

FAQ: Applying to the BME Combined B.S./Master's Degree Programs

Posted to BME Undergraduate Advising Canvas site

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The following information pertains only to WPI students applying to WPI BME Graduate Programs (graduate programs at other institutions may have different application and admissions criteria). Detailed information and admissions procedures can be found in the WPI Graduate Catalog.

Q: When should I apply?

A: Apply during the fall of your senior year. Applications are considered for fall admission only and are due January 1. Applications are reviewed January 15 – May 15 (Spring semester). New online applications will not be accepted after May 1.

Exception: If you are a junior with senior standing and hope to complete both degrees in under 5 years total, you should apply during your junior year. If you apply your junior year, be sure to ask your IQP advisor or another faculty member with whom you've worked extensively, for a letter of recommendation.

Q: How do I apply?

A: Apply online through WPI Graduate Admissions:

<http://www.wpi.edu/admissions/graduate.html> All general questions about the online application system should be directed to the WPI Graduate Admissions Office (not the BME department).

Q: What are the criteria for admission?

A: Admission to the combined B.S./Master's programs in BME is reserved for students who have shown the greatest aptitude for advanced academic course work and research. In general, admitted students have a mean cumulative GPA of 3.5 and outstanding letters of recommendation from BME faculty (including their MQP advisors). Improvement in course work over time, advanced research or internship experience, and exceptional recommendations are taken into consideration if an applicant has an undergraduate GPA less than 3.5.

Q: My undergraduate degree will be in biology, chemistry, or another non-engineering discipline. Can I still get a Master's degree in BME?

A: Probably not. BME has a policy of *not* admitting students to the Master's Programs who do not come from an engineering undergraduate program. This is because they generally lack the technical depth in core engineering areas and would not be successful in advanced engineering coursework. Non-engineering students with extensive technical undergraduate coursework in engineering (for example, a minor in an engineering discipline, or a degree in applied physics combined with some biology courses) may be considered.

Q: What do I need to include in my application?

A: Applicants must provide a "Statement of Purpose" (why do you wish to pursue graduate studies at WPI?), a transcript, and three letters of recommendation.

Q: Who should I ask to write letters of recommendation?

A: Ask for recommendations from faculty or other individuals who can comment on your aptitude for advanced course work and research. For example: research and internship supervisors, MQP advisor, and other faculty who have taught or advised your laboratory or project work. Be sure to give your recommenders plenty of notice when requesting letters. Most recommenders will expect you to “WAIVE” your right to review the letter.

Q: Which graduate program should I apply to?

A: The BME department offers two Master’s degree programs – M.S. and M.Eng. (see WPI Graduate Catalog for detailed descriptions).

The Master of Science (M.S.) is a thesis- or project-based Master’s degree. Students must complete a total of 30 course credits, 6 of which are thesis/project credits. Students choose an area of “technical depth” and take 15 credits of coursework within that theme. They also will fulfil various core competencies. For details, please read the [Graduate Catalog](#) description of the M.S. program and consult the FAQ on the M.S. program, located at: <https://wp.wpi.edu/BME/Grad>

The M.S. is a good choice for students who are considering a PhD and want to have an in-depth research experience (thesis) or want to work on an extended project related to an industry experience, clinical problem, or design (e.g. extension/further development of an MQP). Due to the nature of thesis research/ project work, students may require longer than one year of full-time study beyond the Bachelor’s degree to complete the M.S. degree (i.e., more than five years for the combined B.S./M.S. program).

The Master of Engineering (M.Eng.) is a course-based Master’s degree. Students must complete a total of 33 course credits. M.Eng. students do not complete a thesis and (with careful planning) usually complete the degree within one additional academic year after the Bachelor’s degree is awarded (i.e., five years for completion of the B.S./M.Eng. program).

Q: Can I “double-count” undergraduate courses toward my graduate degree?

A: Yes. You may count up to 8 credits of 4000-level course work and 3 credits of 500-level (graduate) courses toward both your undergraduate and graduate degrees (maximum of 9 credits total double-counted). By WPI policy, 1/3 unit = 2 graduate course credits, and 3 graduate credits = 1/3 + 1/6 unit. For courses to officially double count, you must fill out a Course Designation Form and submit the completed, signed form to the Registrar’s Office.

IMPORTANT NOTES ON DOUBLE-COUNTING:

- 1) BME 4300 does NOT count for graduate credit.
- 2) Only courses in which you earned a “B” grade or higher can be double counted for graduate credit.
- 3) We strongly encourage you to double count no more than 6 credits (3 total) 4000-level courses, and instead focus on more advanced coursework.
- 3) Courses can NOT be TRIPLE counted for any WPI degree, including majors, minors and graduate certificates or degrees. For example, if you apply BME 4814 toward the B.S. Major in Biomedical Engineering AND a Minor in Materials Science, then BME 4814 can NOT be

triple counted for Master's degree credit. ADDITIONAL graduate courses not counted or double counted toward the B.S. degree will count directly toward the Master's degree.

Q: Should I take graduate courses during my junior or senior year?

A: If you are on track to successfully meet all of your B.S. degree requirements, you may elect to enroll in graduate courses. Please discuss your plans with your Academic Advisor. Note that some graduate courses DO NOT COUNT toward your B.S. degree requirements. In general, we strongly recommend that you only double-count one 500+ level course towards your undergraduate degree (normally filling the 4000+ engineering course requirement). You may enroll in other graduate courses while still an undergraduate student, to get a "head start" on completing a graduate degree.

Q: How do I register for graduate courses?

A: Workday allows a certain number of undergraduate students to register for graduate courses, reserving the remaining seats for graduate students. A few days before classes start, any remaining empty [reserved graduate] seats will be released for anyone to register. So, try and register as usual. If you are put on the waitlist, check again a few days before class.

Q: If I've been admitted to a Master's program already but I'm still an undergraduate, can I register for graduate classes online for the following year?

A: They claim that you can.

Q: How many credit-hours is reasonable to take at once?

A: If you have no other obligations (job, TA, research) then 15 credit hours is entirely reasonable to take. A full time load for a graduate student is 9 credit hours, but this assumes that you will be spending 20 hours per week working on a thesis, project, or similar.

Q: How do I take advantage of the [WPI Alumni Tuition Incentive](#)?

A: All alumni should already be pre-coded within the system to automatically receive the discount. So, you should be able to just register for classes as usual. Please see the link above for more details.