



Data Science

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

Student Handbook

Master of Science in Data Science
(MS-DS) on Coursera

2026 Fall 1 – 2027 Summer 2

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Welcome

Welcome to the Master of Science in Data Science (MS-DS), an innovative program that has been designed to prepare students for rewarding careers in the field of data science. Hosted on the internationally acclaimed Coursera learning platform, the MS-DS program offers graduate-level courses, a fully accredited Master's Degree in Data Science, and a Graduate Certificate in Data Science. The fully online MS-DS on Coursera presents three major innovations for students:

- **Access.** The MS-DS is designed to provide global access to graduate-level education. It seeks to educate the world. To this end, it uses *performance-based admissions* rather than traditional admissions standards. Anyone who can complete the work of a graduate-level data science course is welcome to enroll in our degree.
- **Curriculum.** The MS-DS curriculum is both modular and self-directed. The data science professors have purposely broken down their semester-long courses into one-credit classes and, although classes can naturally fit together in sequence, we encourage our students to construct their degree plan as needed. Note the degree requires students to complete 21 credits of core courses and 9 credits of elective courses. The 12 credit graduate certificate registers content-area mastery. The MS-DS curriculum is made up of a broad variety of courses in areas across data science and students will gain a deep understanding of data science through statistics, computer science, and information science and will apply these skills to a variety of domains.
- **Learning.** The MS-DS is guided by the belief that learning belongs to the learner. To be successful in the MS-DS, each student must commit to his or her learning by creating a clear plan of courses, a schedule for study, and a strategy for taking courses.

As an essential part of learning strategy, we recommend that students explore the courses in non-credit format before taking them for-credit. By beginning a course in a non-credit format before switching to for-credit, students can assess whether the course content, asynchronous nature, and instructor's style fit their learning style prior to committing to paying tuition. See [How It Works](#) for more information on upgrading from the non-credit to for-credit experience.

The MSDS is a CU Boulder degree, administered in Coursera. As such, students graduating from the MSDS on Coursera earn the same credential as students

graduating from the residential MSDS. There are no designations on official CU transcripts, diplomas, or certificates that indicate this is an online program offered on the Coursera platform.

The program specifics are reviewed on the [Data Science program webpage](#). This document provides students with the policies governing the MS-DS (updated annually). CU graduate degree programs are also governed by the University's and [Graduate School's rules, policies, and procedures](#).

We welcome student contact:

- Prospective students and students enrolled in non-credit courses may contact us at cuboulder-msds@coursera.org.
- Students enrolled in for-credit courses may contact their dedicated support staff, including Coursera support staff, Course Facilitators or their MS-DS graduate advisors at msds-support@colorado.edu with questions.

We are excited for you to join our community and forge a new kind of data science education. Welcome to CU Boulder's Master of Science in Data Science program on Coursera.

Admissions

The MS-DS on Coursera program uses **performance-based admissions** for enrollment, which means students earn program admission simply by performing well in a three-course pathway.

There is no traditional application required for admission to the MS-DS program. Students do not need to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or English proficiency exams like the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS). They never need to submit letters of recommendation or application essays. Neither a prior degree nor university transcripts are required for admission. Because these are purely online programs, students do not need to complete a background check to enroll.

Specifically, a student pursuing admission to the MS-DS degree program must complete the following four steps:

1. Earn at least a grade of C in each of the for-credit courses listed below within one of the following three-course pathways:

Foundations of Data Structures and Algorithms Pathway (3 credits)

- DTSA 5501: Algorithms for Searching Sorting and Indexing
- DTSA 5502: Trees and Graphs – Basics
- DTSA 5503: Dynamic Programming and Greedy Algorithms

Data Science Foundations: Statistical Inference Pathway (3 credits)

- DTSA 5001: Probability Theory – Foundation for Data Science and AI
- DTSA 5002: Statistical Inference for Estimation in Data Science
- DTSA 5003: Statistical Inference and Hypothesis Testing in Data Science Applications

Please note that both pathway specializations are a required part of the curriculum, allowing students to make direct progress toward the degree while working toward program admission.

2. Achieve a computed pathway grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.00.
3. Have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 for all for-credit courses taken to date.
4. Indicate interest in degree admission (New students via the Account Creation Form, or later using the Program Action Form in your Buff Portal)
 - a. * Please note that students must submit their intent to pursue the MSDS by the last day of class for their admissions to be processed that session. Admissions are processed about two weeks after grades post at the end of every session.

Upon completion of these four steps, the student is automatically admitted to the MS-DS degree program. Students may successfully complete a designated pathway specialization and declare their intent to seek the degree at any point in their academic journey. Completion of a pathway specialization is not required for students to begin earning academic credit, only to earn the degree, and credits do not apply to the degree until a student is admitted. While not required, it is recommended to start with a pathway to work towards admission. To remain in good standing in the program, students must earn a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher.

Non-degree-seeking students may also enroll in for-credit courses. All courses attempted and/or completed for credit will appear on an official CU Boulder transcript

(unless dropped by the drop deadline) and will count toward the cumulative GPA. See Course Drops, Tuition Refunds, Withdrawals & Grades for details.

Curriculum & Requirements

Graduate Certificates

A graduate certificate is a sequence of courses totaling 9-12 credit hours that has been approved by the Graduate School at CU Boulder. Students may enroll in graduate certificates as either non-degree-seeking or degree-seeking students. Students should declare their intent to earn certificates using the Program Action Form in Buff Portal.

CU certificates on Coursera are **stackable**, meaning degree-seeking students can count credits first earned as part of a CU certificate toward the 30-credit MS-DS degree, as well.

All CU certificates on Coursera require students to earn a cumulative certificate GPA of 3.00 or higher before conferral. Individual certificates may have additional requirements.

Graduate certificate credentials are conferred by the CU Boulder campus.

Data Science Graduate Certificate

To earn the Data Science Graduate Certificate, students must complete **12 credit** hours of coursework.

Students must complete the following **required** courses (6 credits):

Data Mining Foundations and Practice (3 credits)

- DTSA 5504: Data Mining Pipeline
- DTSA 5505: Data Mining Methods
- DTSA 5506: Data Mining Project

Data Science Foundations: Statistical Inference (3 credits)

- DTSA 5001: Probability Foundations for Data Science and AI
- DTSA 5002: Statistical Inference for Estimation in Data Science
- DTSA 5003: Hypothesis Testing for Data Science

Students must complete an additional 6 credits and can choose to complete any 2 of the following 3 specializations (6 credits):

Introduction to Statistical Learning for Data Science (3 credits)

- DTSA 5020: Statistical Learning for Data Science: Regression and Classification
- DTSA 5021: Statistical Learning for Data Science: Resampling, Selection and Splines
- DTSA 5022: Statistical Learning for Data Science: Trees, SVM, and Unsupervised Learning

Machine Learning (3 credits)

- DTSA 5509: Introduction to Machine Learning – Supervised Learning
- DTSA 5510: Unsupervised Algorithms in Machine Learning
- DTSA 5511: Introduction to Deep Learning

Statistical Modeling for Data Science (3 credits)

- DTSA 5011: Modern Regression Analysis in R
- DTSA 5012: ANOVA and Experimental Design
- DTSA 5013: Generalized Linear Models and Nonparametric Regression

In order to earn a [Data Science certificate](#), students must receive a minimum grade of a C or higher in each course. The cumulative GPA for certificate courses must be 3.0 or higher.

Certificates from Other CU Boulder Degrees on Coursera (“Outside Certificates”)

MS-DS on Coursera students may currently pursue CU Boulder graduate certificates on Coursera offered by the Master of Engineering in Engineering Management ([ME-EM](#)) on Coursera, the Master of Science in Computer Science on Coursera ([MS-CS](#)), and the Master of Science in Electrical and Computer Engineering ([MS-ECE](#)) on Coursera programs.

It is your responsibility to ensure you take courses in the correct order to earn the certificates you are most interested in. Multiple certificates may require the same courses, and *you cannot double count courses between multiple certificates*. For example, while it is possible to earn both the AI Certificate and the DS Certificate, you may need to indicate which certificate you want certain credits to apply to. Please speak

to your advisor for clarification. Once declared, CU certificates on Coursera are automatically conferred once all requirements are met.

Students must officially declare their intent to pursue any certificate offered by another CU degree on Coursera. To officially declare your intent to pursue one of these outside certificates, fill out the Program Action Form in Buff Portal.

Master's Degree

Degree Requirements

Degree requirements in effect per the [Special Programs](#) section of the University Catalog at the time of your admission to the MS-DS on Coursera degree program will apply to you during your course of study. Any revisions to the requirements after the term that you are officially admitted to the MS-DS on Coursera will not apply to you retroactively. Use the [University Catalog](#) for the term you were admitted to the program until you graduate, since that governs your graduation requirements. Students can also use their degree audit in BuffPortal to verify their individual degree requirements and catalog year.

The MS-DS requires a minimum of 30 credit hours of approved, degree-eligible graduate-level coursework and a minimum cumulative grade-point average (GPA) of 3.00. This includes 21 credits of core coursework and a choice of 9 credits of elective coursework from the options listed below (Note: up to six credits from other CU Boulder degrees on Coursera can be applied toward MS-DS elective credit requirements. See Other Elective Courses ("Outside Electives") for details.) Courses in which grades below C (2.0) are received will not be applied toward the degree but will count toward the cumulative GPA.

Courses may not be double counted toward two credentials of the same level.

This means students can apply credit from a particular course toward one graduate certificate and one graduate degree, but they cannot apply credit from a particular course toward two graduate certificates or two graduate degrees. More specifically, it is not possible to earn any combination of the MS-DS, MS-CS, or MS-AI degrees. CU degrees and certificates on Coursera are automatically conferred once all requirements are met.

Core Courses (21 credits)

Students must complete the required core courses for a total of 21 credits.

- **PATHWAY: Data Science Foundations: Statistical Inference for Data Science (3 credits)**
 - DTSA 5001: Probability Foundations for Data Science and AI
 - DTSA 5002: Statistical Inference for Estimation in Data Science
 - DTSA 5003: Hypothesis Testing for Data Science
- **PATHWAY: Foundations of Data Structures and Algorithms (3 credits)**
 - DTSA 5501: Algorithms for Searching, Sorting, and Indexing
 - DTSA 5502: Trees and Graphs: Basics
 - DTSA 5503: Dynamic Programming, Greedy Algorithms – CSCA 5414*
- **Vital Skills for Data Scientists (4 credits)**
 - DTSA 5301: Data Science as a Field
 - DTSA 5302: Cybersecurity for Data Science
 - DTSA 5303: Ethical Issues in Data Science
 - DTSA 5304: Fundamentals of Data Visualization – CSCA 5702*
- **Statistical Modeling (3 credits)**
 - DTSA 5011: Modern Regression Analysis in R
 - DTSA 5012: ANOVA and Experimental Design
 - DTSA 5013: Generalized Linear Models and Nonparametric Regression
- **Data Mining Foundations and Theory (3 credits)**
 - DTSA 5504: Data Mining Pipeline – CSCA 5504*
 - DTSA 5505: Data Mining Methods – CSCA 5512*
 - DTSA 5506: Data Mining Project – CSCA 5522*
- **Machine Learning (3 credits)**
 - DTSA 5509: Introduction to Machine Learning: Supervised Learning – CSCA 5622*
 - DTSA 5510: Unsupervised Algorithms in Machine Learning – CSCA 5632*
 - DTSA 5511: Introduction to Deep Learning – CSCA 5642*
- **Databases (2 credits)**
 - DTSA 5733: Relational Database Design
 - DTSA 5734: The Structured Query Language (SQL)

Cross-listed Courses

Cross-listed Courses are offered under two or more programs (e.g., Dynamic Programming, Greedy Algorithms is offered as both DTSA 5503 and CSCA 5414). They are considered equivalent when evaluating progress toward degree requirements. However, we encourage you to take your program's versions of cross-listed courses to ensure your CU transcript reflects the substantial amount of coursework you are

completing directly in your home department. Any courses you complete from another program will appear on your CU transcript with that program's course prefix (e.g., DTSA vs. CSCA). You may not earn credit for more than one version of a cross-listed course. All cross-listed courses are indicated with a * under Core Courses and Elective Courses.

Elective Courses (9 credits)

Students must complete 9 credits of elective coursework. They can choose from the following course options (Note: up to six credits from other CU Boulder degrees on Coursera can be applied toward MS-DS elective credit requirements. See Other Elective Courses ("Outside Electives") for details.)

- **Statistical Learning for Data Science (3 credits)**
 - DTSA 5020: Regression and Classification
 - DTSA 5021: Resampling Selection and Splines
 - DTSA 5022: Trees, SVM, and Unsupervised Learning
- **Software Architecture for Big Data (3 credits)**
 - DTSA 5507: Fundamentals of Software Architecture for Big Data – CSCA 5008*
 - DTSA 5508: Software Architecture Patterns for Big Data – CSCA 5018*
 - DTSA 5714: Applications of Software Architecture for Big Data – CSCA 5028*
- **Computer Vision (3 credits)**
 - DTSA 5512: Introduction to Computer Vision – CSCA 5222*
 - DTSA 5513: Deep Learning for Computer Vision – CSCA 5322*
 - DTSA 5514: Modern AI Models for Vision and Multimodal Understanding – CSCA 5322*
- **High-Performance and Parallel Computing (3 credits)**
 - DTSA 5701: Introduction to High-Performance and Parallel Computing
 - DTSA 5702: Efficient Programming
 - DTSA 5703: Parallel Computing with MPI
- **Data Science Methods for Quality Improvement (3 credits)**
 - DTSA 5704: Managing, Describing, and Analyzing Data
 - DTSA 5705: Stability and Capability in Quality Improvement
 - DTSA 5706: Measurement System Analysis
- **Bayesian Statistics for Data Science (3 credits)**
 - DTSA 5726: Introduction to Bayesian Statistics for Data Science
 - DTSA 5727: Computational Bayesian Statistics for Data Science
 - DTSA 5728: Bayesian Statistical Modeling for Data Science Applications
- **Internet Policy (3 credits)**

- DTSA 5736: When to Regulate? The Digital Divide and Net Neutrality – CSCA 5433*
- DTSA 5737: Protecting Individual Privacy on the Internet – CSCA 5443*
- DTSA 5738: Cybersecurity in Crisis: Information and Internet Security – CSCA 5453*
- **Modeling and Predicting Climate Anomalies (3 Credits)**
 - DTSA 5740: Global Climate Policies and Analysis
 - DTSA 5741: Modeling Climate Anomalies with Statistical Analysis
 - DTSA 5742: Predicting Extreme Climate Behavior with Machine Learning
- **Natural Language Processing: Deep Learning Meets Linguistics (3 Credits)**
 - DTSA 5747: Fundamentals of Natural Language Processing – CSCA 5832*
 - DTSA 5748: Deep Learning for Natural Language Processing – CSCA 5842*
 - DTSA 5749: Model and Error Analysis for Natural Language Processing 5852*
- **Text Marketing Analytics (3 credits)**
 - DTSA 5798: Supervised Text Classification for Marketing Analytics
 - DTSA 5799: Unsupervised Text Classification for Marketing Analytics
 - DTSA 5800: Network Analysis for Marketing Analytics
- **Effective Communication (2 credits)**
 - DTSA 5842: Effective Communication: Writing, Design and Presentation
 - DTSA 5843: Effective Communication Capstone Project

Stand-Alone Electives

- **Deep Learning Applications for Computer Vision (1 credit)**
 - DTSA 5707: Deep Learning Applications for Computer Vision
- **Databases (1 Credit)**
 - DTSA 5735: Advanced Topics and Future Trends in Database Technologies
- **Security and Ethical Hacking (1 Credit)**
 - DTSA 5739: Security and Ethical Hacking: Attacking the Web and AI Systems – CSCA 5323*
- **Capstone (1 Credit)**
 - DTSA 5841: IBM Capstone Project

The MS-DS program will continue to roll out additional electives that will be available for selection. Please see the [Curriculum](#) page for up-to-date information on additional data science electives that can be applied toward the required 9 elective credits.

Other Elective Courses (“Outside Electives”)

Up to 6 graduate-level credit hours of courses offered by other CU degrees on Coursera may be applied as elective credits toward the MSDS on Coursera degree. All courses must be graduate level, offered through Coursera, and meet all applicable academic standards. This includes all courses offered by the ME-EM, MS-CS, MS-AI and MS-ECE programs on Coursera, with the exceptions of CSCA 5214, CSCA 5224 and CSCA 5234. Courses must be graduate level and meet all applicable academic standards and may not be double counted toward two credentials of the same level. Only courses offered by other CU degrees on Coursera may be used.

Students wishing to complete degrees in more than one program must complete all the requirements for both degrees with no shared or overlapping coursework. Please see the MS-DS [Curriculum page](#) for more details. Courses that begin with a "DTSA" prefix and courses that are cross-listed with a DTSA-prefixed course are not considered outside electives and do not count against this six-credit limit.

Non-Credit and For-Credit Experiences on Coursera

Non-Credit & Coursera Completion Certificates

All MS-DS courses are hosted on the Coursera platform. All courses are asynchronous in nature which means that they do not meet at specific times. A typical non-credit **course** includes content, discussion forums, and homework assignments of level and scope similar to assignments made in an equivalent on-campus course in the same subject. Many of the courses are organized into sequences called **specializations**, a series of courses linked together to cover a topic more fully. Non-credit students may use specializations to earn course and specialization completion certificates from Coursera, but non-credit courses and specializations do not carry CU Boulder credit and are not recorded on CU Boulder transcripts.

Non-credit courses taught by CU Boulder Data Science faculty are the foundation of for-credit courses taught by those same faculty. A student enrolled in a non-credit version of an MS-DS on Coursera course may elect to pay tuition and upgrade to the for-credit version of the course at any time in their learner journey. However, MS-DS credits are only applicable to the MS-DS degree for up to eight years; after that point, students must re-enroll and pay tuition for any expired credits that are required for graduation. (See [Time Limit](#) for details.)

Work performed in the non-credit portion of the course (e.g., assignments and quizzes) automatically transfers with the student to the for-credit option, and the student can then continue to complete any remaining homework, exams, projects, and lessons. Due to their interactive nature, discussion board posts may not transfer from session to session

if you drop/withdraw and later re-enroll in a particular class. Be sure to save your work outside of the Coursera platform.

Students may upgrade from non-credit to for-credit at any time during the enrollment window via Buff Portal. Each enrollment period begins two weeks before the first day of class and ends two weeks before all coursework is due. In addition, please note the following:

- All for-credit coursework is due by the last day of the session.
- Previously completed assignments will be automatically applied to your for-credit experience.
- Prior to accessing for-credit content for the first time, you must complete onboarding steps found on our [Current Students](#) page, which includes verifying your identity, activating/linking your student accounts and passing a short (4–5 hour) non-credit onboarding course. You only need to complete these steps once.
- Please note that if you start a non-credit course within the same month that you upgrade to the for-credit version, you will not receive a refund for the monthly subscription associated with the non-credit course. The monthly subscription fee is paid to Coursera, not to the University of Colorado Boulder.

For Credit & CU Boulder Credentials

A course is not considered credit-bearing until a student enrolls in the for-credit session of the course by paying CU Boulder tuition. Enrolling in the for-credit session enables access to additional credit-bearing content and assessments.

For-credit CU Boulder courses on Coursera may include proctored assessments or use project-based assignments.

Individuals may take for-credit CU Boulder courses on Coursera as either **non-degree-seeking** students (in which case they do not seek admission to the MS-DS degree) or as **degree-seeking** students (in which case they have followed the onboarding steps to enroll in the MS-DS degree listed above).

Prerequisites & Assumed Background Knowledge

There are no official course prerequisites or corequisites for MS-DS courses. Nevertheless, it is important that students are prepared for individual courses. Course descriptions will advise students of assumed incoming knowledge, and students are

strongly encouraged to take course sequences in the order they are presented on the Coursera platform. *Students are also encouraged to take a non-credit version in some form before moving to the for-credit version to test whether they can succeed, especially if they are unsure whether they have the background knowledge required for a course.*

Courses & Credit Hours

Each MS-DS course on Coursera with a “DTSA” prefix is worth one credit hour. Elective courses offered by other CU degrees on Coursera like the [ME-EM on Coursera](#), and the [MS-CS on Coursera](#) programs may offer different credit hour amounts. It is your responsibility to track your progress and ensure you meet all graduation requirements.

Individual courses in the program have an anticipated completion timeline of between four and six weeks. The program’s credit hour system reflects its commitment to maintaining the rigor of the on-campus experience in an online setting by narrowing and focusing the content on a specific topic.

Students are limited to 15 credits per semester/term (a term equals, for example, spring 1 session + spring 2 session).

Calendar & Course Sessions

Non-credit course sessions are typically self-paced with assignment due dates programmed and updated by the Coursera platform.

For-credit sessions run in 8-week increments throughout the calendar year, so students have the ability to upgrade and take a course for credit, complete coursework and any additional for-credit requirements, and earn credit and a grade in a fashion approximating an on-demand service.

Students enrolled in a for-credit session will be expected to complete and submit work by the 8-week session end date. At the end of a for-credit session, the session closes; all enrolled students are assigned a letter grade.

We look forward to each student succeeding in this program. To that end, we recommend students take a lighter course load for their first 8-week session—enrolling in only 1 or 2 courses. By doing so, students can best determine time commitment and workload. This allows students to get a better idea of how to plan for future sessions.

Students who want to complete the degree in 2 years need to take 2–3 courses per 8-week session. Please see the advising tools on our Current Students page for further degree planning assistance.

Calendar for Proctored Exams and Projects

MS-DS courses on Coursera may use ProctorU or HonorLock to proctor tests and exams. Students in MS-DS courses can complete final exams and projects that use the ProctorU remote proctoring service in each session starting at **9:00 am Mountain Time** on the day classes begin and ending at **4:50 pm Mountain Time** on the day classes end.

You must schedule your proctored experience at least 72 hours in advance of your desired day and time. For example, if the ProctorU availability window closes at 4:50 pm on a Friday, the last time you could schedule a proctored exam or project would be at 4:50 pm that preceded Tuesday.

To secure your desired proctoring session time, log into ProctorU to schedule your session as soon as you know your desired session date and time.

View the [Calendar](#) for each session to see deadlines for scheduling and completing proctored exams and projects.

Calendar and Penalties for Peer-Reviews

All peer reviews are due by Tuesday of the final week of the session. Students are required to submit all peer reviews assignments by this deadline. If a student does not receive the required number of peer reviews for their assignment, a Course Facilitator will review the assignment after the session ends but before final grades post, in place of the review(s) not given.

Late submissions and incomplete peer reviews are subject to the penalties outlined below.

Late Submission Penalties

Peer reviews submitted after the Tuesday deadline (see [program calendar](#) for specific dates) will be subject to the following deductions, based on the date of submission:

- Submitted on Wednesday: 10% deduction
- Submitted on Thursday: 20% deduction
- Submitted on Friday: 30% deduction

Incomplete Peer Review Penalties

Students are required to complete three peer reviews per assignment. Failure to complete all three before the end of the session (see [program calendar](#) for specific dates) will result in the following deductions:

- 2 of 3 peer reviews completed: 10% deduction
- 1 of 3 peer reviews completed: 20% deduction
- 0 of 3 peer reviews completed: 30% deduction

Late submission penalties and incomplete peer review penalties are assessed by program staff at the end of the session and may be applied cumulatively where applicable.

Financial Information

Tuition

Tuition is assessed at a linear rate based on credit hours and may vary by program. Please refer to the [Bursar Office's website](#) for officially published tuition rates. Students are granted access to for-credit components of a course after their tuition has been paid and verified.

For accepted payment methods, please refer to the Bursar's [Degrees on Coursera](#). Tuition payments cannot be rolled over to future sessions.

If a tuition payment does not process successfully and/or students have a past due balance, a financial hold is placed on the student's account and the student will be prevented from registering for future courses at CU Boulder until the past due amount is paid in full. Former or current CU Boulder students wishing to enroll in MS-DS on Coursera courses who have unpaid debts may have these debts deducted from payments made to the MS-DS on Coursera program and before MS-DS on Coursera tuition charges are paid. If applicable, the students may be dropped from enrolled classes for non-payments or invalid payments. The Bursar's Office will collect on the unpaid balance according to the Bursar's Office collection policies.

If a student enrolled in the MS-DS on Coursera program wishes to take additional courses on Main Campus or through Continuing Education, they must enroll through the appropriate channels and will be charged separately for those courses. Students will

also be required to pay the required mandatory fees associated with their new enrollment.

The CU Employee Tuition Assistance Benefit cannot be applied towards the MS-DS on Coursera program.

MS-DS on Coursera courses are not eligible for coverage by RA/TA waivers.

Courses taken in Coursera programs are eligible for 3rd party sponsorship. The student is required to make a payment at the time of enrollment. The students will receive a refund once the University receives the sponsorship authorization, and the sponsorship applies to the student accounts. You can read more about this process on the [Finances page](#).

The tuition dispute is available for the students in Coursera programs. Refer to the Bursar's Office website [tuition dispute process](#). The non-attendance cannot be used as a reason for tuition dispute for Coursera programs. Reasons to submit a tuition dispute include the following: Approved Retroactive Withdrawal, Recent Unanticipated Medical Condition, Immediate Family Emergency, Recent Unanticipated Financial Problems, University Error.

Student Fees

Currently, there are no student fees charged to students in the MS-DS on Coursera program. Course tuition also includes access to [CU on Coursera](#), [Digital Library resources](#), the [Handshake](#) online employment platform and networking tool, the [Quinnia](#) online resume review service, and the [Forever Buffs](#) alumni association.

Other Fees

Students who enroll in for-credit MS-DS on Coursera courses and pay tuition do not need to pay for a Coursera subscription. Currently, students do not need to pay for exam proctoring costs. Students may be charged on an at-cost basis for such items as credit card fees.

Financial Aid

At this time, no financial aid will be administered for the MS-DS on Coursera program. The MS-DS on Coursera program is not eligible for federal financial aid.

Transfer of Credit

Credit earned at other institutions or in other non-Coursera programs at the University of Colorado Boulder are not transferable to the MS-DS.

Credits taken as part of the MS-DS program may be transferred to other CU Boulder graduate degree programs at the discretion of the program and of the Graduate School in accordance with program-specific requirements and Graduate School rules.

Other institutions may accept transfer credit from the MS-DS program at their discretion, based upon their transfer of credit standards.

Prior Learning Credit (PLC)

When you complete the DeepLearning.AI specialization, you can earn credit toward the MS-DS degree, as long as you are an admitted student. Please see the Curriculum page and filter for PLC for more details.

Changing Degree Programs

Students may change degree programs by following the steps outlined in this section. Students are responsible for understanding possible consequences of changing programs *before* they take the steps below.

1. Be sure you understand the differences between your current degree program and the program you are hoping to change to.
 - **Degree structure:** CU Boulder degrees on Coursera share a similar structure that uses performance-based admission, pay-as-you-go tuition, and options for both non-credit and for-credit experiences.
 - **Recommended prerequisite knowledge:** Though CU degree programs on Coursera do not have formal prerequisite requirements, each program lists particular subjects that you should be familiar with to be successful.
 - **Admissions requirements:** Ensure you understand the available pathway courses, as well as grade and GPA requirements for both programs.
 - **Curriculum:** Make sure you understand if and how any coursework you have completed will apply to the new degree program you are considering. Determine how any Cross-listed Courses or Other Elective Courses

(“Outside Electives”) you have already completed will affect your degree progress.

- **Grade requirements:** Programs may have different minimum grade requirements for admission and graduation. For example, the MS-DS requires a C or better on all courses for graduation (and a 3.0 pathway GPA for admission), whereas the MS-CS requires a B or better on all breadth courses and a C or better on all elective courses for graduation (and a B or better on each pathway course for admission). All programs require students to maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA for admission and graduation.
 - **Tuition:** Tuition rates vary by program.
2. Update your program declarations in Buff Portal using the Program Action Form.
 3. Meet all admission requirements for your new degree program, as outlined in that program’s student handbook.
 4. Wait until admission decisions are released via email. Decisions are released once per session, approximately 3-4 weeks after the end of the session.

Academic Records & Policies for For-Credit Courses

Course Repetition & Replacement

Course Repetition

The cumulative GPA and credit totals are based on all courses attempted. Students may repeat as many different courses as they like, but they can only repeat the same for-credit MS-DS course once regardless of the grade they earn. Course attempts that result in a “W” (withdrawal) are not counted toward the two attempts.

Grade Replacement

The [Grade Replacement Policy](#) allows students in eligible courses with qualifying grades, to repeat courses and replace credits in the cumulative GPA calculation. In this process, all courses attempted and both course grades will still appear on the transcript.

To be eligible for grade replacement, you must:

- Have previously taken an eligible MS-DS on Coursera course for credit and earned a C+ or lower.
- Have no record of academic dishonesty for the course in question.

- Still be working toward graduation. Graduates are not eligible for grade replacement for courses taken prior to earning their degree.

Note that grades for DTSA 5900 may be eligible for grade replacement only if you retake the course under an updated (permanent) catalog number and contact reg-specialprograms@colorado.edu to request that the Office of the Registrar and the Data Science program review your eligibility.

See the [Grade Replacement Policy](#) for more details.

Course Drops, Tuition Refunds, Withdrawals & Grades

Because the MS-DS has flexible course start dates, all drops, tuition refunds, withdrawals and grades are handled at the individual course level. It is the student's responsibility to monitor these deadlines. Coursera and CU Boulder are not responsible for notifying the students of these deadlines. To drop or withdraw from a course students must do so through the CU Boulder on Coursera Enroll & Pay site via Buff Portal, instructions can be found on the [Office of the Registrar Special Programs page](#).

Course Drop & Refund

To drop a class and receive a full refund, two requirements must be met:

1. The student must submit a drop request within 14 days of the class start date or their enrollment date, whichever is later; and
2. The student must not have accessed restricted content (e.g., password quiz, honor code verification, final assessment such as final exam/project, etc.) in the course or received a course grade.

When a course is dropped under these conditions, it will not appear on the student's record. All refunds are returned to the payment method on file within 10 business days.

The following examples help to illustrate the timeline for students to drop and receive a refund:

- *Enrolled Before Class Start:* A student enrolls in a class before it begins. Class starts on the 1st of the month. The deadline for the student to drop this class and receive a refund is 11:59 pm [MT](#) on the 14th of that same month.
- *Enrolled After Class Start:* A student enrolls in a class after it begins. Class starts on the 1st of the month, but the student enrolls on the 10th of the month. The

deadline for this student to drop the class and receive a refund is 11:59 pm [MT](#) on the 23rd of that same month.

If a student enrolls in a course and does not complete the course, tuition payments cannot be rolled over to future sessions.

Course Withdrawal

Students who request to drop the course after the 14-day period and who have not accessed the restricted content (e.g., password quiz, honor code verification, final assessment such as final exam/project, etc.) may withdraw from the course until the session end date, prior to 17:00 hours (5:00 pm Colorado [Mountain Time](#)). When a student withdraws from a course under these conditions, they are not eligible for a refund and will receive a grade of W on their academic record. W grades have no bearing on GPA and credit total.

Neither Coursera, nor the University of Colorado, nor the Data Science program at CU Boulder is responsible for students who delay too long and experience technical or other difficulties; it is the student's responsibility to act responsibly and promptly when making these kinds of decisions.

As noted under [Tuition](#), if a tuition payment does not process successfully, a financial hold is placed on the student's account and the student will be prevented from registering for future courses at CU Boulder until the outstanding amount is paid in full.

See [Program Withdrawal](#) for more information about withdrawing from the MS-DS program.

Grades

Converting Letter Grades (A–F) to the 4.0 Scale

Students can convert letter grades to the 4.0 scale with the [CU Transcript Key](#) (PDF).

Grades of C- or lower will not apply to the MS-DS degree. Any core course with a final grade of C- or lower will need to be retaken. See the [Grade Replacement Policy](#) for more details.

Students who access restricted content (e.g., password quiz, honor code verification, final assessment such as final exam/project, etc.) are ineligible for a drop, withdrawal or refund, and are assigned a final grade.

Upon completion of all required coursework and within a couple of weeks following the session end date, a letter grade is recorded on the student's CU Boulder transcript.

Students who complete some but not all coursework and who specifically do not complete the password quiz to unlock the final exam (or equivalent, like an honor code verification) will be assigned administrative Ws after the session end date passes.

Grades of Incomplete (I) are not assigned as part of the program, and a Pass-Fail (P/F) grading basis is not offered.

Academic Standing, Time Limit, Discontinuance & Withdrawal

Academic Standing

Degree-seeking students admitted to the MS-DS are expected to maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher for good academic standing in the program and to earn the degree.

If a student's cumulative GPA falls below 3.00, the student is considered in **academic recovery**. The student will remain in academic recovery until the cumulative GPA is raised to 3.00, at which point the student is returned to good academic standing.

If a student's cumulative GPA falls below 2.50, they will be **academically dismissed** from the degree program. Such students may continue to take for-credit courses as non-degree-seeking and may be able to earn a certificate but cannot earn a degree. To be reinstated to the degree program after dismissal, the student must raise their cumulative GPA to 3.00 and complete the other requirements for admission, including the successful completion of a new pathway specialization.

The MS-DS degree cannot be awarded until the minimum 3.00 cumulative GPA has been achieved.

Time Limit

Courses used toward the degree must have been completed within 8 years of the degree conferral date. The 8-year time limit starts when a student takes their first course. Courses taken more than 8 years prior to graduation will appear on the transcript and be calculated in the cumulative GPA but may not be used toward the degree. Students may continue to pursue the degree even after eight years, but they must accrue 30 credits within an 8-year window in order to earn the degree.

The 8-year restriction is applied to courses on a rolling basis and is determined by the date that credit was awarded in the course.

Discontinuance

Students admitted to the MS-DS degree program are not otherwise required to take a minimum number of credit hours over any given period of time and are not required to apply for a leave of absence when not enrolled in courses. However, students will be discontinued in the following scenarios:

- The student completes the Personally Identifiable Information (PII) form during their first term but does not end up enrolling in that term.
- The student begins a program but does not enroll in a course for two consecutive years.
- The student enrolls but subsequently drops all of their classes during the initial drop-with-refund period of their first term.
- The student discontinues all programs without declaring another

Discontinued students, who enroll in course credits in a later term, will be automatically reinstated. Prior to Fall 2025, students who return to their program after being discontinued will follow the curricular requirements in effect during their initial term of enrollment. Beginning Fall 2025 onward, students who return to their program after being discontinued will follow the curricular requirements in effect during their reinstated term of enrollment.

Program Withdrawal

Students admitted to the MS-DS on Coursera program may formally withdraw from the program by updating their intent on the Program Action Form in Buff Portal.

Non-degree seeking students (not admitted to the degree program) may simply stop enrolling in future courses. No withdrawal formalities of any sort are necessary.

See [Course Withdrawal](#) for more information about withdrawing from individual courses.

Privacy Policy

This program adheres to the University of Colorado Boulder's commitment to the protection of individual privacy. See the [CU Boulder Privacy Statement](#) for details.

In order to preserve the integrity of this program, some exams and projects will have live proctoring managed by ProctorU or Honorlock. Read the [ProctorU Privacy Policy](#) and Honorlock [Student Privacy FAQ](#) and the [Student Privacy Statement](#) for more information.

Program Faculty, Course Facilitators, Degree Governance & Student Support

Program Faculty

All courses and specializations affiliated with the MS-DS are designed and taught by instructors with Graduate School faculty status. All courses are asynchronous in nature and faculty are hands-off.

Online Learning Facilitator

Online Learning Facilitators—typically subject matter experts with advanced knowledge in their discipline—support the quality, maintenance, and continuous improvement of online courses. OLFs work closely with Course Facilitators, instructors, and program staff to review course content, implement approved updates, address course-related issues, and support program goals related to instructional quality and student experience. They also provide guidance on course improvements, help ensure course materials remain accurate and effective, and communicate relevant recommendations and concerns to instructors of record and program administrators.

Course Facilitators

Course facilitators—typically graduate students knowledgeable in the subject matter—will assist in administering courses. Course facilitators participate in the course discussion forums, respond to student feedback, address issues with the course and its features on the platform, and convey any relevant issues to the instructor of record and relevant program administrators.

Degree Program Governance

The MS-DS on Coursera is overseen by a dedicated MS-DS faculty director, who works with associated department chairs, staff, Graduate School, Program Manager, Program Specialists, Online Learning Facilitator, and Course Coordinator. The faculty director is

charged with the day-to-day operations of the degree program, including budgetary oversight, chairing the MS-DS steering committee, as well as working with the College of Arts and Sciences; College of Engineering and Applied Science; College of Media, Communication, and Information; and the Graduate School and the Provost's Office.

The MS-DS is governed by the MS-DS steering committee. The MS-DS steering committee is charged with overseeing the strategic direction of the degree, as well as reviewing its program-specific processes and policies annually.

Student Services Provided to Enrollees in the Program

Academic Support

A student's primary academic support will be via peer mentorship and course facilitators.

Graduate Advising for the Program

Students may contact the MS-DS graduate advisor at msds-support@colorado.edu.

Career Services & Alumni Association

Students who are admitted into the degree will receive lifelong access to [Handshake](#) and other selected services and resources via CU Boulder [Career Services](#) and the [Forever Buffs](#) alumni network.

Graduation

You do not need to apply to graduate. Degree conferrals are processed automatically for students who have met the degree requirements as outlined on the [Special Programs section](#) of the University Catalog.

Diplomas

Degrees are conferred six times annually. Check the [graduation calendar](#) for semester-specific dates. Diplomas are issued to graduating students in both paper and digital formats. See [Order a Diploma or Certificate](#).

Certificates

If a student has declared a certificate using the initial application form or Program Action Form in Buff Portal, certificates are automatically awarded and transcribed on the student's transcripts after the certificate requirements are met. Certificates are issued in both paper and digital formats. See [Order a Diploma or Certificate](#).

Commencement

Students who graduate from the program and earn the MS-DS degree are welcome to attend on-campus graduation ceremonies but are not obligated to do so.

Academic Dishonesty & Honor Code

The University of Colorado Boulder takes issues of academic dishonesty extremely seriously.

Students in all of CU Boulder's courses, whether not-for-credit or for-credit, are expected to perform to the highest standards of academic honesty.

Students enrolled in for-credit courses are members of the CU Boulder community and are subject to the [Honor Code Office](#)'s policies and procedures.

Additionally, due to its online nature, the MS-DS on Coursera program must specify some additional honor code regulations. The MS-DS on Coursera program utilizes peer reviewed assignments in some of its courses. The nature of these assignments means that project rubrics become available to students after submission.

- Students are NOT allowed to copy or use in any way the material and information that is provided on the grading rubrics.
- Students are NOT allowed to copy material that other learners have submitted in their assignments.
- Students are NOT allowed to copy material from outside sources (websites, books, etc.)

All examples listed above are considered plagiarism and will be subject to grade repercussions varying from a 0% grade on the assignment to a 0% grade in the class.

Any suspected violations of the Honor Code, including reports of violation from the MS-DS's proctoring service, will be reviewed by our leadership team and may be escalated to the CU Boulder Honor Code Office (honor@colorado.edu).

Students who violate the Honor Code are subject to discipline, including possible academic penalties and non-academic sanctions. The course instructor will assign relevant academic sanctions for students found to have violated University rules on Academic Dishonesty, if applicable.

AI Tool Usage Policy Overview

Course policies on AI tool usage vary throughout the MS-DS program, ranging from **Full** use, where AI tools are permitted with no restrictions, to **Conditional** use, where AI tools are permitted for specific tasks or with required documentation, to **Limited** use, where AI tools are permitted only in narrowly defined ways, to **None**, where AI tools are not permitted at all. The AI usage policy for each course, along with any documentation requirements, is defined by the course instructor and may differ from course to course and assignment to assignment.

Before using any AI tool in a course, please review your course syllabus and the AI usage guidelines located in the in-course Assessment Expectations reading, as these will outline exactly what is and is not permitted for that specific course. The information below outlines what happens if a suspected violation of a course's AI usage policy occurs.

Suspected Violations of AI Tool Usage Policy

If program staff suspects you may have used AI tools to complete assignments in ways not explicitly authorized or suspect other violations of the honor code, they will contact you via email. Be sure to respond promptly to any related communication so your perspective is included in the case review. Failure to respond timely will not prevent the completion of a case review.

In suspected cases of unauthorized AI tool usage, the program may:

- Request the documentation (see in-course *AI Usage Documentation Guidelines*) or other supplementary materials
- Issue a warning
- Assign a 0–50% grade for the question
- Assign a 0–50% grade for the assignment
- Assign an F grade for the course
- Reference prior violations
- Remove access to the course, related materials, and tools
- Contact the [Office of Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution](#) to report suspected [Honor Code](#) violations

Turnitin and similar AI detection tools may be used in these courses for initial detection of possible honor code violations. All suspected violations will be reviewed by a human. AI tools alone will not be used to determine if an assignment is plagiarized, and results from these tools will not be used alone as evidence to penalize students.

Find more details on the Honor Code at the [Honor Code Office website](#) and in the [Coursera Program Policies](#).

Petition, Appeal & Grievance Issues

Petitions, appeals, connectivity issues and grievances should be handled at the lowest level possible, within the individual course if appropriate. This policy applies to platform issues as well as discussion forum, course content, assessment and degree issues.

Concerns regarding platform issues should be directed to Coursera's technical support team at msds-support@colorado.edu.

Learning management system issues (i.e., CU Boulder software as distinct from Coursera software) should be directed to the CU Boulder Office of Information Technology (oithelp@colorado.edu). This includes issues with Canvas LMS, the platform where all CU Boulder students must complete a non-credit Mandatory Community Equity Training course after program admission. See the [Current Students](#) page for course details.

Concerns regarding discussion forum, content, assessment, and degree issues should be brought directly to the individual course's course facilitator. If the course facilitator cannot resolve the issue, he or she will escalate the issue through the following resolution hierarchy:

1. Course Facilitator
2. Course Coordinator
3. Program Manager
4. Instructor of Record
5. Faculty Director
6. Department chair and Dean of Appropriate School if applicable, or Graduate School dean as determined by the Faculty Director.

Concerns regarding the degree itself, and not having to do with a particular course, follow a different pathway. These should begin with the Graduate Advisor and then move accordingly:

1. Graduate Advisor
2. Program Manager
3. Faculty Director
4. Graduate School Dean

In all cases, the program policy is to resolve student concerns at the lowest level possible, without escalation.

Connectivity Issues

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have a stable exam environment when taking proctored assessments. Coursera and CU Boulder are not responsible for internet connectivity issues.

Grade Appeals

The instructor of record has primary authority and responsibility in all aspects of evaluating student course performance and assigning grades.

If a student believes that a course grade is incorrect, the student should first contact the course facilitator or instructor of record. Failing resolution at this level, the student may make a formal, written grade appeal to the program faculty director.

The written grade appeal must document the basis for the appeal and should state the specific remedy desired by the student. The appeal should include the following:

1. The student's name
2. The course, section, and date
3. The details of the case, including the steps taken to resolve and, if a specific test or homework is concerned, the nature of the problem
4. The student's desired outcome

The appeal must be submitted within 30 days of the conclusion of the course to msds-support@colorado.edu. The instructor of record will be given an opportunity to respond in writing to the faculty director regarding the student's appeal.

If the faculty director finds that the grade has been improperly or unprofessionally assigned, they will recommend within 30 days that either (1) the original grade stands, or (2) that a revised grade be assigned. The faculty director will submit a short written statement summarizing the reasons for its recommendation and submit an official change of grade request.

In cases where the instructor or student do not agree with the committee recommendation, the faculty director shall submit all materials to the Dean of the college where the course is rostered (or a designee), who will make a final decision on the student's grade appeal. In the case of an interdisciplinary course not rostered within

a home department or college, materials shall be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School. There is no further appeal.

Grievances

Programs follow the [Graduate School policy](#) for grievances. The first step in the Grievance Process and Procedure requires a student to first file a grievance through the program and then file an appeal to the Graduate School if the issue is not resolved through the program-level process. The program-level grievance shall be initiated by submitting the [Graduate Student Grievance form](#) to the faculty director. The grievance must be reviewed by an ad-hoc faculty committee or steering committee before an appeal can be filed directly to the Graduate School. Additionally, the University of Colorado Boulder has a guide for [information](#) related to appeals, complaints, and grievances, including those for distance and online students.

Students located outside of Colorado must first seek resolution with the [University of Colorado Boulder by filing a complaint with the appropriate person or office](#). If the student bringing the complaint is not satisfied with the outcome of the university's internal processes, the student may file a complaint with the university's SARA Portal Entity at the [Colorado Department of Higher Education](#).

The University of Colorado Boulder also provides access to a list of [all state contacts](#) for filing complaints should the person wish to pursue these venues.

Regardless of location, if students are unsatisfied with the resolution and all other avenues provided have been exhausted, unresolved complaints may be filed with the [Higher Learning Commission](#), the University's regional accreditor.

Higher Learning Commission
230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500
Chicago, IL 60604
Telephone: 800-621-7440
info@hlcommission.org
<http://www.hlcommission.org>

Accommodations for Disabilities

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to msds-accommodations@colorado.edu in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment.

Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation

CU Boulder is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. University policy prohibits sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (including dating or domestic violence), stalking, protected-class discrimination or harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information and other resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that CU Boulder faculty, instructors and staff have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about reporting options and support resources. This applies regardless of where or when an incident occurs if it involves a member of the CU Boulder community. One of the free, confidential resources to help someone explore their options and receive trauma-informed counseling is CU's [Office of Victim Assistance \(OVA\)](#), 303-492-8855.

To learn more about reporting and support options for a variety of concerns, visit [Don't Ignore It](#).

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) & the Higher Education Opportunity Act

State Authorization

The University of Colorado is part of, and participates in, the [State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement \(SARA\)](#) – an agreement among states, territories, and the District of Columbia that establishes a level of quality in distance education and offers [consumer protection to students](#). As a participant in SARA, the University of Colorado Boulder agrees to comply with applicable state and federal regulations in order to offer educational opportunities outside of Colorado.

International Students: International Students are advised to understand and be apprised of the norms, rules, regulations, and requirements related to online distance education programs in their country of residence, particularly if the country will charge any additional taxes, withholdings, or fees associated with online distance education programs.

International students are encouraged to contact the [International Student and Scholar Services](#) in the Office of International Education if they have any questions.

Higher Education Opportunity Act

The Higher Education Opportunity Act requires institutions of higher education to disclose and make available to current and prospective students safety-related, financial, graduation rate, athletics, and cost information, as well as instructions on how to obtain more information.

Students may review these required disclosures for CU Boulder at the [Student Right To Know](#) website.

Accreditation & Designations

The University of Colorado Boulder is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

The University's accreditation may include programs delivered via correspondence or distance education upon notification to HLC.

See the [Coursera Program Policies](#) for HLC and Department of Education definitions of *correspondence education*, *correspondence courses* and *distance education*.

Please note: programs offered by the University of Colorado Boulder that are designated as correspondence education are not eligible for Financial Aid.

Additional Policies for CU Boulder Coursera Special Programs

See Coursera [Program Policies](#) for details about additional policies that apply to this program.