although tuition and fees are set by the university, in the department we attempt to provide as much financial support as possible for our graduate students. This support includes multi-year teaching and research assistant (TA and RA, respectively) appointments, hourly employment opportunities, and travel grants for students giving presentations at conferences. Through these funding opportunities, we attempt to promote educational and research excellence, diversity, and community, while ensuring that graduate students are able to complete their degrees without undue or unforeseen financial burden.

3.2 Tuition and Fees

Because tuition and fees are charged at variable rates based on residency, program, student status, and number of enrolled credits each semester, a good understanding of the structure of tuition and fees can help to maximize the return on educational investment.

Detailed information on tuition and fees is available at [this section](#) of the [CU Bursar's Office website](#). After choosing the appropriate semester on this page, PhD and MS Thesis student tuition rates are listed under the "Graduate" heading, while MS Professional tuition rates are listed under the "Professional Graduate" heading.

Fees are determined based on a number of factors. To determine the fees for which you are responsible, first identify your graduate status on the [Graduate School website](#). Then, a full list of mandatory fees, by graduate status, can be found on [on the fees section](#) of the Bursar's Office website.

Important tuition and fee policies to note are:

- Fees accompany even 1 credit hour of tuition and should be taken into account when calculating educational costs.
- New domestic PhD students, including current CU students switching into the PhD program, are required to establish Colorado residency within 1 year of starting the PhD program. Further details on the requirements to establish residency are provided in [Section 3.3](#).
- Students must be enrolled in classes during the first semester in which they enter a new degree program, requiring the payment of tuition and fees. For this reason, it is uncommon (although not impossible) for students to start new degree programs during summer terms.

Further questions about tuition and fees can be directed to the graduate advisors at megrad@colorado.edu.

3.3 Establishing Residency

New domestic PhD students who are not already Colorado residents must establish residency prior to the beginning of their second year. Any student wishing to establish Colorado Residency, including MS students, should take action immediately. Instructions on how to do establish residency are available from [the Registrar's Office](#). Additional residency guidelines are available [here](#). It takes exactly one year to gain residency and residency status may affect the possibility of future funding opportunities. Students should plan to complete the residency petition in their second semester.

3.4 Funding Overview

3.4.1 PhD Students

First year PhD students are typically funded by the department with a TA in one semester and an RA in the other semester. PhD students in their second year and beyond are typically funded by their research advisor(s) as an RA through support from sponsored projects, research grants, and contracts. University policy requires appointments for all graduate students be administered on a semester-by-semester basis. As such, if students have any questions about future funding, we encourage them to discuss plans with their faculty research advisor early each semester. Additional questions regarding funding can be directed to either the graduate advisors at megrad@colorado.edu or the [graduate program chair](#).

In cases where funding for a current PhD student has not been secured or is not possible via other sources, the research advisor can apply for departmental support on the student's behalf. The [Application for Departmental Support](#) is available to faculty each semester, including summer. The Graduate Committee reviews applications for departmental support with consideration for availability of funds, previous history of departmental support for the student and the faculty member's financial need. Further detail on this application process is provided in Section [3.9](#).

3.4.2 Master's Degree Students

Students admitted to the master's degree program, including BAM students, are expected to secure their own financial support. Although the department does offer a number of scholarship opportunities, detailed in Section [3.6](#), recipients will still be expected to cover the majority of their cost of attendance either independently or via external sources. Scholarship application requirements and timelines may vary, but will be marketed through the departmental e-mail listserv for current graduate students, as well as on the [departmental website](#).

While MS Thesis students are eligible for TA and RA appointments, these opportunities are very rare. There is no formal application process for MS Thesis students to pursue assistantships. A student's thesis advisor, at their discretion, may offer an assistantship upon demonstration of exceptional promise in research and academics.

Students in the Professional MS program are not eligible for TA or RA appointments, but are eligible for hourly employment as graders, administrative assistants, and research assistants. These positions do not provide coverage of tuition, fees, or health benefits, but do provide hourly pay, usually at a rate of \$19.50 per hour. Requests for hourly support can be submitted via the [Hourly Employment Interest Form](#). The department will solicit students interest in hourly employment prior to each fall and spring semester via the graduate program student listserv.

3.4.3 Sources of Funding

When making sense of different assistantships, appointments, and fellowships, it can be helpful for students to be aware of the different sources of funding that they may come across:

- **Departmental funding:** This funding comes directly from the department in the form of TA or RA appointments and is ultimately allocated by the graduate committee. Individual faculty advisors may be consulted prior to departmental funding decisions, but this funding does not come from sponsored projects or grants. New PhD students are often given departmental support in the form of TA positions, and the [Application for Departmental Support](#) can be used by faculty advisors to request support for

Funding Type	Program		
	PhD	MS Thesis	MS Professional
Teaching Assistantship	✓	*	✗
Research Assistantship	✓	*	✗
Chair's Graduate Assistantship	✓	*	✗
Entrepreneurial Scholarship	✗	✓	✓
Diversity Scholarship	✗	✓	✓
University Graduate Fellowship	✓	✗	✗
Chair's Graduate Fellowship	✓	✗	✗
Tom and Brenda Geers Award	✓	✗	✗
Singh Award	✓	✓	✓
Vogel Family Fellowship	✓	✗	✗
Summer Fellowship	✓	*	✗

Table 1: ✓ = eligible for this funding type; ✗ = not eligible for this funding type; * = eligible for this funding type, but opportunities are limited/rare.

current students.

- **Sponsored project and grant funding:** This funding comes from externally funded sponsored projects and grants connected, for example, to the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Department of Defense (DoD). Such funding is nearly always used to support RA appointments, with final funding decisions made by individual faculty advisors. Although “gift” funding is contractually different than funding from sponsored projects and grants, it is also typically disbursed by individual faculty advisors in the form of RA positions.
- **Startup funding:** In some cases, students may hear about “startup” funding, in the form of either TA or RA appointments, that faculty may have access to. These are positions promised to faculty by the department but, in contrast to “departmental funding”, individual faculty advisors are responsible for deciding when and how to use these positions.
- **Fellowship funding:** This funding is provided by external sources such as the NSF, NIH, or DoD in the form of graduate fellowships (Section 3.8 provides more detail on different types of fellowships). In some cases this funding may be connected to a particular faculty research advisor, but generally students receiving this funding are not contractually obligated to a particular sponsored project, grant, or advisor.

3.4.4 Funding Eligibility Quick Guide

To aid students in finding funding opportunities within the department, we have prepared a funding eligibility quick guide, shown at the top of this page as Table 1. Detailed descriptions of each opportunity are provided in the following sections.

3.5 Assistantships

Assistantships are the primary mechanism for financially supporting PhD students. Recipients are awarded coverage of tuition, 90% of university health plan costs, dental insurance, and a living stipend in the form of a monthly salary. Students on an assistantship are required to work, either in a teaching or research capacity, for up to 20 hours per week during the fall and spring terms. During the summer term, students are eligible to receive assistantships with a 40 hours per week work commitment and an increased living stipend, although most students remain on a 20 hour per week appointment throughout the year. Details of assistantships can vary depending on your faculty advisor; we recommend that all current and prospective students communicate regularly with their faculty advisor about expectations for assistantship funding.

All PhD students are eligible for assistantships. While eligible, MS Thesis students receive assistantship funding on a very limited basis. MS Professional students are not eligible to receive assistantships from any department.

Further information on appointments is available in the [CU Graduate Student Appointment Manual](#).

3.5.1 Teaching Assistantships

Teaching assistants (TAs) play a vital role in supporting the educational mission of the department and the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences. Under the mentorship of faculty, students have the opportunity to develop their pedagogical skills and further enhance their knowledge in the engineering field. Extensive information and resources for TAs are available in Appendix G.

In most cases, TAs will be assigned to support an undergraduate mechanical engineering course. However, in limited cases, some students may support graduate-level and/or courses outside the department.

The number of TA hours allocated to each course is dictated primarily by the number of students enrolled in the course. TA assignments are made by the graduate chair and graduate advisors with input from instructors, PhD advisors, and students. Prior to assignment of TAs, a survey is sent to students requesting course preferences and, in nearly all cases, TAs are assigned to one of their top-three preferred courses.

3.5.2 Research Assistantships

In most cases, research assistants (RAs) are funded directly by faculty through sponsored project or grant funding. As such, specific duties will vary based on the nature of the research and the faculty member. In conjunction with the PhD curriculum, research assistantships provide broad exposure to the research process from grant proposal to publication.

In addition to faculty funded research assistantships, PhD students may be offered a special assistantship in recognition of their outstanding potential. All PhD applicants are automatically considered for special assistantships with their application for admission. Current PhD students are not eligible to be considered for special assistantships.

- **Chair's Graduate Assistantship:** The Chair's Graduate Assistantship is funded by the Department of Mechanical Engineering. It is intended to support outstanding students during their first year of graduate studies, with an emphasis on selection of candidates that demonstrate exceptional leadership and contribution to diversity.

3.5.3 Compensation Rates

Monthly stipend compensation rates for student assistantships, based on PhD student status, are the following:

- *Pre-comprehensive exam:* \$3,224 per month
- *Post-comprehensive exam:* \$3,466 per month

Additional detail on these PhD student statuses is available in Chapter 4. MS Thesis students with RA/TA appointments are paid at the pre-comprehensive exam compensation rate.

3.5.4 English Language Proficiency Requirement

International students assigned as RAs or TAs are required by the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences to take an English language screening test, administered by the [International English Center](#) and described in more detail [here](#). If a student fails this test, they may either be recommended or required to take the course ELSG 1130: Pronunciation for International Graduate students, described [here](#). This course is designed for international graduate students who want to polish and refine their spoken English skills. For students required or recommended to take this course, the cost of the course (\$880 total) will be fully covered for them.

3.6 Scholarships and Fellowships

3.6.1 Diversity Scholarship

Diversity and inclusivity are values embodied in the strategic visions of both the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences and the Department of Mechanical Engineering. We are committed to fostering a diverse and equitable environment for our students in all respects, inclusive of financial support. The Diversity Scholarship offers incoming and current students the opportunity to apply for funding worth \$1,000 – \$4,000 per year.

The application for the Diversity Scholarship will be available each year. The graduate program will market, the application deadlines and specific requirements for the scholarship via the graduate student listserv. While students may apply for the scholarship during any semester the application is open, preference will be given to students who have not previously been awarded a diversity scholarship.

3.6.2 Entrepreneurial Scholarship

As one of the top public Mechanical Engineering departments in the United States, conveniently located in one of the most well-respected technology hubs in the country, entrepreneurial opportunities are abound in Boulder. Students with a demonstrated ability and/or interest in entrepreneurship may apply for the scholarship, which may be worth between \$1,000 – \$4,000 per year.

The application for the Entrepreneurial Scholarship will be available each year. The graduate program will market, the application deadlines and specific requirements for the scholarship via the graduate student listserv. While students may apply for the scholarship during any semester the application is open, preference will be given to students who have not previously been awarded an Entrepreneurial Scholarship.

3.6.3 Singh Graduate Fellowship

Shrawan Kumar Singh and Sudha Singh have generously established a fellowship intended to provide financial support to mechanical engineering students pursuing graduate studies within the department. Students that have research interest in bioengineering and/or biomechanical studies are given preference for this fellowship. Award amounts and lengths may vary. Students will automatically be considered for this fellowship by the graduate committee and departmental leadership.

3.6.4 Tom and Brenda Geers Graduate Fellowship

Thomas L. and Brenda Geers have generously established a fellowship intended to provide one student pursuing a PhD in mechanical engineering with fellowship support. Students who are pursuing work in solid and/or fluid mechanics that have attained post-prelim status are eligible for the fellowship. Possible fellows are considered automatically by the graduate committee and may be awarded a fellowship for up to three years. Award amounts may vary and only one student at a time can be designated a Geers Fellow.

3.6.5 Vogel Family Fellowship

Herbert and Karen Vogel have generously established a fellowship intended to provide one mechanical engineering student pursuing research in the area of thermodynamics, heat transfer or fluid flow with fellowship support. Possible fellows are considered automatically by the graduate committee and may be awarded a fellowship for up to three years.

3.6.6 University Graduate Fellowships

University Graduate Fellowships are awards supported by the University of Colorado and the Graduate School. PhD applicants are automatically considered with their application for admission. University Graduate Fellowships are awarded to the top applicants for each incoming class of PhD students. Fellowship amounts can vary, with a maximum award of \$5000 per year. These awards are provided in addition to the tuition, health insurance and living stipend provided by a student's assistantship.

3.6.7 Chair's Graduate Fellowships

Chair's Graduate Fellowships are awards supported by the Department of Mechanical Engineering. PhD applicants are automatically considered for this fellowship with their application for admission. Chair's Graduate Fellowships are awarded to applicants that show exceptional potential during the admissions process. These awards are provided in addition to the tuition, health insurance and living stipend provided by an assistantship.

3.6.8 Summer Fellowships

PhD students who have not received an assistantship offer for the summer term who wish to continue working in their lab may be considered for a summer fellowship. These fellowship awards do not cover any summer tuition costs or health/dental insurance. The fellowship is intended to supplement summer living expenses

while the student continues to support faculty research. The amount of the fellowship is equivalent to three months of pay at the rate appropriate to the status of the student (provided in Section 3.5.3).

Applications for summer fellowships are submitted using the Application for Department Support process, described in detail in Section 3.9.

Please note that students on a summer fellowship are not considered university employees. As such, they MUST be set up as a POI (Person of Interest) through the department's HR representative prior to the start of the summer semester. Failure to take this step will result in losing access to labs and other areas of campus that require a POI or employment status, as well as inactivation of procurement and travel cards.

Additionally, students should understand that fellowships are paid in one lump sum, rather than spread throughout the summer semester. Students should plan accordingly to ensure their funds last through the summer. Pay stubs are not generated for summer fellowship students due to the nature of this type of compensation. If you have need to demonstrate your summer income for any purpose (i.e., verification of income for housing, etc.), please reach out to your graduate advisor, who will be happy to write a letter to explain the nature of your summer funding.

3.7 Hourly Employment

The department regularly employs graduate students in hourly positions. Students in hourly positions may engage in either course, research, or administrative support. Hourly pay for a research project requires the commitment and support of a faculty advisor.

Hourly positions typically span 5-20 hours per week during the academic year and up to 40 hours per week during the summer. Students in hourly positions are not permitted to work more than 20 hours per week during the academic year or 40 hours per week during the summer. Compensation rates vary by position.

Hourly employment is available for any graduate student who is not funded through a TA or RA position or similar external funding, though requirements can vary based on position.

The graduate program typically requests students interested in hourly employment complete the [Hourly Employment Interest Form](#) twice per year; once for consideration for fall positions and once for spring positions. The graduate program will reach out to students, via the graduate student listserv, when applications are open. Selection for these positions can be competitive due to semester-to-semester variance in the number of positions available. Please note that while a faculty member may provide an informal offer of hourly employment, all hourly employees must be reviewed (for eligibility purposes) and approved by the graduate program before an official offer of employment can be made.

Occasionally, hourly employment opportunities arise on an ad-hoc basis. Any such opportunities will be marketed to students through the graduate student listserv.

Note that, unlike assistantships, hourly employment does not cover tuition, fees, or health insurance.

3.8 External Funding and Fellowships

A short list of funding opportunities that mechanical engineering students have applied for in the past are listed below. This list does not encompass all external funding opportunities. Faculty advisors may also have more information about external funding opportunities for specific fields of study.

- National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship: [More information here](#)
- National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate Fellowship: [More information here](#)
- NASA Earth Science Fellowship: [More information here](#)
- Blue Waters Graduate Fellowship: [More information here](#)
- Draper Fellow Program: [More information here](#)
- Interdisciplinary Quantitative Biology Fellowship: [More information here](#)
- National Institutes of Health F31 Fellowship: [More information here](#)

- National Institutes of Health Training Grants through other CU departments

Additionally, the graduate school provides an extensive list of funding opportunities found [here](#).

3.9 Application for Departmental Support

The **Application for Departmental Support** is for faculty advisors of mechanical engineering PhD students to request departmental support (in the form of either department-supported TA or RA positions). Selection of students for financial support is based on need, prior departmental support received by the student, merit, and the availability of funds. Preference will be given to currently enrolled PhD students, although applications may be submitted and will be reviewed for MS Thesis students. Typically, 5-10 such awards are offered per semester, including the summer.

Note that this application process is specifically intended for non-1st year PhD students who may have a gap in funding or another reason for requiring departmental support. If a student did not receive a department-supported TA or RA position during their first year (e.g., the student was supported on an NSF fellowship or sponsored project RA), that should be noted in the application and will be taken into consideration.

Support provided through this application process is only for one semester at a time. Separate applications must be submitted to request support in future semesters. There are three review cycles for departmental support per year, corresponding to support during fall and spring semesters, and the summer.

Questions about this process may be directed to the graduate advisors at megrad@colorado.edu. PhD students who would like to receive department support but who do not have a faculty advisor should contact the graduate advisors.

3.10 Travel Awards

There are many travel award opportunities available to graduate students. Deadlines for these grants are communicated via the graduate student listserv whenever possible and can be checked at the links below.

- **Department Travel Grant:** <https://www.colorado.edu/mechanical/travel-grant-application>
The Department of Mechanical Engineering accepts applications for travel grants for up to \$250 for in-state conferences and up to \$750 dollars for out-of-state conferences. Students are eligible to receive one travel award per academic year. Applications are accepted throughout the academic year and are reviewed by the Graduate Committee. Funds are limited, so applying early is encouraged.
- **GPSG Travel Grant:** <https://www.colorado.edu/gpsg/grants-awards/travel-grants>
Fall Grants cover travel and events taking place between September 1, 2024 and March 1, 2025. Spring Grants cover travel and events taking place between March 1, 2025 and September 1, 2025. GPSG awards funding (up to 300 dollars) to individual graduate students each academic semester to support travel to academic conferences, meetings, or other events related to the student's studies.
- **Graduate School Travel Grants:** <https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/funding/awards-grants>
This grant has three application cycles per year for domestic (including Mexico and Canada) and international (excluding Mexico and Canada) travel. The dates for the application cycle can be found in the link above. All applications open at 12:01AM MST on the open date and close at 11:59PM MST on the date listed. If you received travel grant funding from the Graduate School during the last application cycle (May for current fall applicants, November for current spring applicants) you may not apply during this cycle. Masters students can receive travel funding once, and PhD students can receive funding twice during their studies at CU. The Graduate School provides a travel grant of \$300 for domestic conferences and \$500 for international conferences.
- **Dean's Travel Grant:** <https://www.colorado.edu/mechanical/travel-grant-application>
Graduate students must first apply for, and be denied, funding through the Graduate School before submitting this application. Applications must be submitted a minimum of 2 weeks prior to travel departure to allow for processing time.

3.11 Other Funding Opportunities

3.11.1 Distinguished Dissertation Award

Each year, the department awards the PhD student with the most outstanding dissertation the Distinguished Dissertation Award. The award recognizes the recipients excellence in research and scholarship and provides a \$1,000 award. Students selected for this award are also entered into the College of Engineering Distinguished Dissertation Award competition.

3.11.2 Thesis/Dissertation Printing

The department covers the costs of printing and binding one copy of any mechanical engineering graduate student's final thesis or dissertation, (up to \$75). This copy is intended to remain with the student for their personal use. Students interested in this option should reach out to the graduate advisors at megrad@colorado.edu for additional details.

3.11.3 Compensation for Service Leadership

Graduate students play a pivotal role in recruitment and administrative service leadership efforts across the department. In recognition of these contributions and time expended, these student leaders are offered compensation in the form of a stipend. Below are a list of leadership roles that recur on a yearly basis and the compensation for said role.

- **Graduate committee student representative:** \$500 per semester of service
- **GEARRS co-presidents:** \$750 per semester of service
- **GEARRS committee leads:** \$300 per year of service
- **Oral preliminary exam subject area leads:** \$250 per year of service

Ad hoc service leadership positions may be available on an irregular basis depending on departmental needs; in those cases, compensation will be provided for substantial contributions and time commitment as well; those rates will be provided to the student prior to accepting the leadership role.

3.11.4 Student of the Month

The graduate program will name one Student of the Month for each month of the academic year (September - May). Nominations may be submitted by any student, staff or faculty member in the mechanical engineering department via the [Student of the Month form](#). Recipients will be acknowledged on the department website and will receive a \$200 award. Students are eligible to be named student of the month on multiple occasions, though preference will be given for students who have not previously received the recognition. If you have questions about the Student of the Month, please reach out to the graduate advisors at megrad@colorado.edu.

3.11.5 Bus Pass Reimbursement

Students on appointment are eligible to be reimbursed for the purchase of a student bus pass. Please contact megrad@colorado.edu for more information on how to request this reimbursement.

3.12 Taxes

Graduate students are responsible for taxes according to the rules and regulations of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Graduate advisors and financial staff in mechanical engineering are not trained or able to provide advice on taxes, but substantial info is available through the [Bursar's Office](#). Please note that there may be special requirements for international students; more information can be obtained [here](#).

3.13 Pre-Enrollment Pay Policy

Faculty will occasionally invite incoming PhD or MS Thesis students to begin working in their lab prior to the student's first term of enrollment at CU. In these cases, students are eligible to be paid as an hourly employee, but are not eligible for an RA appointment. The hourly rate available may change from year-to-year, but currently pays \$18/hr.

Students are admitted to the department for the term in which they apply. Changes to this start term, after an

offer of admission has been delivered, will not be permitted for the sole purpose of pre-enrollment employment.

3.14 Important Note on Full-Time Status and Financial Aid

The Graduate School's definition of full-time student status can vary from the requirements for full-time student status in regards to financial aid. If you have any funding from outside the department or your research group, it is important to ensure you communicate with the financial aid office and funding sponsors about possible enrollment requirements you may be subject to. This is also true if you are deferring any student loan payments from previous degrees. In both cases, enrollment requirements may be higher than the Graduate School requires.



PhD Degree Program

4

4.1 Overview

The PhD program in mechanical engineering is available to students who are entering graduate studies for the first time (i.e., with only a BS or BA degree), as well as to those who already have a master's (MS) degree. While an MS degree is not required to enroll, PhD students without a prior MS degree are typically able to earn one on the way to their PhD degrees. Many incoming PhD students will have prior degrees in some type of engineering, although students from other fields, such as physics, mathematics, biology, and chemistry, are also routinely admitted and can acquire any missing background material during the course of their PhD studies at CU. Students graduating with a PhD from mechanical engineering are expected to have extensive fundamental and foundational knowledge in their field of study, in addition to being research experts.

4.2 Mission Statement

The primary objective of the PhD degree program is to educate students to the highest levels of their chosen field, in order to make lasting and significant impacts to fundamental knowledge, technology, and society through their research. PhD students are expected to become domain experts and to complete research that can withstand the rigorous test of external peer review. Graduates from the PhD program go on to careers in industry, academia, and the public sector, and are expected to become leaders in their respective fields. Each PhD graduate is a lifelong representative of CU and the Department of Mechanical Engineering and, as such, is expected to act professionally, ethically, and with integrity during their time at CU and beyond.

4.3 Timeline

A PhD student entering without prior graduate coursework will typically take 5 years to complete the PhD degree. However, it is not uncommon for students to finish both earlier and later than this five-year average. A student entering the PhD program with prior graduate coursework from another university may be eligible to transfer up to 21 credit hours to CU and can typically finish in 3-4 years. Regardless of the time taken to complete the PhD, the primary emphasis is on remaining at CU long enough to complete high quality research that satisfies the requirements of the PhD dissertation and defense. If a student is nearing the completion of their 6th year in the PhD program, they are required to file a time-limit extension via this [online form](#). Please contact the graduate advisors at megrad@colorado.edu for more information on requesting a time limit extension.

4.4 Requirements

Table 2 provides a description of each major requirement leading to completion of the PhD degree in mechanical engineering. A checklist of PhD graduation requirements is also available from the Graduate School [here](#).

Requirement	Notes	Typical completion
<i>Pre-comprehensive exam student status</i>		
Mathematical proficiency	B- or higher in MCEN 5020: Methods of Eng. Analysis	End of 1st semester
Research group selection	Research expectations form	End of 1st semester
Research development	B- or higher in MCEN 5030: Intro. to Research	End of 1st semester
Oral preliminary exam	Two 30 min subject area exams	End of year 1
Research preliminary exam	1 hour research presentation	During year 2
Course hours	30 hours, with 9 hours of MCEN classes	End of year 2
Comprehensive exam	Oral presentation and report	During year 4
<i>Post-comprehensive exam student status</i>		
Dissertation hours	30 hours	End of year 5
Written dissertation	Completed 2 weeks before defense	End of year 5
Dissertation defense	Oral presentation	End of year 5

Table 2: Requirements leading to the PhD degree, including typical completion dates and updates to student status. Dates listed are typical for completion.

4.4.1 Course Requirement

PhD students must complete a minimum of 30 graduate-level credits at the 5000 level or higher. Of these 30 credits, at least 9 must be Department of Mechanical Engineering courses (denoted by the “MCEN” course prefix). All PhD students are required to take the following courses:

- MCEN 5020: Methods of Engineering Analysis I (3 credits); and
- MCEN 5030: Introduction to Research (3 credits)

Some research advisors will require that their students complete more than 30 course credits. The graduate program recommends that, in addition to their graduate advisor, students consult their research advisor regarding any coursework recommendations or requirements. Additional detail on ME graduate courses is provided in Appendix D.

In order to receive credit towards the PhD, students must receive a grade of at least B- in each course taken. Courses in which a grade below B- is achieved cannot be counted towards the PhD course requirement. Courses taken on a P/F basis cannot count towards the PhD course requirement.

Students must have a cumulative 3.0 GPA in order to be eligible for graduation. However, a 3.25 GPA is required for students to be eligible for Teaching or Research Assistantships.

4.4.2 Transfer Credit

Although students do not need an MS degree to be admitted to the PhD program, students who already have an MS degree, or have completed eligible graduate level coursework, may transfer up to 21 hours of credits towards the PhD course requirements. More information is available on the second page of the [Request for Transfer of Credit Form](#) from the CU Graduate School. To transfer credits, students must fill out and submit this form to their graduate advisor at megrad@colorado.edu with an official transcript(s) included.

Note that requests for transfer credit can only be made after completing 6 credits of graduate level coursework at CU. These requests should be submitted as soon after completion of this 6 credit requirement as possible. Typically, this means that transfers of credit are processed during the second semester of PhD study at CU. Additional information on transfer of credits is available in Section 6.7 of Chapter 6.

4.4.3 Mathematical Proficiency Requirement

All PhD students are required to take MCEN 5020: Methods of Engineering Analysis and to pass with a grade of B- or higher. Students receiving a grade below B- in MCEN 5020 must retake the course.

PhD students will not be able to advance to post-comps status until the mathematical proficiency requirement

has been completed. Failure to complete this requirement by the end of the second year of the PhD may result in removal from the PhD program.

4.4.4 Research Expectations Form

The **Research Expectations Form** is intended not only to formalize the agreed-upon relationship between research advisor and student, but also to assist with strategically designing the curriculum and research goals of your PhD program. The form should be completed as soon as a research advisor is found, and no later than the end of your first semester in the PhD program. This form is also a required element in MCEN 5030: Introduction to Research, which is used to satisfy the Research Development requirement (see Table 2).

Students will need to work with their research advisors to identify the oral preliminary exam topics they plan to take, any core foundational coursework they need to complete, and expectations for funding during their first year, inclusive of the summer term.

PhD students are eligible to work with research advisors at CU outside the Department of Mechanical Engineering (e.g., professors in aerospace engineering sciences or civil engineering); in such cases, the advisor consent form must still be completed in its entirety.

In the event that a PhD student has two or more faculty members serving as co-research advisors, one co-advisor should be chosen to serve as the primary administrative advisor. This faculty member will serve as the named professor for dissertation hours enrollment and, upon completion of the dissertation, will need to sign off on a final grade (in consultation with the co-advisor) for those credits.

4.4.5 Research Development Requirement

The Department of Mechanical Engineering is committed to educating well-rounded PhD students who are prepared to excel in their chosen professional careers after graduation, whether in industry, academia, or the public sector. Throughout the academic year, the department offers a wide variety of seminars, colloquia and workshops that assist in the professional development of students beyond the classroom and lab.

Our commitment to the research and professional development of our PhD students is codified by the Research Development requirement, which is fulfilled by obtaining a passing grade (i.e., B- or above) in MCEN 5030: Introduction to Research. This course, offered every fall semester, provides a strong foundation in a variety of topics related to research that will prove valuable both as a student and professional. Covered topics include ethics in research, literature review, and grant writing, among others. The Research Development requirement must be completed before proceeding to post-preliminary exam status.

4.4.6 Oral Preliminary Exam

All PhD students must successfully pass the oral preliminary exam, which is intended to assess the potential to successfully complete a PhD in mechanical engineering. It is designed to evaluate analytical skills, appraise knowledge of mechanical engineering fundamentals, and to gauge potential for creative independent research. The exam requires students to consolidate their grasp of the fundamentals of mechanical engineering and to demonstrate an aptitude for communicating knowledge during an oral presentation. The content of the examination reflects consensus across the department faculty. The examination is administered by the Graduate Committee, acting on behalf of the entire faculty.

All PhD students are required to take two from a list of multiple topic exams. Concept inventories are provided for each topic in Appendix E and peer-led oral exam practice efforts are organized to facilitate growth with oral defense. The list of topics and their corresponding preparatory courses are listed below:

- **Controls:** MCEN 5448 Linear Systems
- **Dynamics:** MCEN 5228 Advanced Dynamics
- **Fluid Dynamics:** MCEN 5021 Introduction to Fluid Dynamics
- **Heat Transfer:** MCEN 5042 Heat Transfer
- **Materials:** MCEN 5024 Materials Chemistry and Structures

- **Mechanics:** MCEN 5023 Solid Mechanics
- **Thermodynamics:** MCEN 5022 Classical Thermodynamics

The preparatory courses are strongly recommended prior to taking the oral preliminary exam. Although this isn't a requirement, experience has shown that taking these courses is highly correlated with a successful exam.

The exam is oral and delivered by a committee of at least two faculty. The committee cannot include a student's faculty advisor, and advisors are not consulted when making final decisions on exams.

Oral preliminary exams are administered the first week of the fall semester, and will typically be taken by PhD students at the beginning of their 2nd year. In consultation with their research advisor, students entering the PhD program with the appropriate foundational knowledge may choose to take the oral preliminary exams in their first fall semester. Students must take the exams at the beginning of their 2nd year; voluntarily choosing to delay an exam will result in an automatic failure for that attempt. Requests for delays due to extenuating circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Students may request accommodations for oral preliminary exams. In these cases, students should notify the Mechanical Engineering Graduate Program Chair as early as possible with documentation of the requested accommodations from [Disability Services](#). Accommodations may not be requested without formal documentation.

Based on student performance, the preliminary exam committee will provide an evaluation of pass, conditional pass, or fail. If the result is a conditional pass, the committee may require the student to retake a portion of the exam or to complete another condition that displays fundamental proficiency. If a student fails a preliminary exam, they will either be asked to retake the exam in full the next offering, be required to submit a petition to the graduate committee to continue, or may be asked to leave the PhD program (see Appendix [E.1.6](#) for details). Students who fail a preliminary exam twice will be asked to leave the PhD program. While not recommended, students are allowed to "retake" the exam on a different topic, but they would only have a single opportunity to pass.

4.4.7 Research Preliminary Exam

The Research Preliminary Exam is an oral presentation of research to a committee of three that must include a PhD student's research advisor and at least one other faculty member from mechanical engineering. Students should view this as an early thesis proposal.

At least one week prior to the exam, students must send a research proposal to all committee members. The department does not schedule these exams; students must organize the exam and coordinate schedules with the committee. At least one week prior to the exam, students should contact megrad@colorado.edu with their exam date and committee information, including names, email addresses and department affiliations, so the exam form may be sent to their committee electronically. [Research preliminary exam form](#) is available here.

Typically, the research preliminary exam consists of a roughly 30 minute oral presentation by the student on a research topic, followed by roughly 30 minutes of questioning by the exam committee. In nearly all cases, the total exam time should be, at most, 1 hour.

The research preliminary exam should be completed within 1 semester of passing (or conditional passing) both oral preliminary exams, i.e., nominally by the end of the spring semester of their second year. If oral exam retakes are required, the research prelim should be taken the fall semester following retakes. Thus the research prelim will be taken during most students' second year, and by fall semester of the 3rd year at the latest. Students who fail their research preliminary exam must retake the exam and pass within one semester of the first exam; failure to pass this exam may result in removal from the PhD program. Students who conditionally pass the research preliminary exam will typically have less than a year to complete their condition; again, failure to satisfy the condition(s) may result in removal from the PhD program.

Additional details on the research preliminary exam, including the rubric by which students are evaluated, is provided in Appendix F.

4.4.8 Comprehensive Examination

Students must complete a comprehensive exam at least 6 months prior to defending their PhD dissertations. At the time of the comprehensive exam, the dissertation committee will be formed and given preliminary approval by the Department and Graduate School.

A mechanical engineering PhD degree requires depth of knowledge in the dissertation/research area, as well as breadth of knowledge across the mechanical engineering curriculum. Consequently, the comprehensive exam is designed to test student knowledge of their proposed research area, and any general knowledge in the field. It is also intended to evaluate whether a student's proposed research project is original and creative work, whether it will make a significant impact in the field, and whether it will qualify for publication in quality peer-reviewed journals. The exam is also an opportunity to demonstrate an ability to present scientific concepts orally. In short, the comprehensive exam serves as the gateway to the next phase of the doctoral program: completion of a dissertation.

The comprehensive exam consists of the following core requirements:

- Complete the online [Candidacy Application for Advanced Degree](#) at least three weeks prior to your exam date.
- Email the exam committee information to megrad@colorado.edu at least 3 weeks prior to your exam date. The committee must be approved by the Graduate School and the graduate advisor will initiate the doctoral exam report form on the student's behalf. The following details should be included in the email:
 - Student ID Number
 - Exam date
 - Committee member name
 - Committee member email address
 - Committee member department affiliation
- By email, send the comprehensive exam proposal to (i) the examining committee and (ii) the graduate advisors at megrad@colorado.edu at least two weeks prior to the examination. The proposal should describe the work that has been completed to date and proposed work that will be completed for the dissertation.
- Included in the proposal should be a comprehensive literature review of the field of concentration, the subject of the dissertation, as well as a detailed timeline of work to be completed prior to the dissertation defense. In most cases, the proposal should be written in the style and format of the final dissertation document.
- Students must prepare a professional oral presentation that covers what is written in the proposal. This presentation should be 45-50 minutes in length and must be delivered at the comprehensive examination to the examination committee. The oral presentation portion of the examination is open to all students and faculty, and questions are entertained at the end of the presentation.
- The final part of the examination is restricted to only the student and the examination committee. During this portion, questions are entertained that cover the field of concentration and related fields.
- Successful candidates must receive affirmative votes from a majority of the members of their examination committee.

To define appropriate faculty membership for your committee, please keep in mind the following graduate school rules:

- If your advisor is a Mechanical Engineering faculty member:
 - 3 Mechanical Engineering faculty members (your advisor counts as an ME faculty member and as your committee chair)

- 1 CU Boulder faculty member from another department
- 1 additional committee member with a graduate faculty appointment. If this individual is from outside of CU Boulder, please contact the grad advisor megrad@colorado.edu ASAP to discuss their qualifications
- If your advisor is a faculty member outside of Mechanical Engineering:
 - Your faculty advisor (committee chair)
 - Your faculty advisor MAY NOT act as your committee chair AND your faculty member from another department per the Graduate School
 - 3 Mechanical Engineering faculty members
 - 1 CU Boulder faculty member from another department

Please note that a faculty member's primary faculty appointment may still be within Mechanical Engineering even if they are affiliated with a program within the College of Engineering (Environmental Engineering, Biomedical Engineering, Materials Science, etc.). If their primary appointment is within Mechanical Engineering, they do not count as an out of department faculty member.

Students who fail the examination may attempt it once more after a period of time determined by the examination committee. Additional administrative requirements of the comprehensive examination are as follows:

- All program coursework must be completed before taking the comprehensive exam.
- Students must be registered as regular degree-seeking students when they take the comprehensive exam (thus requiring a minimum enrollment of 1 dissertation credit hour).
- Each committee member must have a regular or special faculty appointment on file with the Graduate School prior to submission of the Doctoral Exam Report. Please contact the graduate advisors at megrad@colorado.edu as soon as you form your committee, and no later than 6 weeks prior to your comprehensive examination, to verify that the necessary appointments are in place. It takes 2-4 weeks to process a faculty appointment. Students should submit a recent CV for any committee member who does not have a faculty appointment to the graduate advisors as soon as possible.

4.4.9 Dissertation Hour Requirement

In addition to coursework, PhD students are required to complete 30 PhD dissertation hours. Students are not able to register for dissertation credits on their own and should submit a request for dissertation hours through the [Thesis/Dissertation Credit Hours Request Form](#).

The following Graduate School rules apply to enrollment in dissertation hours and should be considered when determining how many dissertation hours to register for each semester:

- PhD students must be registered as full time, regular degree-seeking students at CU for a minimum of 5 dissertation hours during the semester in which they defend the dissertation.
- A student may not register for more than 10 dissertation credit hours in any one semester, including summer.
- A PhD student is required to register continuously as a full-time student for a minimum of five dissertation hours in the Fall and Spring semesters of each year, beginning with the semester following the passing of the comprehensive examination and extending through the semester in which the dissertation is successfully defended.
- Prior to passing the comprehensive exam, PhD students are considered by the Graduate School to be full-time if they are registered for at least 1 dissertation credit per semester.

There is little advantage to a student registering for more than 30 dissertation hours during the course of their PhD, and so students should attempt to complete this requirement in the semester in which they defend. Please contact the graduate advisors at megrad@colorado.edu for assistance with planning dissertation hour enrollment.

4.4.10 Written Dissertation

The written dissertation must comply with Graduate School rules and procedures in terms of format and submission. Full details on formatting requirements are available [here](#), and deadlines and resources to assist in finalizing your dissertation are available [here](#). Both Word and LaTeX templates for written dissertations are available [here](#).

The dissertation title appears on official university transcripts and must be submitted to the Graduate School in addition to the physical signature page from the dissertation. Students are also required to submit the full written dissertation electronically at the [ProQuest website](#). The timeline for these requirements is as follows:

- Final dissertation title submission is due about two months into the final semester.
- The oral dissertation defense must be passed shortly after this date.
- One week after the defense deadline, students must submit:
 - The written dissertation; and
 - The [Thesis Approval Form](#), signed by the faculty advisor and one additional committee member.

Please see Chapter 3 for information on department support for dissertation printing costs.

4.4.11 Dissertation Defense

Before completion of the PhD degree, students must have their dissertation accepted for defense by the review committee. The dissertation defense may occur before or after the final electronic submission of the written dissertation to the Graduate School, but must take place prior to the end of the final semester of enrollment.

Students must then pass a dissertation defense, which is a final examination on the dissertation and related topics. In the defense, students are expected to explain their research clearly and concisely, and to discuss how it relates to other research in the field. This is an opportunity for recognition of completed doctoral work. It is also an opportunity for discussion and formal evaluation of the dissertation.

All required forms should be submitted on time according to the following deadlines:

- **To the Department:**
 - Email the exam committee information to megrad@colorado.edu at least 3 weeks prior to your exam date. The committee must be approved by the Graduate School, even if there are no changes from the comprehensive exam committee. The graduate advisor will initiate the doctoral exam report form on the student's behalf. The following details should be included in the email:
 - * Student ID number
 - * Exam date
 - * Committee member name
 - * Committee member email address
 - * Committee member department affiliation
- **To the Committee:** The written dissertation should be sent as a single pdf file by email to all members of the defense committee, as well as to the graduate advisors at megrad@colorado.edu, at least 2 weeks before the defense. This deadline is intended to allow the defense committee sufficient time to review the dissertation and to formulate questions and feedback. Prior to the defense, students should contact all members of the committee to assess their areas of interest and concerns. This will help students anticipate any questions that will be asked.

Students must be registered as full time, regular degree-seeking students at CU for a minimum of 5 dissertation hours during the semester in which they pass the examination.

The examination is conducted by a committee appointed by the chair of the ME department and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School, and consists of at least five people with the following requirements:

- If your advisor is a Mechanical Engineering faculty member:

- 3 Mechanical Engineering faculty members (your advisor counts as an ME faculty member and as your committee chair)
- 1 CU Boulder faculty member from another department
- 1 additional committee member with a graduate faculty appointment. If this individual is from outside of CU Boulder, please contact the grad advisor megrad@colorado.edu ASAP to discuss their qualifications
- If your advisor is a faculty member outside of Mechanical Engineering:
 - Your faculty advisor (committee chair)
 - Your faculty advisor MAY NOT act as your committee chair AND your faculty member from another department per the Graduate School
 - 3 Mechanical Engineering faculty members
 - 1 CU Boulder faculty member from another department

The chair and outside member of the committee must have regular or tenured Graduate Faculty appointments. The other committee members must have either regular or special Graduate Faculty appointments. More than one dissenting vote disqualifies the candidate in the final examination. The committee chair and a majority of the committee must be present on the Boulder campus for the examination.

Students should coordinate scheduling the examination with the committee, and should schedule the examination for two hours. The examination is wholly oral and open to the public for the first portion of the examination.

Students must prepare and present a professional oral presentation that summarizes the dissertation. This presentation should be 45-50 minutes in length and delivered to the examination committee. The oral presentation portion of the examination is open to all students and faculty. Questions are entertained at the end of the presentation.

The final part of the examination is closed to only the student and the examination committee. During this portion, questions are entertained that cover the field of concentration and related fields. More than one dissenting vote among the committee constitutes an unsatisfactory exam. A student who fails the exam may attempt it once more after a period of time determined by the committee.

4.5 PhD Student Status

As the requirements towards the PhD degree are completed, PhD students will advance from pre-preliminary exam, to post-preliminary exam, to post-comprehensive exam, status. Milestones required to achieve each status are the following:

- **Pre-comprehensive exam status (Pre-comps):** Students enter the PhD program with pre-comps status and will typically remain at this status until successful completion of the comprehensive exam in year 4. Students should complete the mathematical proficiency requirement, research development requirement, oral preliminary exams, and the research preliminary exam during this time.

4.6 Application for Graduation

To graduate with the PhD degree, students must complete all course and dissertation hour requirements, as well as write and defend their dissertation. Additional details on each of these requirements are provided above.

To graduate with the PhD degree, students must apply online through their [Buff portal](#). Directions to complete this process can be found on the [Registrar's website](#).

The application for graduation is due a few weeks after the start of the desired graduation semester. Full details on requirements and deadlines can be accessed on the Graduate School PhD [graduation webpage](#). If you did not submit the [Candidacy Application for Advanced Degree](#) when completing the comprehensive examination, it must be submitted electronically prior to applying for graduation online.

PhD students must be registered as a full time, regular degree-seeking student, for a minimum of 5 dissertation hours during the semester in which they pass the final exam. If a student is unable to meet the Graduate School's posted defense deadline for that semester, they should consult with their graduate advisor about graduation options.

Detailed graduation information will be communicated to all students through the graduate student listserv at the beginning of each semester.

The graduate program conducts an annual survey of PhD students that evaluates the overall PhD student experience within the mechanical engineering department over the previous academic year. The survey will be conducted anonymously and a report of results will be shared with faculty, staff and students within the department.

4.7 Master's Degree as a PhD Candidate

Although a Master's degree is not required for a PhD, students can earn one while working toward the PhD. This is accomplished by applying for an MS degree when 30 graduate course hours have been completed. All requirements described in Chapter 5 must be completed in order to receive the MS degree; the procedure to apply for graduation with the MS degree is also provided in this chapter. PhD students must notify their graduate advisor within the first two weeks of the semester in which they intend to graduate with the MS degree.



Master's Degree Programs

5

5.1 Overview

Master's degree students in mechanical engineering take graduate courses and participate in research and/or project based learning as part of four different program choices, each leading to a master's of science (MS) degree in mechanical engineering.

- **MS Professional Program:** This coursework-focused degree program emphasizes both project-based and curriculum-driven learning. It is targeted at working engineers and undergraduates considering, or already pursuing, a career in industry, but can also be completed with the ultimate goal of matriculating in a PhD program.
- **MS Thesis Program:** This program is intended for MS students interested in a short-term research experience, leading to the preparation and defense of a research-based thesis. The program emphasizes education through high quality research for students interested in careers in industry, the public sector, and academia.
- **Bachelor's Accelerated Master's (BAM) Program:** Current undergraduate students in mechanical engineering may pursue either an MS Professional or MS Thesis degree through this program. The BAM program in mechanical engineering is also available to undergraduate students from environmental engineering.
- **Dual Degree in Mechanical Engineering and Engineering Management:** This program allows students to earn two master's degrees after completing 45 graduate credits. Dual degree students can pursue either the MS Professional or MS Thesis options for their mechanical engineering degree.

Many incoming MS students will have prior degrees in some type of engineering, although students from other fields, such as physics, mathematics, biology, and chemistry are also routinely admitted and can acquire any missing background material during the course of their MS studies.

5.2 Mission Statement

The graduate program is committed to educating innovative, entrepreneurial, and fundamentally knowledgeable master's students who are prepared to excel—and lead—in their chosen professional careers after graduation, whether in industry, academia, or the public sector. This will be accomplished through high quality hands-on, project-based education in the classroom and in-depth training in the lab, as well as through extensive professional development opportunities offered by the department, college, and university. Through online, distance, and applied courses, the graduate program seeks to cater to current professionals and non-

traditional students seeking to attain a master's degree. Each graduate of the master's program is a lifelong representative of CU and, as such, is expected to act professionally, ethically, and with integrity both during their time at CU and beyond.

5.3 Timeline

Most MS Professional students complete the requirements for the degree in 2 years of full-time study, although it is not uncommon to graduate in 3 semesters or to take more than 2 years, particularly if a student is also working full-time.

MS Thesis and dual degree students typically require at least 2 years to complete their degrees. BAM students may require two or three additional semesters of study beyond completion of their undergraduate degrees to complete their graduate degree requirements.

Full-time study is defined by the Graduate School as enrollment in 5 or more graduate credits per semester. Part-time study is permissible throughout the duration of the program, or for select semesters, as long as the following Graduate School requirements are met:

- Full-time enrollment for at least 2 semesters; or
- Part-time enrollment for at least 4 semesters; or
- Full-time enrollment for 1 semester and part-time enrollment in 2 or more semesters.

Master's students, whether part- or full-time, must complete their degree requirements within 4 years of their first semester of enrollment. If more time is needed, students can request a time-limit extension from the Graduate School by filing a time-limit extension via [this online form](#). Please contact the graduate advisors at megrad@colorado.edu for more information on requesting a time limit extension.

5.4 Requirements

5.4.1 Professional MS Degree Program

Students in the Professional MS degree program can enroll in any combination of coursework that they would like, and a list of mechanical engineering graduate courses is provided in Appendix D.

All MS Professional students must complete the following requirements to be eligible for graduation:

- **Coursework:** 30 graduate-level credit hours must be completed with at least a grade of C in each course. At least 18 credits must be in mechanical engineering (i.e., MCEN courses). Up to 12 credit hours may be taken outside the department, inclusive of any transfer credits applied towards the degree. Students must maintain a cumulative 3.0 GPA to remain in good standing.
- **Professional development:** the three-credit hour course MCEN 5000 Sociotechnical Industry Skills (formerly MCEN 5208: Industry Skills) must be completed with a grade of at least C. This course is offered every spring semester and consists of a series of seminars, workshops, and projects focused on various topics relevant to careers in industry, including project management, engineering ethics, communication skills, technical writing, resume preparation, budget preparation and management, leadership styles and philosophies, and interview skills.

5.4.2 MS Thesis Degree Program

In order to enroll in the MS Thesis program, students must first secure a thesis advisor. Once an advisor has been found, students may be admitted into the MS Thesis program from the Professional MS, BAM, BS/MS, or even PhD program by following the procedures outlined in Section 2.7.

MS Thesis students should consult with their thesis and graduate advisors for course selection recommendations. Students in the MS Thesis program can enroll in any combination of coursework that they would like, and a list of mechanical engineering graduate courses is provided in Appendix D.

MS Thesis students must complete the following requirements to obtain the MS degree:

- **Coursework:** 30 graduate-level credit hours must be completed with a grade of C or higher in each course. All MS Thesis students must complete the following courses:
 - MCEN 5020: Methods of Engineering Analysis I (3 credits)
 - MCEN 5030: Introduction to Research (3 credits)
 - MCEN 6959: MS Thesis (6 credits)

At least 18 credits must be mechanical engineering credits, including the 6 required thesis hours. Up to 12 credit hours may be taken outside the department, inclusive of any transfer credits applied towards the degree. Students must maintain a cumulative 3.0 GPA to remain in good standing.

- **Thesis advisor selection:** Upon finding a research advisor, MS Thesis students should complete the **MS Thesis Research Expectations Form**. This form should be completed no later than the end of the first semester of enrollment in the MS Thesis program. This form is also a required element of MCEN 5030: Introduction to Research. Note that MS Thesis students are eligible to work with CU research advisors outside the Department of Mechanical Engineering; in such cases, the **MS Thesis Research Expectations Form** must still be completed in its entirety.
- **MS thesis hours:** 6 credits of MS thesis hours (MCEN 6959) must be completed, typically in the final two semesters of the program. Students are not able to register for MS thesis credits on their own and should submit a request for thesis hours through the **Thesis/Dissertation Hours Enrollment Request Form**.
- **Research Development Requirement:** A passing grade in MCEN 5030: Introduction to Research is required. This course is offered each fall semester and provides a strong foundation in a variety of topics related to research that will prove valuable both as a student and professional. Covered topics include ethics in research, literature review, and grant writing, among others. This requirement should be completed during the first fall semester.
- **Written thesis:** The written thesis must comply with Graduate School rules and procedures in terms of format and submission. Full details on formatting requirements are available [here](#), and deadlines and resources to assist in finalizing your thesis are available [here](#). Students are required to submit the full written thesis electronically at the **ProQuest website**. The timeline for these requirements is as follows:
 - The oral thesis defense must be passed about 2/3 into the last semester.
 - One week after the defense deadline, students must submit:
 - * The written thesis, electronically; and
 - * The physical signature page, signed by all committee members, to the Graduate School.

Both of these items can be completed using the form provided [here](#).

Please see Chapter 3 for information on department support for dissertation printing costs..

- **Thesis defense:** Students must pass a thesis defense, which is a final examination on the thesis and related topics. In the defense, students are expected to explain their research clearly and concisely, and to discuss how it relates to other research in the field. This is an opportunity for recognition of completed MS Thesis research. It is also an opportunity for discussion and formal evaluation of the thesis.

The thesis defense may occur before or after the final electronic submission of the written thesis to the Graduate School, but must take place prior to the end of the final semester. Failure to defend prior to the end of the proposed final semester may result in the need to register for additional course credits during another semester.

All required forms should be submitted on time according to the following deadlines:

- *To the Department:* The **Master's Examination Report** should be submitted to your graduate advisor at least 3 weeks prior to the defense.
- *To the Committee:* The written thesis should be sent as a single pdf file by email to all members of the defense committee, as well as to the graduate advisors at megrad@colorado.edu, at least 1 week before the defense. This deadline is intended to allow the defense committee sufficient time to review the thesis and to formulate questions and feedback. Prior to the defense, students should

contact all members of the committee to assess their areas of interest and concerns. This will help students anticipate any questions that will be asked.

Students must be registered as full time, regular degree-seeking students during the semester in which they pass the examination. The examination is conducted by a committee appointed by the chair of the major department and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School, and consists of at least three people, two of which must be ME faculty.

The chair of the committee must have a regular or tenured Graduate Faculty appointment. The other committee members must have either regular or special Graduate Faculty appointments. Please contact the graduate advisors at megrad@colorado.edu as soon as you form your committee, and no later than 6 weeks prior to your examination, to verify that the necessary appointments are in place. It takes 2-4 weeks to process a faculty appointment. Students should submit a recent CV for any committee member who does not have a faculty appointment to the graduate advisors as soon as possible.

Students should coordinate scheduling the examination with the committee, and should schedule the examination for two hours. The examination is wholly oral and open to the public for the first portion of the examination. Students must prepare a professional oral presentation that covers what was written in the thesis. This presentation should be 45-50 minutes in length. This presentation shall be delivered at the final examination to the examination committee. The oral presentation portion of the examination is open to all students and faculty. Questions are entertained at the end of the presentation. The final part of the examination is closed to only the student and the examination committee. During this portion, questions are entertained that cover the field of concentration and related fields. More than one dissenting vote among the committee constitutes an unsatisfactory exam. A student who fails the exam may attempt it once more after a period of time determined by the committee.

More than one dissenting vote disqualifies the candidate in the final examination. The committee chair and a majority of the committee must be present on the Boulder campus for the examination.

5.4.3 Bachelor's-Accelerated Master's (BAM) Program

The BAM program offers currently enrolled CU undergraduate students the opportunity to receive both bachelor's and master's degrees in a shorter period of time. Students receive the bachelor's degree first, but begin taking graduate coursework as undergraduates, typically in their senior year. Because some courses are allowed to double count for both the bachelor's and the master's degrees, students receive a master's degree in less time and at a lower cost than if they were to enroll in a stand-alone master's degree program after completion of their baccalaureate degree. In addition, staying at CU to pursue a BAM program enables students to continue working with their established faculty mentors.

Admissions requirements and procedures for the BAM program are outlined in Chapter 2.

Early in the final semester of the undergraduate degree, students must apply to advance to graduate status by completing the [Master's continuation form](#) and the [BAM supplement form](#). These forms are due by February 1 for spring graduates, March 1 for summer graduates, and October 1 for fall graduates. Students will matriculate into the master's program without additional departmental review provided they meet the basic continuation requirement of a 3.25 cumulative GPA. International students must have approval from International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) prior to matriculation.

For their Master's degree, most students in the BAM program will complete the requirements of the Professional MS program outlined in Section 5.4.1. BAM students can pursue the MS Thesis program if admitted according to the application procedures enumerated in Section 2.7. If admitted to the MS Thesis program, BAM students should fulfill the MS Thesis degree requirements outlined in Section 5.

In order to achieve an accelerated BS/MS degree, students in the BAM program are eligible to use 6 graduate credit hours towards both the BS and MS degrees.

Substantial additional information on the BAM program can be found from the Office of the Registrar [here](#), and

BAM program policies are available [here](#).

5.4.4 Dual Engineering Management and ME Degree Program

A student who is pursuing the Professional MS degree in mechanical engineering and wishes to also obtain the Master's of Engineering in Engineering Management degree must apply internally and be admitted into the Engineering Management Program. Further details on admission requirements and procedures in the dual degree program are provided in Chapter 2.

In total, graduate students in the dual degree program must complete a total of 45 hours of coursework at the 5000 level or above, consisting of 21 credit hours from the Engineering Management Program (EMP) and at least 18 Department of Mechanical Engineering credit hours. Specific requirements are as follows:

- **Mechanical engineering coursework:** Students must complete at least 18 credits within mechanical engineering (i.e., MCEN courses). 6 additional credits must be completed and can be taken outside the department, if desired. The course MCEN 5000 Sociotechnical Industry Skills (formerly 5208: Industry Skills) is not required for students in the dual degree program, due to the overlap between the content of this course and the content of courses in Engineering Management.
- **Engineering management coursework:** The 21 credits required in engineering management typically consist of the following courses:
 - EMEN 5010: Introduction to Engineering Management
 - EMEN 5020: Finance and Accounting for Engineering Managers
 - EMEN 5030: Project Management; or EMEN 5031: Software Project Management; or EMEN 5405: Fundamentals of Systems Engineering
 - EMEN 5050: Leading Oneself
 - EMEN 5830: Special Topics: Engineering Communication
 - Two EMEN elective courses. Note that EMEN 5000: Engineering Analysis and EMEN 5005: Intro to Applied Statistics cannot be applied toward the Engineering Management degree.
- **Master's exam:** In Engineering Management, students must pass the master's exam in the final semester of classes or the semester after.

Additional up-to-date information on the dual degree program can be found on the [the Engineering Management Program website](#).

5.4.5 Transfer Credit

Students may be eligible to transfer up to 9 hours of coursework to meet the Master's degree course requirements. More information is available on the [Request for Transfer of Credit Form](#) from the CU Graduate School. To transfer credits, students must fill out and submit this form to the Graduate School via DocuSign.

Please note that requests for transfer credit can only be made after completing 6 credits of graduate level coursework at CU. These requests should be submitted as soon after completion of this 6 credit requirement as possible. Typically, this means that transfer of credit requests are processed during the second semester of study at CU. Additional information on transfer of credit requests is available in Section 6.7.

5.5 Application for Graduation

In order to graduate with the Master's degree, students must apply online through their [myCU portal](#). On the "Student" tab, select the "Apply for Graduation" link under "Academic Resources".

The application for graduation is due a few weeks after the start of the desired graduation semester. Full details on requirements can be accessed by clicking on the appropriate program at [this webpage](#), and deadlines are available by selecting the appropriate semester for graduation on [this webpage](#). For all degree programs, the [Candidacy Application for Advanced Degree](#) must be submitted to the Graduate School via DocuSign. Detailed graduation information will be communicated to all students through the graduate student listserv at the beginning of each semester.



Curriculum

6.1 Deadlines

The Department adheres to the deadlines and calendar established by the Office of the Registrar. Students can find these dates for the current and future semesters [here](#). The primary deadlines to be aware of, with dates that will vary by semester, are as follows:

- **Last day to add a class:** After this date, students can only be enrolled pending a petition to the Office of the Registrar, submitted by the Department on behalf of the student. Such requests will only be entertained in exceptional circumstances. This date is typically during the second week of the semester.
- **Tuition and fees payment due:** Students must pay tuition and fees, or enroll in a payment plan, by this date. This date is typically the day following the deadline for the last day to add a class.
- **Last day to drop a class:** After this date, students choosing to drop a course will receive a withdrawal (i.e., grade of 'W') on their transcripts; tuition for dropped courses will not be refunded. This date is typically during the third week of the semester.

Students should familiarize themselves with these dates, since it can be difficult or impossible to add/drop classes after the deadlines.

6.2 Adding and Dropping Courses

As noted above, students should add and drop all courses within their enrollment window, which is determined by the Registrar's office. Some courses require special application; in those cases, application details will be communicated in advance of the enrollment period via the grad student listserv.

Thesis, dissertation and independent study credits can only be added by the Graduate Advisor. Independent study credits will be automatically added upon approval of the independent study petition, as described in Section 6.5. Thesis and dissertation hours should be requested via the [Thesis/Dissertation Hours Enrollment Request Form](#) prior to the start of the semester.

Students who wish to drop a course after the drop deadline will be required to provide a letter of explanation stating why they would like to drop the course. In order to drop a class after the drop deadline has passed, students are required to petition the Dean and provide documentation showing that there were extenuating circumstances beyond their control (such as illness, injury, a death in the family, etc.) that occurred after the drop deadline, preventing the student from attending/participating in the course for which they were registered. Please consult your graduate advisor prior to dropping a course after the drop deadline.

Students who wish to withdraw from all classes should consult the Registrar's Office website [here](#).

6.3 Transcripts

Official transcripts for current and previous graduate students can be ordered online from the Office of the Registrar [here](#). Unofficial transcripts can be downloaded anytime by students through the educational portal.

6.4 Certificates

Both degree seeking and non-degree students can pursue one of four graduate certificates in mechanical engineering. A minimum GPA of 3.0 is required to remain in good academic standing. For application and curriculum information, please visit the [Graduate Certificates webpage](#).

6.4.1 Advanced Mechanics and Failure Analysis

The Advanced Mechanics and Failure Analysis Certificate trains students with the necessary knowledge and skills for a broad range of industrial sectors that involve structural design and reliability assessment.

9 credit hours of graduate level coursework are required to complete the certificate program with a grade of at least a B in each course.

6.4.2 Biomedical Engineering

The Biomedical Engineering Certificate trains next-generation professional engineers to interface engineering and medicine with design and problem solving to improve human health.

9 credit hours of graduate level coursework are required to complete the certificate program with a grade of at least a B in each course.

6.4.3 Food Engineering

The Food Engineering Certificate focuses on the science and engineering of foods like specialty coffee and chocolate. Students will receive both a broad overview and in-depth content on food engineering and food product design, in addition to learning about food sustainability.

9 credit hours of graduate level coursework will be required to complete the certificate program with a grade of at least a B in each course.

6.4.4 Mechanical Design and Product Development

The Mechanical Design and Product Development Certificate trains students on methods from across the field of design to create learning experiences that will directly influence their potential career path in product design and development

12 credit hours of graduate level coursework will be required to complete the certificate program with a grade of at least a B in each course.

6.5 Independent Study

An independent study course is defined as research study requiring a high level of self-directed learning. This learning requires students to read, conduct research, and complete written examinations, reports, projects, research papers, portfolios, or similar assignments that are designed to measure competency in the stated objectives. This work may be experiential, directed reading, or independent research supervised by a faculty member and approved by the mechanical engineering graduate chair.

6.5.1 Guidelines

A number of activities are specifically prohibited as independent study work. Included here are such activities as internships, volunteer or paid work in a university department, volunteer work of other kinds, work in a business, extra work in a class, and work completed elsewhere. Strictly prohibited are independent study as a substitute for a regular course offering. Independent study will normally consist of directed research which leads to the preparation of a substantive presentation of findings, usually in the form of a written paper or report. Any variation on this format must be approved by the Department graduate committee.

University rules do not normally allow Independent Study credit for internship experiences, work-study or hourly pay work done in departments, or for work also compensated by a salary. In general, an independent study should not be used for resolving scheduling conflicts, making up failed classes or alleviating faculty teaching loads.

6.5.2 Requirements and Eligibility

The following minimum criteria must be met to ensure the overall outcomes of the educational experience, the success of the students, and compliance with accreditation standards:

- Students who take independent studies must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.25.
- The independent study must include comprehensive objectives in a written form.
- The independent study must demonstrate the relevance and appropriateness to the program outcomes.
- The independent study must promote a high level of self-directed learning.
- The independent study must engage students to interact with the instructor throughout the course.

6.5.3 Enrollment Procedure

The student will develop a plan or idea for independent study and will work with a faculty member to determine the feasibility and supervision of the class.

The student and the faculty member will complete the **Independent Study Agreement Form** including, but not limited to, the following information:

- Course description and area of study, including number of credits to be issued (1 credit hour is approximately equal to 40 clock hours of proposed independent study activity per semester).
- Learning objectives and outcomes.
- Approach to be used (directed reading, instructions and supervision, and/or lab experience, exercises and projects, etc.)
- Information on textbooks, references, and reading materials.
- Means of communication between student and faculty member throughout the course of independent study.
- Means of evaluation (one or more), typically consisting of a tangible product such as a project, presentation, written review of the literature, homework assignments or exams.
- Guidelines, schedules, benchmarks, milestones, or weekly task breakdowns throughout the semester.

When an independent study is designed and proposed, the rationale for the number of credits awarded by the course should meet the following criteria:

- 1 semester credit hour for each 40 clock hours of documented independent study activities.
- Students may only count a combined maximum of 6 credits of independent study and internship for credit toward their degree.

The completed **Independent Study Agreement Form** should be submitted no later than one week prior to the course add deadline, which can be found [here](#). Upon approval of the independent study by the graduate committee, the graduate advisor will add the independent study credits to the student's schedule.

6.5.4 Documentation and Assessment

Through the course of an independent study, it is the student's responsibility to communicate with the instructor and document time spent on the independent study. Activities that constitute time spent on an independent study include, but are not limited to: reading, conducting research, completing written examinations, reports, projects, research papers, portfolios and homework assignments.

To ensure proper documentation, a final report or presentation slides should be provided to the graduate advisors at the end of the semester. This can be accomplished by filling out the **Independent Study Completion**

Form, which also includes a brief summary of the main activities.

6.6 Internship for Credit

This course provides students with direct access to rich learning experiences that can be provided outside of the regular classroom where a wide variety of a coursework from multiple classes is synthesized and applied in ways and/or at scales that are not possible in a classroom setting.

Students will demonstrate expertise and integrate foundational concepts in engineering, project, and team skills during the design, development, and delivery activities in an engineering-related industrial project setting.

This course will also prepare students for professional careers in engineering-related industries.

Note that while a faculty advisor is required for each student completing the internship for credit course, ME faculty and the grad program are not responsible for organizing internships.

6.6.1 Requirements and Eligibility

The following requirements and eligibility apply to the internship for credit course:

- All internships for credit require a minimum of 150 contact hours to receive 3 credits towards degree requirements (or, 40-55 hours of work per credit).
- Students must have completed at least 1 semester in the graduate program before they can take the internship course.
- Students must have at least a 3.25 GPA to apply. Continued performance at this level is a prerequisite for beginning an internship experience.
- Students may only count a combined maximum of 6 credits of independent study and internship for credit toward their degree; if needed, students can take the internship for credit class multiple times, but can only count it once toward their degree requirements.
- PhD, MS Thesis, Professional MS, and BAM students can take the course.
- Both paid and unpaid internships are permitted in the internship for credit course.
- Regular tuition and fees are required for the course.

Additional questions regarding requirements and eligibility should be directed to the graduate advisors at megrad@colorado.edu.

6.6.2 Enrollment Procedure

This course requires an application process that must be completed and approved before the internship takes place. This application requires the following:

1. Specify details of the internship;
2. Specify and justify the specific academic goals of the internship;
3. Specify a contact at the company who will ensure the academic components of the internship are delivered;
4. Specify an ME faculty member who has agreed to review the reports generated by the student during the internship; it is this faculty member who will ultimately provide the student with a grade for this class.

6.6.3 Documentation and Assessment

Applications will be submitted via the **ME Student Internship Agreement and Learning Plan DocuSign**. International students must have their internship approved by an international student advisor before the first day of work.

Applications must be received at least two weeks prior to the start of the semester and/or the add deadline.

6.6.4 Documentation and Assessment

The grading approach and assignments will be determined by the faculty advisor. As an example:

- The course grade is based on weekly progress reports submitted via Canvas with information on the following topics:
 1. Summary of internship activities for the past week, including notable tasks and accomplishments;
 2. Work plan for the following week, including an itemized list of objectives;
 3. Specific concerns or challenges related to the internship (enter N/A if there are none).
- A one-on-one interview will be held with the instructor halfway through the course, and students will give a 20 minutes final presentation on their internship experience at the end of the semester, with 10 minutes for questions and discussion.

Regardless of the grading approach and assignments agreed upon by the advisor and student, a student evaluation of the experience is due by the grade submission deadline of the term they are enrolled in. This evaluation will be provided to students at the time of enrollment in the course.

6.7 Transfers of Credit

To request transfer credit, graduate students should complete and submit the **Request for Transfer of Credit Form** from the CU Graduate School. To transfer credits, students must fill out and submit this form to the Graduate School via DocuSign.

Please note that requests for transfer credit can only be made after completing 6 credits of graduate level coursework at CU. These requests should be submitted as soon after completion of this 6 credit requirement as possible. Typically, this means that transfer credit requests are processed during the second semester of study.

Transfer credits from accredited institutions are accepted by CU only after approval by the graduate chair and under the special conditions outlined below. Transfer credit is defined as any credit earned at another accredited institution, credits earned on another campus of the CU system, or credits earned as a non-degree student within the CU system. Students seeking a degree from CU must complete the majority of their course work while enrolled in a graduate program as a degree seeking student.

The following rules apply to transferring credit to the CU Department of Mechanical Engineering:

1. The maximum amount of work that may be transferred to CU depends upon the graduate degree sought. Master's students may transfer up to 9 hours, while PhD students may transfer up to 21 hours.
2. Work already applied toward a graduate or undergraduate degree received from CU or another institution cannot be accepted for transfer toward another graduate degree of the same level at CU. In addition, work completed for a doctoral degree may not be applied toward a subsequent master's degree.
3. All courses accepted for transfer must be graduate level courses. The course grade must be B or higher. Transfer course work which is to be applied to a graduate degree at CU and was completed more than 5 years prior to being accepted to the program shall be evaluated by the Department as to current relevance and applicability to the degree requirements. At the discretion of the Department, a student may be asked to validate transfer credits prior to approval.
4. Credit may not be transferred until the student has completed 6 credits of graduate level course work as a degree-seeking student on the CU campus with a 3.0 GPA. Transferred credits do not reduce the minimum registration requirement but may reduce the amount of work to be done in formal courses.
5. With the exception of students enrolled in the BAM or BS/MS programs, seniors at CU Boulder may transfer a limited amount of graduate level work (up to 9 semester hours) provided such work:
 - Is completed with a grade of B or above at CU Boulder;
 - Comes within the five year course time limit;
 - Has not been applied toward another degree;
 - Is recommended for transfer by the department concerned, and such transfer is approved by the Dean of the Graduate School.

6.8 Curriculum Changes

Students seeking to waive a curriculum requirement or substitute a course should submit a petition to the Graduate Committee using [Graduate Committee Petition](#). The petition should contain the reason(s) for the request, i.e. what action the student is requesting the Graduate Committee to take, and include detailed information about why the request should be approved. Supplementary materials such as course descriptions or syllabi may also be included. All petitions should be routed through the graduate advisor.

6.9 Course Repetition

A student who receives a grade of C+ or lower can request to retake the course for grade replacement. Full details and requirements are available on the [registrar website](#).

6.10 Change of Record

Change of record requests are required for past-term student record changes and for current-term enrollment requests after add/drop deadlines. Some examples where a change of record request should be made include:

- Any academic record change after the last day of classes (e.g., add, drop, change grading basis or variable credits, expunge, etc.)
- Add a student to a class after the Monday before finals. In such cases, the change of record request must include the student's final grade, because the student will not appear on the grade roster.

Change of record requests can only be made with the graduate advisors and consent of the graduate chair. The department must submit appropriate documentation directly to the Registrar's Office. This office will not accept a student-delivered change of record request. Please reach out to the graduate advisors with any questions about this process.

6.11 Dissertation/Thesis Hour Level Change Requests

MS Thesis students who are admitted to the PhD program prior to completing the MS degree can petition the graduate committee to change up to 6 thesis hours to dissertation hours by submitting a [Graduate Committee Petition](#). The petition should demonstrate that the research completed while enrolled in thesis hours directly relates to the proposed dissertation research.

Similarly, PhD students who switch to the MS Thesis program may petition the graduate committee to change up to 6 dissertation hours to thesis hours by submitting a [Graduate Committee Petition](#). The petition should demonstrate that the research completed while enrolled in dissertation hours directly relates to the proposed thesis.

6.12 Auditing Courses

Degree seeking students cannot audit courses. Students can register for NC (no credit), but will need to pay full price for the course. Please note that for students on a TA or RA appointment, the appointment will not cover the tuition cost of a course taken for no credit.

6.13 Grades of 'Incomplete'

To receive a grade of "I" (or incomplete), the student must receive the consent of the instructor and be able to demonstrate that for documented reasons beyond the student's control, the student was unable to complete course requirements during the semester enrolled. Students are given one year to complete the requirements for the course and receive a letter grade; after one year the incomplete grade automatically changes to an "F".

6.14 4000/5000 Level Courses

The CU Graduate School requires that there be a difference between 4000 and 5000 level courses that are taught as a combined 4000/5000 section. Students registered at the 5000 level are taking the course for graduate level credit, and thus the course expectations of that student must be at the graduate level. Conversely, students registered at the 4000 level are taking the course for undergraduate level credit, and thus the course expectations must be at the undergraduate level.

It is advised that the course instructor keep track of the course requirement differences between the 4000 and

5000 level students. An ideal location to document this difference is in the course syllabus. In recent years there have been instances where a student requests changing course credit from 4000 to 5000 level, or vice-versa. The University allows for this change if the student's grade can be adjusted (or additional requirements met) per documentation provided by the course instructor. One example is where a BS/MS student enrolls in a course at the 4000 level, and after completion requests a change to 5000 level, due to some unforeseen event. In this example, the course instructor is approached to determine a grade change, or asked if additional coursework needs to be completed. While it is up to the course instructor on how to proceed, having a documented difference that can be referenced can save the course instructor significant time and hassle, in addition to maintaining Graduate School requirements.

Course instructors should adjust their course requirements as to best fit their course. A graduate level course generally encourages deeper thought, additional workload, and/or higher expectations of the student. With that in mind, a few examples (non-exhaustive), or suggested differences that could be used to distinguish between 4000 and 5000 level students are:

- Additional project requirements for 5000 level students
- Additional exam problems for 5000 level students
- Additional reading assignments and evaluations for 5000 level students
- Additional reports, homework, or other measure of student performance for 5000 level students
- Inclusion of a teaching role for the graduate students

6.15 Grievance Procedures

The Graduate School established revised grievance procedures, effective April 1, 2019, that can be found here: [Graduate School Grievance Procedures](#). These procedures are intended to provide a process by which graduate students can communicate concerns related to academic issues or academic conflicts. An additional brief guide is available at <https://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-appeals-complaints-grievances-brief-guide>. Should you need any assistance with these procedures, please make sure to reach out to your Graduate and/or Faculty advisor, where appropriate.



Summary of Changes

A.1 October 15, 2019

The version of the Graduate Handbook dated October 15, 2019 (filename MEGraduateHandbook_101519.pdf) is the baseline version of the handbook that codifies pre-existing policies and procedures in the Department of Mechanical Engineering Graduate Program and makes the following changes:

- A new process to address internal applications and changes of program (e.g., from Professional MS to PhD degree) is outlined in Section 2.7. Additionally, details are provided in this section on the process for applying to the PhD program both with and without the expectation of Department funding as a Teaching or Research Assistant.
- Of the 30 course hours required by PhD students to graduate, 9 of these hours must be from 5000-level courses from the CU Department of Mechanical Engineering (i.e., MCEN courses), as described in Section 4.4.1. Previously there was no required minimum number of MCEN course hours for the PhD degree in Mechanical Engineering.
- As outlined in Section 4.4.3, all PhD students are required to take MCEN 5020 Methods of Engineering Analysis and to pass with a grade of B- or higher. Students receiving a grade below B- in MCEN 5020 must retake the course. This course satisfies the “Mathematical Proficiency Requirement” for PhD students and there is no longer a written “test out” or “preliminary” methods exam.
- The **Research Expectations Form** must be completed by both PhD and MS Thesis students once a research advisor has been found, as outlined in Sections 4.4.4 and 5, respectively.
- The “Research Development Requirement” for PhD and MS Thesis students now simply requires successful completion of MCEN 5208: Introduction to Research, as described in Sections 4.4.5 and 5. This requirement replaces the previous “Professional Development Workshop” (PDW) requirement, although PDWs will still be tracked for more senior PhD students (i.e., those matriculating prior to Fall 2019) who remain under the old system.
- For PhD students, comprehensive exam reports and written dissertations must be sent to the exam committee and the **ME Graduate Advisors** no later than two weeks before the exam date, as outlined in Sections 4.4.8 and 4.4.10. Previously, this requirement was not rigorously enforced, but students who fail to meet this deadline may now be asked to delay their oral examination to meet the two week requirement.
- For MS Thesis students, written theses must be sent to the exam committee and the **ME Graduate Advisors** no later than one week before the exam date, as outlined in Section 5. Previously, this requirement was not rigorously enforced, but students who fail to meet this deadline may now be asked to delay their

oral examination to meet the one week requirement.

- The oral public presentation at the PhD comprehensive exam and dissertation defense, as well as the MS Thesis defense, should be between 45-50 mins in length, as detailed in Sections 4.4.8, 4.4.11, and 5. Previously, there was no recommendation for minimum presentation length.
- The numbers of Professional Development Program (PDP) required seminars have been updated to:
 - **PhD:** 25 PDP seminars
 - **Professional MS:** 15 PDP seminars
 - **MS Thesis:** 10 PDP seminars
 - **BAM:** 10 PDP seminars
 - **Dual Degree in Engineering Management and ME:** 15 PDP seminars

Each of these changes have been discussed and approved by the Department of Mechanical Engineering Graduate Committee during the Fall 2019 semester.

A.2 May 28, 2020

The version of the Graduate Handbook dated May 28, 2020 (filename MEGraduateHandbook_052820.pdf) includes updated oral preliminary exam concept inventories, as well as a link to prior exams, in the new Appendix E.2.

A.3 August 19, 2020

The version of the Graduate Handbook dated August 19, 2020 (filename MEGraduateHandbook_081920.pdf) includes typo corrections and clarifications throughout, updates to personnel and contact info in Chapter 1, removes the GRE requirement from Chapter 2, provides further information on summer fellowships in Chapter 3.

A.4 September 22, 2021

The version of the Graduate Handbook dated September 24, 2021 (filename MEGraduateHanbook_092421.pdf) includes typo corrections and clarifications throughout as well as the following more substantial changes:

- Updates to personnel and contact info in Chapter 1.
- A description of the joint mechanical and environmental engineering degree program in Section 2.2.4.
- A new Section 2.3.4 outlining eligibility for application fee waivers.
- A description of the English language screening test for international students serving as TAs in Section 3.5.1.
- The professional development requirement has been removed from Chapter 4 describing PhD degree requirements, and the new research development requirement is described.
- The professional development requirement in Chapter 5 describing Professional MS degree requirements has been changed to consist only of a passing grade in MCEN 5208: Industry Skills.
- The professional and research development requirement in Chapter 5 describing MS Thesis degree requirements has been changed to consist only of a passing grade in MCEN 5208: Introduction to Research.
- A description of the new internship for credit course has been added to Chapter 6.
- Students are now only allowed to count 6 credit hours total of independent study and internship for credit courses towards their degrees, as described in Chapter 6.
- Appendix C has been added with upcoming class schedules and instructors.
- Appendix D has been added with descriptions of ME graduate courses.
- Additional oral preliminary exam guidelines have been included in Appendix E.

A.5 February 11, 2022

The version of the Graduate Handbook dated February 11, 2022 (filename MEGraduateHanbook_021122.pdf) includes updated graduate chair contact info in Chapter 1, new RA/TA pay rates in Chapter 3, a description of the research preliminary exams in Appendix F, a resource document for faculty in Appendix H, as well as other

typo corrections and clarifications throughout.

A.6 May, 2022

Several updates applied to make minor adjustments to Oral Prelim concept inventories, update exam leads, update exam format, and to indicate the planned phase-out of the BioM³ exam.

A.7 September, 2022

Updates applied to requirements for when to take the oral prelims (must be attempted at the end of the first year, with retakes the second year), discussion of accommodations, timing of the research prelim (within one semester of passing orals), removal of BioM³ exam, clarification of comprehensive and defense exam committee membership, and updates to Table 2 (timeline).

A.8 July, 2023

Updates to links to many forms that moved from Google drive to other locations, replacement of administrative and course information that is already published elsewhere on our department web site with links to relevant web pages.

A.9 September, 2024

Updates to course numbers (MCEN 5208 Intro to Research is now MCEN 5030 Intro to research, MCEN 5208 Industry Skills is now MCEN 5000 Sociotechnical Industry Skills), clarify PhD committee requirements, update staff names, update newly added graduate certificates.



Forms

B

B.1 Internal Mechanical Engineering Forms

- Application for department support
- Graduate Part-Time Teaching Instructor (GPTI) Application form
- Graduate program petition
- Hourly Grader Interest Form
- Independent Study Agreement form
- Independent study completion form
- Internal Graduate Program Application form
- Internship for credit enrollment form
- Internship for credit financial impact form
- Internship for credit final evaluation form
- Mechanical Engineering Tech Talks Sign-Up Form
- MCEN 5055 Advanced Product Design Intent to Enroll Form
- Research expectations form (MS Thesis)
- Research expectations form (PhD)
- Research preliminary exam form
- Student of the month
- Teaching assistant expectations form
- Thesis/Dissertation hours enrollment request form

B.2 Graduate School Forms

- Bachelor's Accelerated Master's (BAM) continuation form
- Bachelor's Accelerated Master's (BAM) intent form
- Candidacy application for advanced degree
- Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Form
- Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Conditional Pass Form
- Doctoral Final Exam Form
- Doctoral Examination Report
- Graduate program application
- Graduate student request for extension of time limit
- Master's Final Examination Form

- [Request for Transfer of Credit form](#)
- **Note: Complete List of Graduate School Forms**



ME Graduate Course Offerings

The current set of course offerings can be found [here](#). Students with questions about current or upcoming courses can reach out to megrad@colorado.edu with any questions. Schedules for past and current semesters are also available from the [university Class Search page](#).



ME Graduate Course Catalog

Detailed descriptions of graduate course offerings, including prerequisites and regular instructors, are [here](#).



Oral Preliminary Exams

E.1 Oral Preliminary Exam Guidelines

The oral preliminary exams are typically taken by PhD students at the very beginning of their second year in the PhD program. These exams are focused on assessing understanding of fundamental knowledge and are not research focused. The exams are oral in order to prepare students for comprehensive exams, PhD defenses, conference presentations, job talks, TA duties, and teaching, all of which require oral communication.

The primary purpose of these exams is educational, and all feedback provided to students is intended to be constructive. Consistent with the educational mission of these exams, the most common outcome for students who struggle on the exams is a conditional pass, where the condition placed on the students is intended to address a perceived area of weakness that requires further attention and improvement. There is also no set pass (or fail) rate for these exams; all students can pass, or all can fail.

All exams take place the first week of the fall semester, with all results and feedback reported to students by the end of this week.

E.1.1 Oral Preliminary Exam Topics

All PhD students are required to take two from a list of six topic exams. Corresponding preparatory courses for each topic are listed below:

- **Controls:** MCEN 5228 Linear Systems
- **Design:** MCEN 5228 Design Research Theory and Methods
- **Dynamics:** MCEN 5228 Advanced Dynamics
- **Fluid Dynamics:** MCEN 5021 Introduction to Fluid Dynamics
- **Heat Transfer:** MCEN 5042 Heat Transfer
- **Materials:** MCEN 5024 Materials Chemistry and Structures
- **Mechanics:** MCEN 5023 Solid Mechanics
- **Thermodynamics:** MCEN 5022 Classical Thermodynamics

Although the preparatory courses are strongly recommended prior to taking the oral preliminary exam, they are not required.

E.1.2 Format

Each exam is oral and is delivered by a committee of two faculty. The committee cannot include the student faculty advisor, and advisors are not consulted when making final decisions on exams.

Exams are printed out (without solutions) and given to students 10 min prior to the start of the question and answer period so that they can read the entire set of questions in advance and begin to think about their problem-solving approach; students should sign the honor code at the top of each exam and return it at the end. Each exam consists of the following components:

- 20 minute exam preview period;
- 30 minute question and answer period;
- 5 minute closed-door faculty discussion to assess student;
- 5 minute feedback to students regarding the correct solutions and approaches (**not to include** evaluation of the students' individual performance or pass/fail/conditional pass decision).

Students will be notified via email with the final decision (pass/fail/conditional pass) on Friday of the week of the exams. Those receiving conditional or failing evaluations will be required to meet with the graduate committee chair or topical exam faculty lead to discuss the results; those passing will be given the option to meet with the topical exam lead for feedback.

E.1.3 Questions

The oral preliminary exams are intended as a test of fundamental knowledge in a particular subject area; as such, research questions and presentations are not part of these exams. Due to the oral format, questions are focused on testing conceptual understanding, critical thinking skills, and intuition.

Each student taking the oral prelim in a particular subject area is, to the greatest extent possible, asked the same questions at the same difficulty level. Exams are written such that they can be completed in the allotted time, and the time per question is listed on the exam to ensure that faculty examiners cover sufficient material on the exam to evaluate each student.

Topics on the exams are only those listed on the concept inventories provided in Section [E.2](#).

A collection of oral prelim exams from previous years is available [here](#).

E.1.4 Preparation

Concept inventories are provided for each topic exam in Section [E.2](#), and a Microsoft OneDrive folder available [here](#) contains old exams and other information related to the oral preliminary exams.

Faculty-led information sessions are held at the beginning of the summer to outline each exam; these sessions are recorded and uploaded a Microsoft OneDrive folder. These sessions typically include the faculty lead solving an example problem (e.g., from a previous year) to demonstrate a successful preliminary exam response for the students. In some cases, additional faculty-led info sessions and office hours may be held for the students later in the summer.

Peer-led oral exam practice efforts are also organized by the lead graduate teaching fellow to facilitate growth with oral defense. These practices include study groups and mock exams; information on how to become involved in these peer-led efforts is provided by the lead graduate teaching fellow at the beginning of each summer.

E.1.5 Evaluation

As much as possible, faculty are encourage to adhere to Bloom's taxonomy to assess learning objectives and evaluate students taking each exam. Although specific adaptation to each exam is expected, we encourage faculty to assess students based on their ability to:

1. **Remember:** Recall facts and basic concepts;
2. **Understand:** Explain ideas and concepts;
3. **Apply:** Use information to solve problems;
4. **Analyze:** Draw connections among ideas;
5. **Evaluate:** Support, defend, and critique a solution;

6. **Create:** Produce new original ideas.

These skills are ordered from lower- (i.e., remembering) to higher-order (i.e., creating) thinking skills. In order to pass the oral preliminary exams, a student is not necessarily required to demonstrate aptitude in all of these skills (for example, a student may run out of time on an exam before demonstrating an ability to “create”). However, we do ask faculty examiners to keep these skills in mind when formulating exams and evaluating students.

Helpful examples of question verbs used to evaluate each of these skills are available on [this website](#). Example verbs and expectations are summarized below:

1. **Remember:** List, recite, outline, define, name, match, quote, recall, identify, label, recognize.
Example: The student can recite Newton's three laws of motion.
2. **Understand:** Describe, explain, paraphrase, restate, give original examples of, summarize, contrast, interpret, discuss.
Example: The student can describe Newton's three laws of motion in their own words.
3. **Apply:** Calculate, predict, apply, solve, illustrate, use, demonstrate, determine, model, perform, present.
Example: The student can calculate the kinetic energy of a projectile.
4. **Analyze:** Classify, break down, categorize, analyze, diagram, illustrate, criticize, simplify, associate.
Example: The student can differentiate between potential and kinetic energy.
5. **Evaluate:** Choose, support, relate, determine, defend, judge, grade, compare, contrast, argue, justify, support, convince, select, evaluate.
Example: The student can determine whether using conservation of energy or conservation of momentum would be more appropriate for solving a dynamics problem.
6. **Create:** Design, formulate, build, invent, create, compose, generate, derive, modify, develop.
Example: The student can design an original homework problem dealing with the principle of conservation of energy.

Examiners take 5 minutes at the end of each exam to determine which objectives were met by the student, with justifications and explanations provided. Examiners may choose to add quantitative metrics [e.g., from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)] to aid in the assessment of these objectives, but the feedback given to students is qualitative in nature.

E.1.6 Outcomes

To provide time to identify any potential biases or problems with each exam, final decisions are not delivered to students immediately after each exam. Once all exams are completed, all committee members for each exam will meet to discuss scores and determine final decisions; the advisor is not part of the discussion on whether their student passes/fails.

Final decisions are communicated to students by email at the end of the first week of classes, after all exams have been completed. For each exam taken, students receive their final decision (i.e., pass, fail, or conditional pass) and a written explanation of the decision. If a student receives a conditional pass, the condition placed on the student is also described. All students who receive a conditional pass or failing grade on any exam are required to meet with either the graduate program chair or the lead faculty for that exam. Students who pass an exam are not required to attend any additional meetings, although they are given the option to meet with the graduate program chair or lead faculty if desired.

The most common outcome for students who struggle on an oral preliminary exam is a conditional pass. A conditional pass can take many forms, including taking an additional course, guest lecturing for a course, or completing an additional report or assignment. In general, the condition imposed on the student is intended to address areas identified as needing improvement during the oral exam. Once the condition is satisfied, the student is considered to have completed their oral preliminary exam(s).

Students failing one of their oral preliminary exams for the first time will be invited to retake the exam the subsequent offering. While not recommended, students are allowed to “retake” the exam on a different topic, but they would only have a single opportunity to pass.

Students failing both of their oral preliminary exams the first attempt will not necessarily be removed from the PhD program. Many such students will be given the opportunity to retake both exams the following year, pending a discussion with the student’s advisor and approval of a petition to the graduate committee.

Students who fail a preliminary exam twice or who do not successfully pass two exams by the second exam offering will be asked to leave the PhD program. Forfeiture of an exam is counted as an exam fail.

E.2 Oral Preliminary Exam Concept Inventories

Concept inventories are provided in this appendix for each of the oral preliminary exam topics: Controls, Fluid Dynamics, Heat Transfer, Materials, Mechanics, and Thermodynamics. Additional details on the oral preliminary exam structure and expectations are provided in Section 4.4.6, and PhD students must choose and pass the oral preliminary exam for two of these six fundamental topics.

E.2.1 Controls

Fall 2025 Faculty Leads: Chahat Singh (chahat.singh@colorado.edu)

Relevant MCEN Courses:

- MCEN 4043 System Dynamics (prerequisite to Feedback Control)
- MCEN 4138/5138 Feedback Control (prerequisite to Linear Control Systems)
- MCEN 5448 Linear Control Systems

Classical Control:

- Laplace transforms
- First and second order system response
- Impulse response
- Sinusoidal response, Bode diagrams
- Root locus
- Nyquist criterion and analysis
- Gain and phase margins
- PI/lag control, PD/lead control, PID control
- Translation of closed loop performance requirements into open loop constraints
- Loopshaping design

Linear Control Systems (State Space):

- Theory of vector spaces; bases, dimension, linear independence, norms, inner products, orthogonality and projections, Gram-Schmidt
- Theory and solution of static linear systems $Ax = y$
- Decomposition of linear transformations using eigenspaces
- Matrix exponentials; Jordan form; modal form
- Solutions of homogeneous linear systems using linear operator decompositions
- Solutions of forced linear systems
- Stability of state space systems; relation to eigenvalues
- Controllability, observability, stabilizability and detectability; associated tests
- State feedback control; pole placement
- Observer design to reconstruct internal states

E.2.2 Design

Fall 2025 Faculty Lead: Grace Burleson (grace.burleson@colorado.edu)

Relevant MCEN Courses:

- MCEN 5228 Design Research Theory and Methods

Design as an Object of Study

- Explain the concept of design as a third discipline (distinct from science and humanities); compare epistemological differences between design knowledge and scientific knowledge.
- Summarize the theoretical perspective of design as the science of the artificial; apply this framework to interpret the nature of design problems and solutions.

Design Approaches and Philosophies

- Distinguish between various design approaches and philosophies, such as user-centered design, computational design, systems design, and participatory design.
- Critique the advantages and limitations of different design paradigms in engineering.

Design Process Models

- Identify and explain common models (e.g., Double Diamond, spiral model).
- Analyze how process model choice impacts engineering team dynamics and project outcomes.

Design Methods

- Describe common design methods, e.g., morphological charts, Pugh matrices, TRIZ, etc.
- Apply appropriate methods to solve ill-defined design problems with multiple constraints.

Co-Evolution of Problem and Solution Space

- Define the co-evolutionary model of design; define “problem space” and “solution space”; analyze how design teams iterate between spaces.

Emergence in Design

- Describe emergence and its relation to design process and outcomes.

Ideation and Design-by-Analogy

- Explain cognitive mechanisms behind analogy-based design; evaluate methods for supporting analogical reasoning during ideation.

Fixation Theory

- Define design fixation; propose strategies to reduce fixation in design processes.

Affordance Theory

- Explain affordance theory as it applies to design; apply affordance theory to critique the usability of physical products across contexts and user groups.

Prototypes as Boundary Objects

- Explain the concept of boundary objects and their role in a design process.

E.2.3 Dynamics

Fall 2025 Faculty Lead: Alaa Ahmed (alaa@colorado.edu)

Relevant MCEN Courses:

- MCEN 2043 Dynamics (recommended prerequisite to Advanced Dynamics)

- MCEN 5228 Advanced Dynamics

Newtonian Dynamics:

- Coordinate systems (rectangular, polar/cylindrical)
- Rotation matrices
- Euler angles
- Euler rate kinematics
- Linear and angular momentum
- Transport theorem
- Newton's 2nd law for translation and rotation

Lagrange's Equations:

- Constraints and generalized coordinates
- Work and incremental work
- Principle of virtual work, equilibrium conditions
- D'Alembert's principle
- Kinetic and potential energies for particles and rigid bodies
- Conservative and non-conservative forces, relation to potential energy
- Euler-Lagrange equations
- Calculation of generalized forces
- MDOF (Multi-Degree of Freedom) systems
- Modal analysis, natural modes and natural frequencies
- Free oscillation (undamped, unforced) solutions

Hamilton's Principle:

- Variational calculus
- Hamilton principle and relation to Lagrange's equations
- Kinetic and potential energies for continuous systems (strings and rods)
- Separation of variables, normal mode solutions, boundary conditions
- Assumed modes method for reduction to ODEs

E.2.4 Fluid Dynamics

Fall 2025 Faculty Lead: Jeremy Koch (jeremy.koch@colorado.edu)

For any problem, you should be able to:

1. Identify the physical processes and fluid properties
2. Formulate mathematical models
3. Select methods of analysis and computation including solution of basic diff. equations.
4. Develop first-cut solutions and interpret them in physical terms
5. Explain what you have learned in the context of an oral exam

With a focus on the following:

1. Basic Balance Laws – mass, momentum, energy
2. Kinematics
3. Similarity
4. Vorticity Dynamics
5. Viscous Flows
6. Boundary Layers

Also, familiarize yourself with the following:

1. Physical properties of gases and liquids (for example: viscosity, surface tension, vapor pressure)
2. Kinematics of flow fields including flow acceleration, streamline, streak-line, and particle path concepts, Reynolds transport equation;
3. Conservation laws (mass, momentum and energy) and the governing equations of general fluid flows (integral and differential forms);
4. Relation between stress and deformation-rate tensors;
5. Internal and kinetic energy equations;
6. Viscous dissipation;
7. Vorticity equations;
8. Dimensionless form of the equations and Reynolds number;
9. Classification of flow regimes;
10. Exact solutions and rational approximations for viscous flows (e.g., Couette, Poiseuille, etc.);
11. Similarity solutions;
12. Boundary layer, displacement, and momentum thicknesses;
13. Blasius solutions;
14. Flow separation;
15. Cavitation;
16. Flow around cylinders, spheres, and other immersed bodies;
17. Transition to turbulence;
18. Structure of turbulent flows;
19. Laminar vs. turbulent boundary layers.

You are allowed to bring with you to the Fluid Dynamics exam one single page (8.5×11 in) double-sided or two pages (8×11 in) single-sided handwritten equation/concept sheet. There should NOT be example problems written on the sheet.

E.2.5 Heat Transfer

Fall 2025 Faculty Lead: Nathalie Vriend (nathalie.vriend@colorado.edu)

Relevant Courses:

- MCEN 3022 Heat Transfer (Undergraduate level)
- MCEN 5042 Heat Transfer (Graduate level)

The exam will be primarily based on the course contents of MCEN 3022 and MCEN 5042. A student might do reasonably well if they have a true mastery of MCEN 3022. However, attending MCEN 5042 is strongly encouraged. Some challenging problems that cover a wide but integrated spectrum of fluids/thermal sciences such as fluid mechanics, thermodynamics, and heat transfer are expected.

Basic Coverage of MCEN 3022:

The fundamental equations that govern heat transfer are developed and applied to various practical cases of interest, including aerospace applications, high temperature materials, thermal management of electronics, power generation, buildings and HVAC systems, and manufacturing applications. Solution techniques for systems of differential equations that describe heat transfer processes are reviewed and/or developed. Transient as well as steady state conduction in various geometries is studied. Correlations are developed for convective heat transfer in tubes and ducts as well as over external surfaces. Both natural and forced convection are studied. Radiative heat transfer between various surfaces of different temperatures and surface properties is emphasized.

1. Conduction:

- Calculate heat transfer rates for steady unidirectional conduction in thin wall and thin shell configura-

tions.

- Use analytical methods to calculate heat transfer rates for steady multidirectional conduction in simple configurations.
- Calculate temperature profiles and heat transfer rates for multi-directional steady-state conduction using analytical methods for simple geometries.
- Set up and solve discrete control volume/finite difference formulations for numerical solution of steady state conduction problems.
- Analyze problems involving transient conduction using approximate methods.
- Set up and solve finite difference equations for transient conduction problems.
- Select appropriate solution methods for transient conduction problems.

2. *Convection:*

- Define and evaluate the key dimensionless parameters that characterize flow fields and convective heat transfer in external configurations.
- Use similarity solutions and empirical correlations to evaluate heat transfer coefficients or heat transfer rates for external forced convection in laminar and turbulent flow regimes.
- Use similarity solutions and empirical correlations to evaluate heat transfer coefficients or heat transfer rates for internal forced convection in laminar and turbulent flow regimes.
- Qualitatively describe flow and temperature fields in external boundary layers and within pipes and ducts.
- Qualitatively describe the driving forces that govern natural convection.
- Define and evaluate the dimensionless parameters that characterize natural convection.
- Use empirical correlations to evaluate heat transfer rates for natural convection in external and internal flow configurations.

3. *Radiation:*

- Analyze radiative heat transfer between black or diffuse gray surfaces, using geometric shape factors together with fundamental descriptions of thermal radiation.

4. *Contemporary Issues in Heat Transfer*

- Apply knowledge of heat transfer to current issues, including aerospace applications, high temperature materials, electronic systems, combustion systems, power generation including solar energy, machinery and manufacturing applications.
- Apply fundamentals of conduction, convection and radiation to heat exchanger analysis and design. Identify heat transfer mechanisms, formulate energy balance equations, and choose appropriate methods for evaluating the conduction, convection or radiation terms in the energy balance equation.

In covering the above topics, there should be three overriding objectives:

(a) The student should appreciate the physical origins of the various transport mechanisms. Moreover, when confronted with a particular problem, they should be able to identify the relevant transport processes.

(b) The student should be able to perform engineering calculations for problems involving heat transfer. They should know when, and of what nature, simplifying approximations may be made. They should also be able to perform the kinds of calculations which lead to a rational design and/or an improved understanding of the performance of heat exchange systems.

(c) A final, yet equally important objective, is to develop a positive attitude towards the subject of heat transfer. It is incumbent upon the instructor to reveal the vital role which such processes play in the natural and industrial worlds and to thereby transmit a sense of excitement for the subject.

Basic Coverage of MCEN 5042:

Topics to be covered include: conservation laws, some heat conduction, laminar and turbulent convection (forced and natural), heat and mass transfer including phase change (boiling, evaporation, and condensation), and basic thermal radiation. Students need to learn and show the fundamentals skills on how to model thermal transport processes in typical engineering systems. Problems and examples will include theory and applications drawn from a spectrum of engineering systems, such as manufacturing and machinery, power systems, building systems, solar-thermal utilization, electronics cooling, and even personal thermal management.

E.2.6 Materials

Fall 2025 Faculty Lead: Greg Whiting (Gregory.Whiting@Colorado.edu)

Material Structures, Physics, and Chemistry:

1. Atomic, Molecule, and Crystal Structures and Properties
2. Bonding and Inter-molecular Interactions
3. Band Theory of Solids (metals, semiconductors, and non-metals)
4. Alloys and Ceramics
5. Defects
6. Surfaces and Interfaces
7. Materials Characterizations (Structures and Fundamental Properties)

Materials Thermodynamics and Kinetics:

1. Basic Laws of Thermodynamics
2. Entropy
3. Thermodynamic Properties of Pure Substances and Mixtures
4. Phase Equilibrium and Transformations
5. Basic Phase Diagram and Related Physical and Mechanical Properties

Materials Mechanics:

1. Mechanical Behavior of Crystalline and Non-crystalline Materials
2. Basic Solid Mechanics Concepts, Formulations, and Problem Solving (Tension, Shear and Torsion; Transformation of Strain and Stress Components, Generalized Hooke's Law, and General Formulation Linear Elasticity Problems)
3. Stress Concentration and Materials Failures
4. Stress and Strain Sensing Principles and Sensors

Polymer Materials:

1. Polymer Chain Formation, Configuration, and Basic Structures
2. Crystalline and Amorphous States of Polymers, and Solution and Phase Behavior of Polymers
3. Rubber and Viscoelastic Mechanical Properties of Polymers

Recommended Reference Books:

- W. D. Callister, Jr. and D. G. Rethwisch, *Fundamentals of Materials Science and Engineering: An Integrated Approach*, 4th Ed.
- A.C. Ugural, S.K. Fenster, *Advanced mechanics of materials and applied elasticity*, 5th ed., Prentice Hall.

E.2.7 Mechanics

Fall 2025 Faculty Lead: Francois Barthelat (francois.barthelat@colorado.edu)

Mechanics of Materials:

1. Tension, simple shear and torsion

2. Multi-axial strain and stress components
3. Principle stress/strain and directions
4. Transformation of strain and stress components
5. Compatibility equations for strain
6. Generalized Hooke's law
7. General formulation of linear elasticity problems
8. Plane strain & plane stress conditions
9. Thermal stress
10. Stress concentration
11. Energy method (Castigliano's theorem)
12. Stability of columns and buckling

Continuum Mechanics:

1. Kinematics of continuum bodies
2. Material and spatial derivative
3. Deformation gradient and strain tensors
4. Stress tensors (Cauchy, first and second Piola-Kirchhoff)
5. Balance principles (mass, momentum and energy)
6. Entropy inequality

Mechanics of Beams and Plates:

1. Bending moment, shear force and distributed load
2. Deflection of beams
3. Composite beams
4. Pure bending of beams with asymmetrical cross section
5. Kirchhoff plate theory
6. Bending and stretching (membrane theory or plate theory)

Inelasticity:

1. Plastic deformation
2. Yielding and yield criteria
3. Strain hardening
4. Plastic flow law
5. Viscoelasticity (Maxwell model, Kelvin-Voigt model, Standard linear solid model)
6. Creep and stress relaxation
7. Relaxation modulus and Prony series
8. Storage and loss modulus

Recommended Reference Books:

- A.C. Ugural, S.K. Fenster, *Advanced mechanics of materials and applied elasticity, 5th ed.*, Prentice Hall.
- A.F. Bower, *Applied Mechanics of Solids*, CRC Press.

E.2.8 Thermodynamics

Fall 2025 Faculty Lead: Hope Michelsen (hope.michelsen@colorado.edu)

The prelim will cover topics from standard undergraduate and graduate classical thermodynamics courses.

When preparing for the prelim, focus less on memorizing equations and more on starting from first principles and building up to a problem solution. Be sure to practice working out problems on a board in front of others.

Prelim concepts follow *Thermodynamics: An Engineering Approach* by Cengel and Boles:

- Properties of pure substances
- Closed and open system analysis (control mass and control volume)
- 1st law of Thermodynamics
- 2nd law of Thermodynamics
- Entropy
- Cycles: Power & refrigeration cycles, gas, vapor, & combined cycles, closed & open cycles
- Thermodynamic property relations, gas mixtures, gas-vapor mixtures (psychrometrics)
- Chemical reactions
- Chemical and phase equilibria

For every problem you should be able to:

- Assess given information: what is known, what you need to find, and what assumptions are appropriate and relevant
- Draw appropriate system diagrams
- Draw appropriate thermodynamic diagrams
- Articulate your solution approach step-by-step, using appropriate technical language and demonstrating proficiency with the thermodynamic concepts

E.3 Studying for the Prelims, by Prof. John Daily

These notes offer my personal guide to the Preliminary Examinations. They are based on almost forty years of experience, starting with my own journey through the Ph.D. First I'll make some observations about the nature of the Ph.D. and the purpose of the exams and what we the faculty are seeking. I'll then offer some specific advice on preparing for them.

The Doctor of Philosophy Degree (Ph.D.) is the most advanced degree offered by research universities world-wide. It is designed to prepare students for careers in education, research or industry at the highest levels. It is a demanding program that offers the opportunity to excel in a particular technical field, while becoming highly effective in planning, oral and written communication, and other management skills that will have a long lasting impact on your career. Our goal is to assist you in becoming an effective, self-motivated researcher with a broad grasp of your discipline and the ability to relate what you do to the larger world around you.

The purpose of the preliminary examination is to assess the probability of your success in the program, and, more importantly, it is an opportunity for you build a strong base of integrated disciplinary knowledge that will serve you well for the rest of your career. It is not possible to rush preparation for the exams. To turn in a credible performance, you must be prepared at a very high level. You will be asked to solve and discuss problems from a fairly mature perspective. That means being prepared to cross boundaries between subject areas, and see relationships not necessarily explored deeply in the undergraduate curriculum. Much will be asked in an oral environment, one that most of you are relatively unfamiliar with. And you will be feeling a great deal of pressure.

The Fundamental Knowledge Examination

There are three major elements to the Fundamental Knowledge exams:

1. Basic Disciplinary Knowledge

It is important that you have a global picture of the basic disciplinary fields you are to be working in. Thus, you must codify your knowledge in each of the areas being tested. This is best done by systematically developing your own set of notes summarizing the major concepts, important numbers, etc.

2. Basic Problem Solving

You must be able to rapidly solve a variety of basic problems of the type you worked in your undergraduate courses. You must be able to systematically formulate the problem in a way that leads clearly to a solution

method, carry out the solution, and understand the significance of your findings. The best sources for such problems are textbooks of the type recommended for the areas. You must systematically solve large numbers of problems to become truly adept.

3. *Compound Problem-Solving*

In the exams, you will be asked to solve problems that require more than one discipline. For example, you may have to solve a fluid mechanics problem as part of a heat transfer question. The question might involve needing to identify a particular flow regime as being critical to the heat transfer problem, say a boundary layer. You would then need to approximate the boundary conditions, and solve for the temperature profile. You can best prepare for such questions by selecting real world applications and asking yourself how you would attack analyzing the system. For example, what would be required to predict the real efficiency of an automotive turbocharger? Calculating the ideal efficiency is a basic problem-solving skill. Dealing with heat transfer and friction losses is a compound problem solving skill.

Research Evaluation Examination

The Research Evaluation Examination requires you to become an expert in a single topic, and demonstrate that you have the ability to conceptualize the problem, propose a hypothesis or research scenario, and make progress toward a solution. Your oral presentation should include the following components:

1. A clear statement of your research problem.
2. A discussion of the research history for this problem, citing appropriate literature.
3. A description of the experimental and/or numerical/computational methods needed or used to address the research problem. Include statistical and/or uncertainty analysis where appropriate.
4. A discussion of your findings to date.
5. A summary and statement of your conclusions, including recommendations for future direction the research might take.

During and following your presentation, you will be asked a range of questions to assess how well you understand each element and the maturing of your approach.

Preparing

Being successful will require systematic preparation. The following suggestions have been proven over time, and we strongly urge you to make a study schedule similar to this and plan accordingly. The plan is design to give you ample opportunity to study for the exams, while allowing you to continue taking classes, working on research projects and having some semblance of a normal life.

First form a study group with at least one, but preferably two or three, other students who will be taking the same exams. If English is not your native language, avoid forming a group of other non-English speakers. You will be working with this group to develop your oral problem-solving skills and to practice your research presentations.

Next, determine how many basic disciplinary areas you must prepare for. Set aside a period so that you have two weeks for each area (this might vary depending on the depth and complexity of the area), starting so that it ends three weeks before the exams. For this period set a regular meeting time for the group. The lunch hour is a good time. You should meet once every week for each student in the group. Thus, two students meet twice a week, three students meet three times a week, etc. Meet in a place with a blackboard. It will be tempting to shortcut this time, but it is critical to developing good oral skills. Assign each two-week period to a disciplinary area. You should order them in a logical way, starting with the most basic and working up. Once your overall schedule is set, set aside two contiguous hours every weekday or evening for individual study. This is the time you will use to outline the area, and do problems on paper.

At the beginning of each two-week period, discuss with your group the nature of the area, what you think the

scope of the exams might be, and what sources you will use for problems. Assign each group member the task of providing problems to have the other students practice in the oral setting. Each student should spend at least an hour a week answering questions at the board. Start your individual study each two-week period by outlining the area, then filling in your notes. One suggestion is to spend the first hour of each two-hour period working on your notes. Then do problems during the second hour. By the end of the overall period, you should have developed a very strong sense for each area, solved a large number of problems, and begun to feel much more comfortable in the oral setting.

You now have two weeks left. During the first of these, prepare short one-page summaries from the area notes you prepared earlier. This serves to consolidate your memory of each area and forces you to prioritize what information you think is most important.

During the second week, take a break. Go to the movies, get plenty of exercise, and eat well. Splurge on a nice dinner out. Sleep in. You want to enter the exams well rested. Don't worry, your mind will still be thinking about the exams, and you can put some (but not too much) time into checking up on some of those difficult questions you never really understood.

You will notice that I am NOT asking you to stay up all night, study weekends, give up your other course work, give up research, or stop exercising and eating properly. I am asking you to plan ahead, be systematic, and spread out studying over a sufficiently long period so that you won't have to do those things mentioned in the previous sentence. In fact, the ability to make and carry out such plans is the hallmark of a successful Ph.D. and a person with a successful career. Learn to do it, and you will be rewarded many times over.



Research Preliminary Exams

F.1 Research Preliminary Exam Guidelines

The intent of the research preliminary exam is to evaluate the potential of a PhD student to perform doctoral level research. The exam is focused primarily on the PhD student's plan for future research, but may also include preliminary research results. The research preliminary exam should be completed within 1 year of passing the oral preliminary exam, but no later than fall semester of the 3rd year.

There are both written and oral components to the research preliminary exam, as outlined in the following:

- **Written research proposal:** Students should prepare a 5-page report, with figures and references, describing their proposed PhD research. The report should consist of the following elements:
 1. *Cover page (1 page):* High-level information on the proposed project, including the project title, names of all project participants and their affiliations (including the student, advisor, and collaborators), and the project abstract (300 words max).
 2. *Project narrative (maximum 4 pages):* A description of the proposed research, including the following elements:
 - (a) Background and review of prior literature (1 page);
 - (b) Problem definition and project objectives (less than 0.5 page);
 - (c) Research plan including timeline (1-2 pages);
 - (d) Preliminary (if available) and expected research results (0.5 page);
 - (e) Impact of proposed research (less than 0.5 page).
 3. *References*

The written research proposal should be prepared using Microsoft Word, LaTeX, or other word processor and should be formatted with 11pt Arial or Times New Roman font, 1 in margins, single spacing, and letter paper (8.5 in×11 in). The report should be well written with proper citations of prior work and minimal grammatical and typographical mistakes. All reports will be checked for plagiarism.

- **Oral presentation:** In addition to the written proposal, PhD students taking the research preliminary exam should prepare and deliver a 30 minute oral presentation, with slides, describing the proposed research and covering all aspects of the written report. The student and committee will then hold a closed-door question and answer period (roughly 30 minutes) immediately after the presentation. The committee will ask challenging questions of the student to test the bounds of the student's knowledge and research potential.

Both the written report and oral presentation should be understandable to committee members who have a great deal of technical experience and knowledge, but who are not necessarily experts in the exact area of the proposed research.

Students are encouraged to provide their written report to their advisors for feedback prior to sending the report to the preliminary exam committee. Students are also encouraged to practice their oral presentation with their advisor and lab-mates.

F.1.1 Personnel

Students are responsible for selecting and forming their own preliminary exam committees; students are strongly encouraged to discuss potential committee members with their research advisors. The following committee guidelines must be followed:

- 3 Department-approved committee members are required (including Advisor). 2 committee members must be mechanical engineering faculty.
- Additional committee members are allowed if desired; these additional members can include faculty outside of mechanical engineering and/or CU.
- No guests are permitted during the preliminary exam beyond the committee, including other faculty, students, family, etc.

Although present during the exam, PhD advisors are encouraged to not intervene or assist students during the exam, except in cases where clarifications are needed. The intent is to evaluate the student research progress, without assistance.

F.1.2 Procedure

At least one week prior to the exam, students must send their written research proposal as a PDF document to all committee members, as well as to megrad@colorado.edu. This email should also include the names, email addresses and department affiliations of all committee members for approval by the graduate program.

The student is responsible for scheduling the time and location of the preliminary exam presentation; students must organize the exam and coordinate schedules with the committee. Both in-person and virtual (via Zoom) exam presentations are permitted. The department does not schedule these exams.

Students taking the exam in-person should bring the research prelim form with them to the exam; this form is available [here](#). Alternatively, a copy of this form can be sent to the committee via DocuSign by emailing megrad@colorado.edu.

F.1.3 Evaluation

The written research proposal and oral presentation will each be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. **Literature and Previous Work:** Demonstrates sound knowledge of literature in the area, and of prior work on the specific research problem.
2. **Problem Definition:** States the research problem and objectives clearly, providing motivation for undertaking the research.
3. **Research Plan:** Provides a sound plan for applying state-of-the-field research methods/tools to solving the defined problem and shows a good understanding of how to use methods/tools effectively.
4. **Preliminary and Expected Results:** Provides a sound plan for analyzing and interpreting research results/data.
5. **Impact of Proposed Research:** Demonstrates the potential value of solution to the research problem in advancing knowledge within the area of study. Also demonstrates awareness of broader implications of the proposed research. Broader implications may include social, economic, technical, ethical, business, etc. aspects.
6. **Quality of Written/Oral Communication:** Communicates research proposal clearly and professionally in both written and oral forms.

7. **Critical Thinking:** Demonstrates capability for independent research in the area of study, preparedness in core disciplines relevant to research, and ability to complete the proposed research.

In each of these categories, students will be given a rating of:

- Needs Significant Improvement;
- Needs Improvement;
- Acceptable;
- Very Good;
- Excellent.

Students must receive a rating of “Acceptable” or above for each of the seven evaluation criteria. A rating of “Needs Improvement” or “Needs Significant Improvement” in any category does not necessarily mean the student has failed the exam; instead, the committee may choose to pass the student with conditions, where the conditions are intended to address the criteria above.

Students will receive their evaluations and exam results informally immediately following the closed-door question and answer period during the oral preliminary exam. They receive notification via DocuSign of how they did (pass/fail/conditional after their exam).

F.1.4 Outcomes

Students can pass, fail, or conditionally pass the exam. A failing grade does not necessarily mean the student is out of the PhD degree program and is often encouraged to retake the exam. The conditions placed on conditional passes should be designed to address the perceived weakness of the student (e.g., guest lecturing in a class, writing a brief report, meeting again with a committee member, etc.).

Students who fail the research preliminary exam must retake the exam and pass within 1 year of the first exam; failure to pass this exam may result in removal from the PhD program. Students who conditionally pass the research preliminary exam will typically have less than a year to complete their condition; again, failure to satisfy the condition(s) may result in removal from the PhD program.

The exam is considered complete when all faculty have signed off on the [Research Preliminary Exam form](#).



Resources for Teaching Assistants

G.1 Center for Teaching and Learning

The Center for Teaching and Learning (previously known as the Graduate Teaching Program) is a graduate and professional student development program that strives to encourage graduate students to embrace teaching as an intellectual and inclusive act and to pursue their personal and professional development through participation in the program. The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) provides workshops that focus on pedagogical techniques and professional development. In addition to workshops offered throughout the year, the CTL holds two training events each year, the Fall Intensive and Spring Conference. These training events are open to all graduate students.

To encourage graduate students to focus on gaining teaching skills, the CTL also offers two certificates and in college teaching and future faculty development. The two certificates include, the Certificate in College Teaching (CCT) and the Future Faculty Development Certificate (FFD). The CCT helps graduate teachers develop a confident classroom presence, good interactional skills, and a firm foundation in college teaching. Graduate students must teach for two semesters to pursue this certificate. The FFD offers graduate students the opportunity to pursue a project on teaching at the college level under the guidance of a faculty mentor. Graduate students are not required to teach to pursue this certificate. While the Pursuing Excellence in College Teaching Credential (CTC) allows graduate students whose programs do not offer opportunities for classroom teaching, or for those who are not able to complete the Certificate in College Teaching (CCT). Links to the requirements for each certificate/credential are listed below.

- [Certificate in College Teaching \(CCT\)](#)
- [Future Faculty Development Certificate \(FFD\)](#)
- [College Teaching Credential \(CTC\)](#)

G.2 Lead Graduate Student

The Lead Graduate Student of the Mechanical Engineering department works closely with both the department and the CTL to advance teaching and professional development in the department. Through this position, the Lead Graduate Student will receive training in academic management, academic leadership, college pedagogy, collegial teamwork and project management.

Responsibilities of the Lead Graduate Student are listed below:

- Develop and implement an original project that contributes to the improvement of teaching and/or professional development in the Mechanical Engineering Department

- Organize orientation for the incoming 1st year PhD students
- Participate and help to organize the College of Engineering and Applied Science orientation
- Meet with 1st year PhD students individually during the Fall and Spring semester for check-in meetings
- Serve as a consultant on teaching and college pedagogy
- Act as a liaison between the PhD students and the ME department faculty and leadership
- Act as a liaison between the CTL and the ME department, communicating information about CTL activities and programs to graduate students
- Conduct three non-evaluative videotape consultations
- Conduct consultative microteaching sessions with graduate students
- Conduct one professional development/teaching workshop
- Submit required documentation (e.g., Lead Plan, Lead network evaluations, Capstone project) to the CTL

All leads are required to attend the following events:

- May Lead Training (usually 3 days about a week after finals in May)
- Best Should Teach Lecture in August
- Fall and Spring small group meetings
- Fall Lead Network meeting
- Collaborative Preparing Future Faculty Network (COPFFN)/Spring Conference event in January
- Lead Capstone Event

G.3 Grading

The method of grading for homework, quizzes and exams will be determined by the course instructor. Some faculty have a preferred methods for each type of assignment or assessment. However, we encourage TAs to suggest different methods to grade more efficiently (so that the TA can focus on other teaching responsibilities). Examples of ways to grade more efficiently are listed below.

- Make sure that all assignments created have clear goals and instructions. This way, students will have more consistent answers that will be easier to grade.
- Use different grading scales for different assignments.
 - check +, check, check- (for quizzes, homework, response papers, quick reports or presentations, etc.)
 - 100-point numerical scale (for exams, certain types of projects, etc.)
 - pass-fail or credit-no-credit (for preparatory work)
- Grade one problem at random from each homework assignment
- Post quizzes on Canvas, so they can be graded automatically
- Limit your comments or notations to those your students can use for further learning or improvement
- Spend more time on guiding students in the process of doing work than on grading it

For more information on grading, [click here](#) for a great resource.

G.4 Faculty Expectations

When graduate students were asked for advice about TAing, 47% of students mentioned communication as key advice for TAing. Part of improving communications is establishing clear expectations from the instructor teaching the course. Faculty expectations of each TA should be determined before the semester begins. We recommend that all TAs meet with the faculty member instructing the course they are assigned to and use the TA expectations document to go through the expectations for each class. This document is provided to all TAs at the time they receive their TA assignment each semester. If you no longer have access to this document, please reach out to a graduate advisor.

G.5 Best Practices

General Reminders

- When paid to be a TA by the department, TAing is your main priority. For example, if a TA responsibility conflicts with lab meeting time it would be important to try to reschedule lab meeting to a time that would not conflict. If this is not possible, working with the instructor and your PI to suggest a compromise (e.g. attend lab meeting every other time) would be another option.
- Be professional with your professor and your students. Communicate openly with your professor, especially regarding semester and summer breaks.
- Set boundaries for yourself. For example, it is important to respond to students' questions quickly, but you may want to communicate to your students that you will not respond to email after 11:00pm.
- You must introduce yourself to your TA class during the first week of school and send an email to the class (cc'ing your Lead TA). These introductions are extremely important because previously a lot of undergraduates did not know who their TA was.

Scheduling Office Hours

Office hours in the Engineering Center

- Note: Using the ME conference rooms is not allowed (If the professor would like the office hours held here they must book it themselves)
- To request a classroom in the Engineering Center for AFTER 5:00PM ONLY, contact the ME front desk (mefrontdesk@colorado.edu). When contacting the front desk, please include the following information:
 - Course number and title
 - Day(s) of the week for office hours or Date(s) for review sessions.
 - Start and end time. It's also helpful for the Front Desk to know whether their preferred start and end time are flexible (i.e.: prefer 6-7PM, but could also do 7-8PM).
 - Anticipated attendance. Classrooms tend to fall into 25+, 45+, 60+, 80+, and 120+ seat ranges. So those are good options to keep in mind.

Office Hours in the Idea Forge

- *For more information click [here](#)* or contact: victoria.lanaghan@colorado.edu
- Note: There are many events that occur in the Idea Forge throughout the year and office hours could move around when these events occur during your scheduled time.
- Idea Forge Commons
 - Capacity: 60 +
 - Tables for students to collaborate
 - White boards
 - Can be noisy sometimes because other students can work there
- Drop-In Design Lab
 - Capacity: 48 +
 - Tables for students to collaborate
 - Small conference rooms on the side with TVs for presentations
 - Whiteboards
 - Can be noisy sometimes because other students work there
- Classroom 271B
 - Capacity: 15
 - Tables for students to collaborate
 - Whiteboards
 - Quiet

Assignment Filing

Assignments are returned to students based on the preference of the course instructor. Most instructors will

prefer that assignments are returned to students in their student folder in the filing cabinet by the front desk. It is important to organize all assignments by ME ID to make filing more efficient. When filing, the TA may ask the front desk staff if they would be able to help file the assignments only if the front desk staff is not busy or does not have other priorities from the department at the time. The TA must stay in the front desk to assist in filing the whole time.

Students in Distress

If you notice that a student in your class is in distress, take action according to the situation. This document ([click here](#)) provided by the graduate school can help guide how to deal with certain situations.

Remember as an employee of CU Boulder, you are a mandatory reporter. CU-Boulder policy requires any supervisor who becomes aware of a complaint of protected class discrimination and harassment and sexual harassment (including sexual assault, intimate partner abuse, and stalking) or related retaliation, to promptly report it to the *Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC)* if the alleged perpetrator is an employee or a student.

For more information on how to respond to a disclosure, see the following [link](#).

First Contact Quick Reference Guide

(See inside for further resource information)

Mental Health Issues & Emotional Behavior Depression, anxiety, trauma, substance use, eating disorders, etc.	→	Counseling and Psychological Services (2-6766) Psychological Health & Psychiatry (2-5654)
Individuals and Communities in Crisis Traumatic life events, sexual assault or abuse, harassment, bias-related incidents, hazing, death	→	Office of Victim Assistance (2-8855)
Student, Faculty, and Staff Safety	→	CU Police Department (2-6666) Office of Student Conduct (2-5550)
Illness or Medical Emergency Seizure, loss of consciousness, injury, etc.	→	Wardenburg Health Center (2-5101) 9-1-1 (emergency)
Disability Accommodations and/or access concerns	→	Disability Services (2-8671 ext. 0)

If you have any questions, contact the Dean of Students at 2-8476.

Pedagogical Resources

- [Click here for website including teaching and mentoring resources](#)
- [Click here for a guide specifically for TAing](#)



Resources for Faculty

The graduate handbook provides an exhaustive and detailed description of graduate program requirements and processes. However, faculty frequently request further clarification on a number of topics, and explanations of these topics are provided below.

H.1 Student Advising

- **Student Expectations:** A document outlining expectations for students on Research Assistant (RA) appointments can be found [here](#) and a similar form for students on Teaching Assistant (TA) appointments can be found [here](#). Faculty are encouraged to review and complete these forms with their RAs and TAs.
- **Dissertation Hours:** PhD students are required to have 30 dissertation hours in order to graduate. Any hours beyond 30 are unnecessary and can incur additional unnecessary expenses on sponsored projects. Faculty should work with their students and the graduate advisors to ensure that PhD students complete as close to 30 dissertation hours as possible by the end of the semester in which the PhD defense takes place. The following restrictions on dissertation hours must, however, be observed:
 - PhD students must be registered for at least 1 dissertation hour during the semester in which they complete their comprehensive exam;
 - PhD students must be registered for a minimum of 5 dissertation hours in each of the fall and spring semesters beyond completion of their comprehensive exam and defense;
 - PhD students must be registered for 5 dissertation hours during the semester in which they complete their dissertation defense;
 - PhD students may register for a maximum of 10 dissertation credits in any given semester.

To aid with dissertation hour tracking, only the graduate advisors can enroll PhD students in dissertation hours; requests for dissertation hour registration can be made by students using [this form](#).

- **Student Support Resources:** Students with a variety of concerns, such as academics, anxiety, body image, depression, relationships, substance use and more, should contact Counseling & Psychiatric Services (CAPS), which is a confidential, on-campus mental health and psychiatric service.

Counseling & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

Website: <https://www.colorado.edu/counseling/>

Phone: 303-492-2277 (24/7 phone)

Location: Center for Community, N352 ([Office Hours](#))

The Office of Victim Assistance (OVA) also provides free and confidential information, consultation, support, advocacy, and short term counseling services to CU students, graduate students, faculty and staff

who have experienced a traumatic, disturbing or life disruptive event.

Office of Victim Assistance (OVA)

Website: <https://www.colorado.edu/ova/>

Email: assist@colorado.edu

Phone: 303-492-8855 (24/7 phone); after hours press 2 to talk to a counselor

Location: Center for Community, N450

(Office Hours)

Additional campus resources can be found [here](#) and more general health resources are available [here](#).

H.2 Funding

- **Tuition:** Detailed information on tuition and fees is available at [this section](#) of the [CU Bursar's Office website](#). After choosing the appropriate semester on this page, PhD and MS Thesis student tuition rates are listed under the "Graduate" heading, while MS Professional tuition rates are listed under the "Professional Graduate" heading.
- **Pay Rates:** In December 2021, the department voted to increase pay rates for students on appointment (i.e., TA and RA positions) to the following
 - *Pre-comprehensive exam:* \$2,755 per month
 - *Post-comprehensive exam:* \$2,884 per month

MS Thesis students on appointment are paid at the pre-comprehensive exam rate.

- **Applications for Departmental Support:** Three times per year (corresponding to the fall and spring semesters, as well as the summer), faculty advisors of mechanical engineering PhD students are given the opportunity to request departmental support (in the form of department-supported TA or RA positions, or fellowships during the summer). Announcements of the application review deadlines are made via email to the me-facstaff mailing list, and faculty can apply for funding using [this form](#). This application form is not required for startup TA or RA requests, which can be made directly to the department financial team. Support provided through this application process is only provided for one semester at a time and separate applications must be submitted to request support in future semesters.

Selection of students for financial support is based on need, prior departmental support received by the student, merit, and the availability of funds. Preference is given to currently enrolled PhD students, although an application may be submitted and will be reviewed for MS Thesis students. Students are selected by the graduate or executive committees, with input from the department financial team to assess need. During the fall and summer semesters, these positions provide selected students with a 50% appointment, including tuition remission and health benefits, at standard pay rates based on status (i.e., pre- or post-comps). Fellowships awarded for the summer do not include a tuition waiver/tuition remission. Faculty are expected to use any startup TA/RA positions available to them prior to requesting department support.

- **Professional MS Funding Restrictions:** According to Graduate School rules, students in our professional MS degree program cannot be placed on RA or TA appointments. These students can, however, be hired as hourly graders or research assistants. Graduate students in the MS Thesis program can be funded as RAs or TAs, with tuition remission and benefits.
- **Hourly research assistants:** Requests for hourly research assistants (i.e., hourly employees who are not part of the course support process) should be made directly to [Kassie Van Pelt](#).

H.3 Recruiting and Admissions

- **Internal Applicants:** Current CU students seeking to switch programs (e.g., from Professional MS to PhD) should complete the [change of program form](#). Off-cycle (e.g., spring or summer) PhD admissions can be made with the guarantee of full financial support from the student research advisor. That is, no promise of department support is made for PhD students admitted off-cycle. For current CU students wishing to transfer into the PhD program with department support as a 1st year RA or TA, the [change of program](#)

form should be completed for a fall semester matriculation, and the student application will be reviewed alongside other external applicants also seeking department support.

- **MS Thesis Incentive Program:** To strengthen and grow our MS thesis degree program, the Department of Mechanical Engineering provides \$2,500 in discretionary funds per semester for each mechanical engineering MS thesis student advised by an ME faculty member. Complete details of the program are as follows:

1. Effective the summer 2021 semester, the graduate program will provide mechanical engineering faculty with \$2,500 in discretionary funds for each fall, spring and summer semester in which they advise a mechanical engineering MS thesis student(s). MS thesis students must be engaged in research during a summer semester for faculty to be eligible for discretionary funds during that summer.
2. Funds will be available for a maximum of five semesters per MS thesis student, inclusive of any summer semesters.
3. Funds can be used at the discretion of the faculty advisor, inclusive of purchasing lab supplies and supporting hourly employment costs for the MS thesis student.
4. The graduate program will disperse funds to eligible faculty within the first two weeks of each fall, spring, and summer terms.
5. Depending on faculty interest and the availability of funds, it may be necessary in the future to limit the number of MS thesis students supported by this incentive program.

To facilitate distribution of funds, faculty are requested three times per year by email to fill out **this form** for both continuing and new MS thesis students in their groups.

H.4 Course Support

- **Procedure:** Course support is allocated by the graduate chair and graduate advisors 1-2 months before the start of each semester. The initial step in determining these allocations is to solicit instructor course support preferences using **this form**. Responses to this form are typically requested in July (for the fall semester) and in November (for the spring semester). After initial allocations are determined, they are then sent to instructors for review. Once this review has been completed, the students are then notified of their TA assignments and connected with instructors. At this point instructors can also request graders and other hourly course support using **this form**.
- **Calculation of Course Support:** An initial estimate of the number of support hours to assign each course is calculated as $N/4$ (minimum $N = 16$) for lecture courses and $N/3$ (minimum $N = 12$) for courses with labs/recitations, where N is the number of students enrolled in the course. Both TAs and hourly graders are used to fill the hours for courses, based in part on responses to the instructor course support preferences survey. Typically, a TA is assigned a 20 hour appointment while graders are assigned up to 10 hours, although these numbers can vary. Faculty can check their course enrollments (i.e., N) via **my.cu.edu**.

H.5 Curriculum

- **Online Courses:** To increase access to high-quality graduate education for non-traditional students, as well as provide access for students who find it difficult or impossible to pursue on-campus instruction, every semester we identify roughly five courses to teach fully online or in a hybrid format. Selection of these courses is guided by several principles:
 - Should be of primary interest to Professional MS students;
 - Should lend itself well to an online modality (e.g., no hands-on classes);
 - Should span a range of focus areas (e.g, bio, thermal/fluids, controls, etc.);
 - Could support one of our certificate programs or Professional MS degree requirements (e.g., industry skills);
 - Faculty should voluntarily be comfortable and willing to teach online.

Faculty may receive \$5,000 in discretionary funds for developing a new online course and \$2,500 for each subsequent offering of the course. This funding can be used for additional grader and TA support to

manage AV equipment, purchases of iPad, mics, etc.

- **4000/5000 Level Courses:** The CU Graduate School requires that there be a difference between 4000 and 5000 level courses that are taught as a combined 4000/5000 section. Students registered at the 5000 level are taking the course for graduate level credit, and thus the course expectations of that student must be at the graduate level. Conversely, students registered at the 4000 level are taking the course for undergraduate level credit, and thus the course expectations must be at the undergraduate level.

It is advised that the course instructor keep track of the course requirement differences between the 4000 and 5000 level students. An ideal location to document this difference is in the course syllabus. In recent years there have been instances where a student requests changing course credit from 4000 to 5000 level, or vice-versa. The University allows for this change if the student's grade can be adjusted (or additional requirements met) per documentation provided by the course instructor. One example is where a BS/MS student enrolls in a course at the 4000 level, and after completion requests a change to 5000 level, due to some unforeseen event. In this example, the course instructor is approached to determine a grade change, or asked if additional coursework needs to be completed. While it is up to the course instructor on how to proceed, having a documented difference that can be referenced can save the course instructor significant time and hassle, in addition to maintaining Graduate School requirements.

Course instructors should adjust their course requirements as to best fit their course. A graduate level course generally encourages deeper thought, additional workload, and/or higher expectations of the student. With that in mind, a few examples (non-exhaustive), or suggested differences that could be used to distinguish between 4000 and 5000 level students are:

- Additional project requirements for 5000 level students
 - Additional exam problems for 5000 level students
 - Additional reading assignments and evaluations for 5000 level students
 - Additional reports, homework, or other measure of student performance for 5000 level students
 - Inclusion of a teaching role for the graduate students
- **Independent Study:** Full details of the ME Independent Study course can be found in Chapter 6.5 of the graduate handbook.
 - **Internship for Credit:** Full details of the ME Internship for Credit course can be found in Chapter 6.6 of the graduate handbook.