BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY

Program Handbook

for the Master of Science degrees in
Computer Science and Data Science
and Graduate AI certificates
taught via the Coursera platform

2026-27

Welcome

Ball State University welcomes you to your graduate program designed to be relevant, accessible, and transformative to students entering or advancing in computer science, data science, and/or AI.

Your educational journey is just beginning with us, but we hope you will always feel connected to Ball State, a student-centered, Midwestern university with a growing global impact. Our alumni often use the terms “quality,” “immersive,” “friendly,” and “innovative” to describe their Ball State professors and experiences. We hope you will feel the same.

You will learn more about us in the required student orientation on the Coursera platform, but we would like to take a moment to reflect on Ball State’s mission and enduring values. We take them seriously and hope they have a measurable impact on your life.

Our Mission

We engage students in educational, research, and creative experiences that empower our graduates to have fulfilling careers and meaningful lives enriched by lifelong learning and service, while we enhance the economic, environmental, and social vitality of our community, our state, and our world.

Our Enduring Values

Excellence. We commit to excel in all that we do.

Innovation. We commit to be creative, responsive, and progressive.

Courage. We commit to set ambitious goals and to take the risks necessary to achieve those goals.

Integrity. We commit to be honest, ethical, authentic, and accessible.

Inclusiveness. We commit to respect cultural experiences and intellectual perspectives in all people.

Social responsibility. We commit to act for the benefit of society at large.

Gratitude. We commit to express appreciation to other people and to demonstrate our gratitude through our actions.

We are offering this degree via **Coursera**, the world’s leading and largest online learning platform, especially in the high-demand fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Coursera’s vision and beliefs complement Ball State’s outlook

Coursera Vision

We envision a world where anyone, anywhere has the power to transform their lives through learning.

Coursera Believes . . .

Learning is the source of human progress.

It has the power to transform our world from illness to health, from poverty to prosperity, from conflict to peace.

It has the power to transform our lives for ourselves, for our families, for our communities.

No matter who we are or where we are, learning empowers us to change and grow and redefine what’s possible.

That’s why access to the best learning is a right, not a privilege.

And that’s why Coursera is here.

We partner with the best institutions to bring the best learning to every corner of the world.

So that anyone, anywhere has the power to transform their lives through learning.

Program Overviews

This document provides students with the policies governing the Ball State master's in computer science (MS-CS), master's in data science (MS-DS), plus graduate certificates in artificial intelligence. Overall, the programs are governed by the policies and procedures for graduate programs at Ball State University, including the Graduate Catalog, the Student Academic Ethics Policy, and the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Because these programs are unique among graduate programs at Ball State in their admissions policies and course delivery, the programs have several special policies, which are detailed in this handbook.

Program Policies

Performance-Based Pathway for MS-CS and MS-DS Degrees

Ball State recognizes that, for some programs, the best way for students to demonstrate their readiness for success in graduate school is not by a review of undergraduate credentials. Rather, for these select programs like the MS-CS and MS-DS, students can best demonstrate their readiness by successfully completing a set of entry-level (or pathway) courses that are determined by the program. In these programs, Ball State will waive the submission of undergraduate transcripts and any other application materials.

Learners may enroll in three pathway courses outlined by the College of Sciences and Humanities and are conditionally admitted to either the MS-CS or MS-DS degrees. Upon successful completion of each of the three pathway courses with an overall 3.0 GPA or higher, the student will then gain full admission status in the program. If the student does not earn an overall 3.0 GPA once they have completed 9 credits in the outlined pathway courses, they will be dismissed from the program and will not be granted reinstatement into the Ball State Graduate School. If any of the pathway courses are waived by the department, or if the department accepts transfer credit for any of the pathway courses, then students must earn a 3.0 GPA on the first 9 credits taken to achieve full admission to the program.

In order to ensure that students are making timely progress toward degree completion, students are allowed to take additional classes concurrently with their final pathway course(s) before gaining full admission to the program. For example, if a student takes two pathway courses in their first semester, they may take the third pathway course plus additional classes in their second semester of enrollment. If a student completes the three pathway courses (9 credits) and one additional course (3 credits), then they must meet an overall GPA of 3.0 in these 12 credit hours in order to be granted admission to the program. No student will be able to take more than 12 hours of MS-CS or MS-DS courses in non-degree status without permission of the program director.

All courses attempted and/or completed for credit will appear on an official Ball State University transcript (unless dropped by the drop deadline) and will count toward the cumulative GPA.

Graduate AI Certificates

New in Spring 2027, the Department of Computer Science is launching two new graduate certificates in artificial intelligence (AI):

- Beginner: **AI Foundations** (3 courses, 9 credits)
- Intermediate: **AI Theory and Ethics** (3 courses, 9 credits)

As with our master's degrees, certificate learners do not need to go through an application process. They simply indicate their program of choice on an enrollment form for new students. Students wanting more than one program will fill out an enrollment form per program.

Although designed to be taken sequentially for students new to the computer science field, the certificates can be taken at the same time. All courses in the certificate count toward the MS-CS for learners who may want to advance past the certificates. The intermediate certificate requires a pre-requisite for some courses.

All certificate requirements must be met within five years.

Current MS in Computer Science students may already be taking all or most of courses within these two certificates and can add these certificates as a way to emphasize their knowledge within particular skill sets. Degree-seeking students can contact their Student Success Specialist (see last page for contact details) to learn how to add a certificate.

Current MS in Data Science students may take the AI Foundations Certificate and have all those courses counted toward the MS-DS degree.

Tuition and Fees

Costs for the programs can be found on the programs' website landing pages: MS-CS and MS-DS. New learners are required to pay a $100 nonrefundable deposit at the time of registration. The deposit is applied toward tuition. Full tuition and fees must be paid by 11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time on the final add/drop date of the term (see the section on "Course Add, Drop, Total Withdrawal, Tuition Refunds, and Grades" for specific dates). Students who do not complete payment by the deadline will be dropped from all courses. If a student drops their courses or is removed from them, the $100 deposit is not refunded. However, it will be credited to their account and may be applied to a future course registration within one year.

Payment for the deposit and tuition can be made via bank draft (electronic check) or credit card. If a credit card is used, a 2.85% service charge will apply to all transactions—this includes payment for tuition and refunds of tuition in cases where a student drops a course within the refund schedule window (see "Course Add, Drop, Total Withdrawal, Tuition Refunds, and Grades" section). Payments made using U.S. bank draft (ACH), also known as electronic checks that come directly from your checking or savings account, do ***not*** have transaction charges. However, international bank draft payments (IFT) may have additional charges that vary by country and current conversion rates. These rates are displayed prior to payment when this option is selected.

If a student enrolled in any of these programs wishes to take courses outside of these programs, they must apply separately to the appropriate program and tuition will be charged separately for those courses. Charges for tuition and fees for Ball State's non-Coursera courses will follow our standard tuition and fees policies.

Ball State employees and graduate assistants may use their tuition remission benefits toward the MS-CS and MS-DS Coursera programs. When registering for courses, students may select "I am a Ball State employee" in the fee waiver options. Once verified, the employee or graduate assistant will be given further instructions.

Financial Aid

Students enrolled in the master's degree programs may be eligible for federal financial aid. Students enrolled in only graduate certificates are not eligible.

U.S. federal financial aid may be used by qualifying students (see more details about Qualifying Students below) during the performance-based admission process and at the point they qualify for regular admission. Students must take 6 or more credits per semester to remain eligible for federal aid. Students must pay for courses in full no later than 11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern time on the last day of the add/drop period (see pages 7-8). They will then will be reimbursed for federal aid. If students apply for financial aid and it is ready to be disbursed prior to the due date, the aid will apply to tuition and fees. If a balance remains, students will be responsible for paying the remaining balance by the due date. If the amount of financial aid exceeds the amount of tuition and fees, a refund will be issued to the student.

Learn more about financial aid and how to apply at bsu.edu/finaid.

Qualifying Degree-Seeking Students: According to the U.S. Department of Education, learners must be U.S. citizens or eligible noncitizens and have completed at least 90 credits of post-secondary college credit to qualify for graduate-level, federal, Title IV financial aid. MS-CS and MS-DS students who already hold a bachelor's degree may qualify. However, MS-CS and MS-DS students who don't hold a bachelor's degree may still qualify if they have earned at least 90 undergraduate or graduate credits prior to requesting aid. Credits earned during the performance-based admission process for the MS-CS or MS-DS would count toward that 90. Students applying for financial aid will have to submit official transcripts documenting their undergraduate academic record.

Dual Degrees

Students can earn master's degrees in the complementary fields of computer science and data science at Ball State. Up to 9 credit hours can be double-counted for each degree. Learners interested in earning both degrees should contact their Student Success Specialist (see last page for contact info) to work out a course plan to meet their needs.

In addition, Ball State students who are already admitted to another Ball State graduate program may opt for a dual major in MS-CS or MS-DS. Learn more about dual master's degrees at Ball State.

Degrees + Certificates

Ball State students may enroll in more than one graduate certificate at the same time. Students may also be enrolled in a certificate and a master's degree at the same time. Courses within the AI Foundations Certificate can count toward the MS-CS or MS-DS. Courses in the AI Ethics and Theory Certificate count toward the MS-CS. If you are a current student and wish to add a certificate or a degree, contact your Student Success Specialist (see last page for contact details).

Courses and Curriculum

Course Length

All courses in the degree and certificate programs are 3 credits each. Fall and spring semesters are 15 weeks; the summer semester is 10 weeks.

Prerequisites and Assumed Background Knowledge

The Ball State MS-CS and MS-DS degrees, plus the AI graduate certificates, have been designed for learners who do not necessarily have prior learning via undergraduate degrees in computer science, mathematics, or related fields. Nevertheless, it is important that learners are prepared for individual courses. Course descriptions help inform about assumed incoming knowledge and can be found within the Graduate Catalog (click on the title of each course description in the catalog to pull up a description of it).

- Master's in Computer Science
- Master's in Data Science
- **Beginner:** Graduate Certificate in AI Foundations
- **Intermediate:** Graduate Certificate in AI Theory and Ethics

Required Credits, Grades, and GPA

All graduate grades are used in computing the student's cumulative GPA. An overall scholastic ratio of 3.0 GPA (*B* average) must be attained before admission to graduation candidacy and the final awarding of any master's degree. An average of B is also required in the student's major. No course with a grade below 2.0 (C- or lower) may be counted toward any degree or certificate program. (See Grading System section in the Graduate Catalog.)

Repeating Courses

Fully admitted degree-seeking students or graduate certificate students who wish to retake a course can refer to the course repetition policy for graduate students.

For learners in the Performance Based Admission process who are concerned that they may not pass a course, we recommend they take only one or two courses at a time. If an MS-CS or MS-DS student does not earn an overall 3.0 GPA once they have completed the three pathway

courses, they will be dismissed from the program and will not be granted reinstatement into the Ball State Graduate School.

Transfer Credits

After successfully completing the pathway courses students who have completed graduate credits at another institution may be able to transfer up to 9 credits into the degree program. Students in this situation should contact their Student Success Specialist (see last page) for more information. No transfer credit is allowed to count toward a certificate.

Industry Content for Credit Via Coursera

As part of Ball State's credit for prior learning policy, the university will count as credit toward the MS-CS or MS-DS degrees successful completion of relevant content or certificates, noted below, on the Coursera platform. This credit *cannot* be counted toward the performance-based admission process but can be counted as credits toward the degree.

Approved credit will be given for learners who have ***successfully completed*** the following Coursera certificates and specializations:

MS-CS: Up to 9 credits of prior learning can be applied to this degree with a limit of 6 total credits applied toward CS 669 and CS 679. Learners can earn up to 6 credits for CS 669.

- IBM Applied Software Engineering Fundamentals Specialization in place of CS 669 Selected Topics (3 credits)
- Complete **four courses** from the Deep Learning Specialization from DeepLearning.ai in place of CS 669 Selected Topics (3 credits)
- Google Data Analytics Professional Certificate from Google in place of CS 669 Selected Topics (3 credits)
- GPU Programming Specialization from Johns Hopkins University in place of CS 669 Selected Topics (3 credits)
- Complete **six courses** from the IBM AI Engineering Professional Certificate from IBM in place of CS 679 Research Topics in CS (3 credits).
- Python for Everybody Specialization from the University of Michigan in place of CS 617 Introduction to Programming (3 credits) or CS 601 Computer Programming and Data Structures (3 credits)

MS-DS: Up to 9 credits of prior learning can be applied to this degree with a limit of 6 credits applied toward DSCI 669 and DSCI 679.

- Complete **four courses** from the Deep Learning Specialization from DeepLearing.ai in place of DSCI 669 Special Topics in Data Science (3 credits)
- Google Advanced Data Analytics Professional Certificate in place of DSCI 601 Introduction to Data Science (3 credits)
- GPU Programming Specialization in place of DSCI 669 Selected Topics (3 credits).
- IBM AI Developer Professional Certificate in place of DSCI 679 Research Topics in Data Science (3 credits)
- Complete **six courses** from the IBM AI Engineering Professional Certificate from IBM in place of DSCI 679 Research Topics in CS (3 credits)

- IBM Data Science Professional Certificate in place of DSCI 601 Introduction to Data Science (3 credits)
- Python for Everybody Specialization from the University of Michigan in place of CS 617 Introduction to Programming (3 credits)

Students interested in applying credit from any of these Coursera courses should fill out and submit the prior learning credit form. For questions, contact cs.support@bsu.edu or ds.support@bsu.edu.

Course Add, Drop, Total Withdrawal, Tuition Refunds, and Grades

Individual Course Add, Drop, and Refund

Adding courses: Learners may add courses up to the 7th calendar day from the term start during the 15-week fall and spring terms and the 7th calendar day from the start of the 10-week summer term. Students adding courses after the start date should be aware of refund policies.

Dropping courses and refunds: The MS-CS and MS-DS presently follow standard university policies about individual course drops. More information about dropping individual courses and refunds is on the website of Student Financial Services (also commonly referred to as the Bursar's Office). We are highlighting here some key points below for clarity.

Full and Partial Refunds for Individual Course Drops A course drop is done ***before*** the course start date. When a course is dropped within the time periods below (measured from the start date of the course), it will not appear on the student's record. All refunds are returned to the payment method on file. The U.S. Eastern time zone applies. Students taking *only one course* in a semester should follow the process for "Total Withdrawal and Refunds," detailed on the next page.

Refund Schedule for Individual Course Drops		
Fall and Spring 15-Week Courses	**Fall and Spring 7-Week Courses**	**Summer 10-Week Courses**
Before course start date: 100%	Before course start date: 100%	*Before course start date: 100%
Week 1: 100%	Days 1-4: 100%	Days 1-5: 100%
Week 2: 75%	Days 5-10: 50%	Days 6-10: 50%
Week 3: 50%	Days 11 and beyond: 0%	Days 11 or more: 0%
Week 4: 25%		
Week 5 or more: 0%		

* **NOTE** that there is **no** full refund for dropping ALL courses after the start date in the summer term. Students are encouraged to register early and take advantage of the early access to course content before the first day of the summer term to understand the course expectations.

How to withdraw from individual courses: To drop or withdraw from a course, you will use Self-Service Banner (SSB). Download our registration guide (PDF) for instructions. If you are taking only one course and withdrawing from that course, read the section below about "Total Withdrawals and Refunds." Refunds may take up two weeks to process. Enrollment changes, including dropping or withdrawing from a course, may affect your financial aid.

Program Withdrawal

Students admitted to the MS-DS or MS-CS program may formally withdraw from the program by contacting their Student Success Specialist (see last page for contact info) who will, in turn, notify the Office of the Registrar to officially withdraw the student. ***Total Withdrawal and Refunds for a Semester***

The MS-CS and MS-DS follow standard university policies regarding withdrawal from ALL courses within a term. If a student is taking only one course and withdraws from that course, this is considered a total withdrawal and the following refund schedule is applicable:

Fall and Spring 15-Week Courses	Fall and Spring 7-Week Courses	Summer 10-Week Courses
Week 1: 100%	Week 1: 80%	*Week 1: 90%
Week 2: 80%	Week 2: 60%	Week 2: 70%
Week 3: 60%	Week 3: 40%	Week 3: 50%
Week 4: 50%	Week 4: 20%	Week 4: 30%
Week 5: 40%	Week 5: 10%	Week 5: 10%
Week 6: 30%	Week 6: 0%	Week 6 or more: 0%
Week 7: 20%		
Week 8: 10%		
Week 9 or more: 0%		

*** NOTE** that there is **no** full refund for dropping ALL courses after the start date in the summer term. Students are encouraged to register early and take advantage of the early access to course content before the first day of the summer term to understand the course expectations.

To completely withdraw from courses, contact Cardinal Central. Refunds may take up to two weeks to process.

Time Limit to Earn a Degree, Dismissal, and Reinstatement

Please refer to the Ball State Graduate Catalog for these policies. Some highlights include:

- **Time Limit:** All degree requirements must be met within 6 years. Graduate certificate requirements must be met within 5 years. If a student does not complete their degree within these time limits of taking their first course, they will be dismissed from the program.

- **Probation and Dismissal:** Students will be placed on academic probation if their cumulative graduate GPA falls below 3.0 at any time after being admitted to the program (i.e., successful completion of the performance-based pathways courses

and/or first 9 credit hours at a 3.0 or higher). To remove probationary status, a student must have at least a 3.0 graduate cumulative GPA by the time the next 9 graduate credits are completed. If probationary status is not removed, the student's admission to graduate study will be canceled, and additional graduate study will not be possible until the student has reapplied for reinstatement.

- **Reinstatement Procedure:** Students seeking reinstatement must present to the dean of the Graduate School a written request approved by the program director. The decision to reinstate a student will be made by the dean of the Graduate School. Students may only be reinstated once to the Ball State Graduate School.

Reactivation of Student Record

Students seeking a graduate certificate or degree program but who have not taken a course in over a year will find their Ball State academic records have become inactive. To resume taking classes, students will fill out the enrollment form again for the semester they wish to re-start. Students may contact their Student Success Specialist (see last page for contact info) for assistance.

Grade Appeals

Concerns about grades, discussion forums, assessments, or other course issues should be brought first to the individual course facilitator to seek a resolution. Students who feel they received a final grade that does not reflect their performance have the option to file an appeal following Ball State's standard grade appeals process and policy.

Connectivity Issues

Students are responsible for having a stable Internet connection for their course and when taking course assessments. Coursera and Ball State are not responsible for students' Internet connectivity issues.

Student Support

Student Success Specialist

Every student has access to a Student Success Specialist (see last page for a list of specialists) who serves as the key touchpoint for students from the time they register in a pathway course to the time they graduate from Ball State.

The specialist serves as a student's academic advisor, plus is a student's connector between their academic needs and other student support services at Ball State. Students who need some help and may not know where to turn can contact their assigned Student Success Specialist (view the last page of this handbook for contact information) at any time during their student journey with Ball State.

The Student Success Specialist helps students design their course plans to meet the educational and career goals they have.

Required Orientation for New Students

All new learners in our computer science and data science courses need to complete an orientation on the Coursera platform by the end of the first day of the course start date to get access to their course materials.

The orientation module generally takes an hour or less to complete. Learners will gain an understanding of the program structure, get acquainted with their Ball State faculty, and learn about course registration and academic policies, making the transition to a graduate-level program more likely to be successful.

Learners will receive an email describing how to activate their Ball State log-in credentials and register for classes, and it includes a checklist to help learners prepare for the upcoming semester. Within 24-48 hours after creating their Ball State account, learners will receive a separate email with important instructions on how to link their account to Coursera and access Orientation.

Course content will be available for preview one week before the class start date for learners who have completed the orientation by that time. Learners who complete the orientation less than a week before the class start date will be able to access course content within 2-3 business days. Learners can preview readings, assignments, and other course content during this time. Moderated discussions and access to the course facilitator will not be available until the course start date. In addition, no assignments are due or will be reviewed by the course facilitator during this time.

Questions about the orientation should be directed to the student's assigned Student Success Specialist (see last page for contact info).

Ball State ID

The Ball State ID number is a unique number generated when an individual registers for their first Ball State course. Students can find their Ball State ID number by logging into **myballstate.bsu.edu**, clicking on *Self-Service Banner*, then clicking the *Personal Information* tab.

Academic Support Services

University Libraries provides many services and resources for online students. A popular features includes Ask a Librarian, available via chat, email, text, phone, or scheduled web-based conference.

The **Writing Center** offers a "Quick Question" feature when you need some fast chat help. Plus, if you need individualized help, you can set up an appointment.

Career Services

Cardinal Career Link is an online job search tool that puts learners into direct contact with employers who want to recruit Ball State students and graduates. The service provides:

- a résumé builder to help students get started on their résumés
- a critique of résumés when students upload it to their documents section
- ways to explore careers and industries

Career Guide: The Ball State Career Center has collected their best advice for you including such topics as:

- career self-assessment
- interviewing
- networking
- sample resumes and cover letters
- best verbs to use in your application materials
- job search tips
- mind mapping

Career Coaches: Our Career Center career coaches are highly trained professionals who can guide learners in their career search and explorations. They can review résumés, help with an internship search, lead learners through a practice interview, or help students develop a strategy for success.

Disability Services

The Office of Disability Services coordinates university efforts to provide access and opportunity to students with disabilities, including students who have disabilities that are non-apparent. Students wanting to learn more about services or accommodations available to those with a documented disability should contact the Disability Services office. Advance notice in planning services is strongly encouraged.

If you wish to self-disclose information about a disability or receive information about auxiliary aids, services, or other accommodations, complete this self-disclosure form.

Alumni

Finding the ideal career can be a lifelong process. Learn more about the services offered by the Ball State Alumni Association at **bsu.edu/alumni**.

U.S. States Authorization for Online Programs

Ball State University is authorized to accept online students from all U.S. states, territories, and Washington, D.C. Learn more about state authorizations for non-Indiana students at **bsu.edu/stateauthorization**.

International Students

International students who live outside of the United States are advised to understand and be aware of the rules, regulations, and requirements related to online study from their country of residence, particularly if a country will charge any additional taxes, withholdings, or fees associated with online education programs.

International students may register for courses and proceed through the performance-based admission process and the full degree programs just as any domestic student. International students are also charged the same in-state tuition and fees as U.S. citizens. Please note that these courses and degree programs may not be used to attain or maintain any U.S. visa type.

Questions?

coursera

If you have a question, contact your Student Success Specialist:

MS-CS and AI Certificate Students
Jeremy Johnson
cs.support@bsu.edu

MS-DS Students
Michelle Turner
ds.support@bsu.edu

Or call them at 1-765-285-1581 or toll-free at 1-800-872-0369.

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Ball State reserves the right to change policies and processes.