Frequently Asked Questions
about the BME Master’s Program

What makes BME @ CCNY Different from Other Programs?
The Department of Biomedical Engineering is part of a unique collaboration with the New York Center for Biomedical Engineering (NYCBE), which consists of faculty from 7 of New York’s premiere research hospitals. These faculty take a special interest in BME graduate students and supervise research programs that enable BME students to obtain real hospital and/or laboratory experience as desired. The Department has received multi-million dollar funding to develop our programs from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Whitaker Foundation for Biomedical Engineering, and the Wallace H. Coulter Foundation.

I have been admitted to the program. Can I defer my starting date?
Yes.

Can I interrupt my studies for a few semesters once I am in the MS program?
You can take a break of up to 1 year (two semesters) by simply not registering for classes. It would be good to inform the MS advisor of your intention to take a leave. When you are ready to start again you have to submit a re-entry form at the office of the Dean of graduate studies.

What is the Total Number of Courses Required for Degree Completion?
Students must complete 30 credits in order to obtain an MS from BME@CCNY. These credits are broken down into three categories: BME Courses, Technical Electives, and Research. Students electing the thesis option must complete 8 graduate courses (24 credits) plus one thesis research course for 6 credits. Students pursuing the non-thesis option must complete 9 graduate courses (27 credits) and one independent 3-credit research project. MS students are allowed to take at most one 500-level UG course for credit (3 credits).

Where do I register?
New incoming students will register in person at the office of Dean Ardie Walser (Steinman Hall Room ST-209) after their first advising session with the BME MS advisor. In the following semesters they can register on-line, but students are advised to talk to the advisor at least ones every semester (typically at the time of registration).
Do Master’s Students Receive Credit for Undergraduate Pre-requisites?
No. A Master of Science is awarded after 30 credits of graduate coursework have been completed. Undergraduate pre-requisites are required for graduate courses but do not count towards degree credit.

Can I transfer graduate credits from another institution to the MS program at CCNY?
Yes, provided there exists an equivalent course here at CCNY, you obtained at least a B in the course, and the credits were not required for completion of another graduate degree. The school allows a maximum of 6 credits from ABET accredited US schools, 9 cr. from CUNY units and more from CCNY. In general, we do not accept credits from foreign universities (except English, Canadians universities). The BME department evaluates transfer credit requests and determines if the course from another graduate program is equivalent in effort, depth, and scope to a course offered here at CCNY. Transfer request forms are available at the office of the Dean for Graduate Studies. Requests to transfer credits from another institution can be filed only after one term has been completed at CCNY.

Do graduate classes taken during my Undergraduate studies counts towards the 30 credits of graduate studies?
They may count provided these credits were not required for your undergraduate degree, i.e. you did not have to take these classes in order to graduate. Here at CCNY you will have to pay the difference between graduate and undergraduate tuition fees for these credits to be transferred to your graduate transcripts. Also, requests to transfer credits from another institution can be filed only after one term has been completed at CCNY.

Can I take classes outside of CCNY?
You may take classes at any CUNY college by getting an e-permit and paying tuition here at CCNY. Allow extra time for this as there are earlier deadlines to take into account. To take classes at any other university in NYC, you should register there as non-matriculated student, take the course and pay their tuition and then transfer the course credits to CCNY. This requests have to be filed with the Dean of Graduate studies. (see questions on transfer of credits). We advise that you first consult with the MS advisor to make sure those credits are likely to be transferable.

Can I take a class for which I do not have the right prerequisite?
The purpose of prerequisites in graduate classes is to give the student some guidance on the required background to perform well in class. You may be able to make up for this by making an extra effort to learn the required background material. If you have a prerequisite missing you will have to talk to the Professor teaching the class. If he/she approves then the Graduate Advisor can sign for you to register. These requests have to be filed with the Dean of Graduate studies.

Can I take Engineering Management classes?
In general, management or business classes taught outside the department do not count towards graduation requirements. We do teach a 2 cr. entrepreneurship class that can be combined with the 1 cr. Ethics class. These can be counted as “traditional engineering” elective or as BME classes. There may be exceptions to this rule for classes taught at other campuses, e.g. Baruch.

Can I take classes from the School of Education?
Courses from the School of Education (all course starting with an E) do not qualify for your 30 credit required courses. In particular MATHE courses do not qualify.

Can I take Scientific Ethics and Entrepreneurship as general engineering credits?
Yes, two BME courses “BME I9300: Scientific Ethics” (1cr.) and “BME I9500: Entrepreneurship and Financial Economics” (2cr.) can be used to fulfill the BME or the general engineering requirement. Together they count for 3 credits and thus many students take them instead of another BME of Engineering course.

What is Considered a Full-Time Semester for Master’s Students?
Students should register for 3 courses the first semester (9 credits). This can include an undergraduate course that may have been missing at admissions. CCNY requires that students register for 12-credit hours to be considered full-time for the purpose of tuition. Entering Master’s students often meet this guideline by taking one or more undergraduate prerequisites during their first semester. If students require the 12-credit guideline in subsequent semesters, the Master’s advisor can arrange research credits as needed. Foreign student with an F1 visa should register for at least 9 credits per semester (please consult with the foreign student office for official and up-to-date information on this topic – see below). For the purpose of financial aid 9 credits are considered full time. For the purpose of student federal loans 6 credits is considered full time (Please consult with the financial aid office for up-to-date information).

Can I work and study part time?
Barring other considerations (visa regulations, health insurance, etc.) you are free to study part time. Indeed, many of our MS students work full time during the day and take classes in the evening. Most graduate classes are scheduled in the later part of the afternoon (4pm onward) to facilitate this.

Registration and Credits
Student meet prior to the start of each semester with the MS advisor to discuss the courses they want to take and obtain approval (signature on the registration form). Students then see the graduate officer who supervises the CCNY program (Dean Walser) and the Bursar for enrollment. International students must register for at least 6 credits. We do not recommend that student take more than 9 graduate credits per term. These are under-graduate level credits and therefore do not count in the GPA. Students can register for either the MS project (3 cr) or the MS Thesis (6 cr). Students may do one credit per semester or all at once. After all credits have been completed the student requests a letter from the mentor to the MS advisor stating the student’s grade. The MS advisor then submits the grade.
What is the Attendance Policy for the BME Seminar?
BME Master candidate students are expected to attend all Wednesday BME seminars every semester, regardless of whether they register for the course or not. BME Masters candidates are required to officially register for the BME seminar course (1 credit) for a minimum of one semester and may register for credits for as many as 3 semesters. To pass the course students may miss at most 3 presentations. If students have an unavoidable regular work conflict that prevents them from ever attending the BME seminar (i.e. The student cannot attend the seminar even when they register for it) they must arrange with the MS advisor for a suitable substitute – an example of a suitable substitute would be attending a national BME conference. The Masters advisor must approve any substitutes. Such a substitute is required only on the semester(s) that you officially register for the course.

What is Expected of Successful Master’s Students?
Students must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0, attend weekly seminars, and identify a research mentor as soon as possible. Students with GPAs less than 3.0 are given a one term probation to improve the GPA, and must take a leave of absence if the GPA is not above 3.0 after the following term. Students pursuing a Master’s thesis are also required to write a suitable thesis and present their work in the form of a BME seminar to the department during their final semester. Lastly, remember that a letter grade of ‘C’ in graduate school is considered a failure and will make it very difficult to secure job opportunities after graduation.

How do Master’s Students find a Research Mentor?
All BME graduate students must provide the Master’s advisor with an updated resume and one-paragraph description of their research interests. The advisor will then forward these resumes to faculty within the NYCBE who need graduate students on their research projects. The faculty members will call students directly to arrange interviews and select research assistants. Master’s students should identify which NYCBE project they are most interested in and talk with the Master’s advisor about working in that lab as soon as possible. It is never too early to identify a mentor! Note, Master’s students should NOT contact potential mentors directly, but rather work through the Master’s advisor to identify a research project or thesis.

Do Master’s Students Receive Funding from Their Mentors?
Students must work out the details of their project and funding with each mentor individually. A Master’s student will generally work for one term or one summer with the mentor on a ‘trial basis’. After this time, the mentor will decide if the student’s research contributions merit full-time support, tuition support, or stipend support. Note that students must adhere to the mentor’s timetable and schedule and can be terminated from the project if their research is unacceptable. Students may also search for new projects if they feel unsatisfied with their research.

Can Master’s Students Receive Funding from the BME Department Directly?
Unfortunately no. The City University of New York (CUNY) provides some support for Doctoral candidates but has no funds allocated for Master’s-Level students.
Are there Research Assistantships Available for MS Students?
There is no fixed allotment of research assistantships for MS students. New students that are willing to volunteer should contact corresponding faculty directly and express their interest to work in the lab. Once you have worked in a lab for some time you may receive support as part of your thesis work (see 9).

What Are the Expectations of a Mentor on a Master’s Project/Thesis?
The CCNY BME department expects mentors to treat Master’s students as if they were employees on their research grants or payroll. Students should work on a meaningful problem with the mentor and strive to produce at least one publication by project completion. The mentor’s presence and evaluation are required for Master’s thesis (oral) presentations, while Master’s projects (3-credits) require only the mentor’s evaluation of the project and a final grade. The thesis is evaluated my a thesis committee that will include the mentor and two other members of the BME faculty.

Are Master’s Students eligible for Doctoral Programs?
Yes. Several of our Master’s students have continued to work with their mentors in successive years as Doctoral candidates. We encourage this option and feel it benefits both the students and NYCBE members. MS students can transfer MS credits towards the PhD program if they apply to CUNY for our BME PHD program before MS completion.

Do I qualify for financial aid or federal student loans?
Please direct questions concerning financial aid to the financial aid office. US citizen and permanent residents may qualify for financial aid if they have not used aid during their undergraduate studies. Federal student loans may be available to citizens and residents provided they are full time students.

What is a financial certificate and how do I get an I-20?
If you are an international student our Office of International Students should have send you all the relevant information concerning your student visa and the I-20 form. You may have received a form to certify that you can cover the cost of your education. This financial certificate mentions tuition and living expenses. This does not mean that CCNY charges living expenses. The form simply gives an estimate of the expenses of living in the US. We advise that all international students carefully read the information provided on the web site of the Office of International Student & Scholar Services.

Where can I get more information?
Most information can be found on our web site:  http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/bme
Questions related to deadlines, forms and procedures your best bet is to direct yourself to one of the following offices:
• Admissions: Admissions office, Wille Administration Building, A-101, (212) 650-6977
• Registration: Registrar's office, Wille Administration Building, A-102, (212) 650-7850. However, a new student should register at Dean Walser's office.
• Graduation issues: Office of Graduate Affairs, Steinman Hall Room ST-209, (212) 650-8030
• Visa issues: International Students Services, North Academic Center, 1/107, (212) 650-8106
• Financial Aid: Financial Aid Office Wille Administration Building Rm. 104, (212) 650-5819

For further questions *specific to the BME program* you may contact the BME Master’s Advisor: Prof Bingmei Fu