

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – DEGREE PLANS AND STRUCTURE

Q: How do I know what courses I need to take?

A: Graduate programs use a completely different approach than undergraduate programs. When you were an undergraduate student, you knew (in most cases) from the very first day in school what courses you are going to take three years later. This is not the case in graduate school – we give our students the flexibility to build their own degree plans, which need to be approved by the chair of their research advisory committee, of course. Each student coming into our program has his/her chair already assigned, and our students are given a window of one semester to select their full research advisory committee and to submit their degree plan for approval. We will discuss some more about it during your first semester into the program.

Q: How long is the program scheduled for?

A: Our data shows that the majority of our graduate students (~70%) are able to graduate within a period of two years. The bottom line is that it is all up to the individual student, and it depends on how classes are scheduled, how well the student works on his/her own thesis, etc. Some students are able to complete the program within a year and a half, other – it will take them two and a half to three years to get everything in place. If you follow our instructions, you can get out of here within two years; if not – it might take you longer.

Q: How do I select my advisory committee?

A: The chair of your research advisory committee is assigned to you (details are provided in your admission letter). As per your other committee members – this issue will be discussed in the Seminar class which you will have to take during your first semester in the program. If you want to start doing this earlier, you can review each faculty's specific areas of interest and CV's, which are available on the department's website, or university's Office of the Registrar, or through Google Scholar. Before approaching a faculty member, read as many publications as you can that were written by him/her, and study what his/her areas of interest are.

Q: What is the process of approving my degree plan, once submitted?

A: Once your degree plan has been submitted (online, of course), it is reviewed by a department's staff member to make sure you comply with the minimum requirements. Then the chair of your research advisory committee has to approve your degree plan, followed by approvals from your other committee members, followed by approval by the Graduate Program Coordinator in the Department of Construction Science. Then, your degree plan goes for final review by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS) for their final approval. Once they approve it, your degree plan is considered to be final. Any changes to your degree plan are possible up until your last (graduating) semester. In order to make changes to an approved degree plan, you will need to submit an online petition through the OGAPS' website.

Q: I am interested in Construction Management, but also in the business side of it. Can your program address this interest?

A: Absolutely yes; as a graduate student at Texas A&M University, you are eligible to pursue a Business Certificate in addition to your major degree. More information about this certificate program, as well as other certificate programs that are available for our students, will be provided once you arrive here.

Q: Do I have to take classes during the summer?

A: No, but if you do take summer classes, it will help you reduce the course load in your graduating semester, at which time you will be able to focus on completing your research project. Texas A&M University offers a large variety of undergraduate level classes, but a limited number of graduate level classes during the summer semester. If interested in enrolling in summer classes, you will have to design your degree plan accordingly. Alternative options to fill out your summer may be: enroll in our summer internship class, continue working on your own thesis, work on a research project with one of our graduate faculty, or take a nice summer vacation from school.

Q: Is there a study-abroad option in your program?

A: The Department of Construction Science offers a study-abroad program; however, this program is limited to our undergraduate students only. Unfortunately, graduate students cannot take advantage of our study-abroad program.

Q: Is there a required internship in your program?

A: No; however, we do encourage our graduate students to obtain an internship while in school. Our graduate internship class is offered only during the summer semester, so no fall and/or spring internships are allowed for our graduate students. Yet, anyone can graduate from our program without taking any internship credit hours. College rules do not allow students to obtain an internship during their graduating semester, and so if you are interested in doing one, you will have to design your degree plan accordingly. International students will also have to go through the International Student Services (ISS) office for additional rules pertaining to internships for international students. Our department has a very strong and solid support from the Construction Industry Advisory Council (CIAC), which provides ample of internship opportunities to our students.