



DATA SCIENCE
YOU ASKED WE ANSWER

This is a compilation of Frequently Asked Questions emailed to the Data Science office by prospective students. If you do not find your question here, please email us at datascience@wpi.edu

and you will receive a prompt reply.

Please note that this information is on the WPI DATA SCIENCE web site.

PRE-ADMISSION

AM I ELIGIBLE TO APPLY TO THE MS PROGRAM?

The purpose of the WPI Data Science application process is to have our admissions committee determine if you fit the criteria for the program. That can only be decided once you have submitted your application. Please don't send resumes and transcripts to the DS office; we cannot open them or give you our opinion on your eligibility.

SHOULD I EMAIL MY INFORMATION TO THE DS OFFICE TO GET AN OPINION ON MY ELIGIBILITY?

No.

The staff cannot give opinions on either your eligibility or your possibility of acceptance. That is the purpose of the application, and you'll receive an email reply to that effect.

WILL MY APPLICATION BE PROCESSED FASTER BY SENDING DIRECTLY TO THE DS OFFICE?

Please do not send your resume, CV, or any official transcripts to the DS office.

It will be forwarded by interoffice mail to the Graduate Admissions Office and this will delay processing by several days.

WHAT ARE THE PRE-REQUISITES FOR THE MASTER'S DEGREE IN DATA SCIENCE?

1. AN EARNED BACHELOR'S DEGREE
2. QUANTITATIVE OR COMPUTATIONAL BACKGROUND
3. PROGRAMMING WITH DATA STRUCTURES
4. CALCULUS
5. LINEAR ALGEBRA
6. BASIC STATISTICS





WHAT IF I HAVE SOME, BUT NOT ALL OF THE PRE-REQUISITES?

If your application meets the Data Science criteria but you are lacking in one of the [pre-requisite](#) areas, you may be admitted on the condition that you take the needed course or courses before you are admitted to the DS program. You may take the courses at WPI in conjunction with other DS courses, or you may take the courses, get exceptional grades, and then re-apply.

WHAT OTHER CRITERIA DO THE FACULTY USE WHEN MAKING ADMISSION DECISIONS?

Admission to the Data Science Program is highly competitive and selection is based on:

- Whether required prerequisites are met
- Demonstration of high aptitude for quantitative analysis
- Academic success as evidenced by undergraduate and graduate course work
- Some professional experience that suggests a propensity for teamwork
- Standard exams such as TOEFL and GRE
- Self-initiative and leadership potential
- Career aspirations that align with the Data Science program's mission
- Academic performance is important but is not a sufficient condition for enrollment
- Maturity

IS THE DATA SCIENCE PROGRAM STEM-DESIGNATED?

Yes, the WPI Data Science Program is STEM certified.

<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/datascience/stem-program.html>



POST-ADMISSION

WHAT DOES THE PLAN OF STUDY ENTAIL?

The '[Plan of Study](#)' for all DS programs tracks your course work to ensure that all of your core requirements are fulfilled. It ensures that you stay on track to graduate on time with courses that align with your career goals. You should update the plan of study each semester and have your faculty advisor review it.

WHAT PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES WILL I LEARN?

The Data Science M.S. uses many programming languages, but R and python are the most common.

THE COURSE I WANT IS FULL! WHAT NOW?

If a required class is full, be sure to put your name on the Waitlist! This alerts us to the number of students who want or need a particular class, in which case we may offer another class.

Also: You must arrive on the first day of class with a completed [add/drop form](#) and politely tell the professor that you are a Data Science student, that you need this class, and ask to be admitted.

MAY I TAKE DATA SCIENCE COURSES WITHOUT BEING OFFICIALLY ENROLLED IN THE PROGRAM?

Yes, if there's space in the class.

WHO IS MY FACULTY ADVISOR AND SHOULD I CONTACT HIM/HER BEFORE I START MY FIRST SEMESTER?

You will be assigned a Faculty Advisor during the Data Science Orientation. It's not necessary to make contact before classes begin as DS students take our core courses for the first year of their master's program. Also, the faculty are still on vacation until classes begin.

If for any reason you do not know your faculty advisor is or are unable to reach him/her, then please contact the Data Science Graduate Coordinator.

HOW LONG IS THE MASTER'S DEGREE IN DATA SCIENCE PROGRAM?

The Master Degree in Data Science is a two year, or 33 credit program.

<https://www.wpi.edu/academics/study/data-science-ms>



PLEASE EXPLAIN THE GQP.

GQP is an acronym for the Graduate Qualifying Project or the M.S. practicum. M.S. students may choose to do either a GQP or a Master's Thesis during the last semester of the M.S. program.

<https://www.wpi.edu/academics/departments/data-science/graduate-qualifying-project>

WHAT DOES A 'COHORT-BASED' PROGRAM MEAN?

A learning cohort is a group of students moving through their courses and related learning experiences together. Cohort learning prepares students for employers who value teamwork and collaboration.

HOW MANY STUDENTS ARE ACCEPTED FOR EACH COHORT?

The Data Science Program limits each cohort to around 35 very strong students.

WHAT IS THE DATA SCIENCE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM?

The Certificate program is a shortened program for those who are not interested in earning a master's degree in Data Science.

<http://wpi.edu/academics/datasience/certificate-program.html>

I HAVE A WPI DS GRADUATE CERTIFICATE. CAN THESE CREDITS BE APPLIED TOWARD THE DS M.S.?

Students enrolled in the WPI [Certificate](#) program *MUST APPLY* to the master's program and be accepted. All credits earned in the certificate program may be transferred to the M.S. degree *if they are in the same major*, i.e., both in Data Science.

DOES WPI DATA SCIENCE OFFER A PH.D.?

Yes, WPI has one of the first Ph.D. programs in the country!

<http://www.wpi.edu/academics/datasience/phd-program.html>

INTERNSHIP (CPT)

WILL THERE BE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERNSHIPS?

Absolutely! Most, if not all of our DS students do internships.

They are hired at companies including:

Monster.com, ESPN, Kronos, Red Hat, UMass Medical School, Pay Pal, and eBay, Dimensional Insight, iRobot Corporation, Object Edge, and countless more.

<https://www.wpi.edu/student-experience/career-development>

WHEN AM I ELIGIBLE FOR AN INTERNSHIP?

Students become eligible for an internship after **TWO** full-time semesters of physical presence in the U.S. So, let's say you attend both the fall and spring semesters on campus, then you will be eligible for an internship during the summer semester.

CAN THE SUMMER SEMESTER COUNT AS A FULL-TIME SEMESTER?

Yes, the summer semester can count as a full-time semester if you take at least 8 credits. Otherwise, it will not count as a full-time semester.

IF I HAVE A PREVIOUS DEGREE FROM ANOTHER SCHOOL, CAN I USE THIS DEGREE TO SATISFY THE INTERNSHIP ELIGIBILITY?

While it is true that an international student who has activated their SEVIS record and completed two semesters of course work in the U.S. is eligible for an off-campus internship (CPT), this authorization is granted based on the student's SEVIS record situation. For example, if you are coming to the U.S. on a new SEVIS record with a new SEVIS number this "resets" your ability to do CPT and the two-semester counter restarts.

CAN I DO AN INTERNSHIP MULTIPLE TIMES?

The most typical scenario is that you do an internship during the summer semester, while fall and spring are dedicated to finishing your coursework. However, there can be exceptions and you can do an internship over the fall or spring as well. These exceptions require approvals from the Data Science program

ARE THERE ANY REGULATIONS ON WHEN TO DO AN INTERNSHIP AND HOW TO COMBINE IT WITH COURSEWORK?

Yes, the Data Science program has rules on how to combine an internship with the other components of the MS degree, e.g., coursework and GQP. Please check the website for these rules:
<https://www.wpi.edu/academics/departments/data-science/resources>

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

COVID-19 PANDEMIC RELATED QUESTIONS¹

ONLINE

As of July 15, 2020, international students may take a FULL ONLINE COURSE LOAD without jeopardizing their legal status in the United States. These are the same rules that were in effect during spring 2020, and they will remain in effect for fall 2020.

REGISTERING FOR ONLINE CLASSES

When registering for online classes under the "FALL 2020" section...

DO NOT select 'ONLINE'

DO NOT select 'BLENDED'

DO select 'WORCESTER'

The WORCESTER courses correspond to the courses in our Data Science program offered by our WPI core data science faculty members, whose current students are used to seeing and interacting with faculty on campus.

<https://www.wpi.edu/offices/registrar/course-registration/schedules>

TAS AND RAs

If you have a TA or an RA assistantship for the fall 2020 semester you are required to be physically in the U.S. during the semester to maintain your position and be paid by WPI.

TAs and RAs should target being in the country by the time classes start.

RAs must contact the Research Advisor who is sponsoring your RAship.

If you are outside the U.S. during the fall semester, then due to tax issues, it is not legally possible for WPI to pay you for remote work.

In that case, your assistantship will be suspended until you can be physically back in the U.S.

¹ This information gets updated regularly as the situation and ICE policy changes.

Updated 09.23.2020