

**New Master's Degrees**  
*Information for Students*  
February 2022

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The University has been working over the past several months to significantly enhance its academic offering, in a way that makes its academic programs more commensurate with the digital future and the demands of the job market. Part of this enhancement is offering new Master's degrees (the program can be referred to as the *Master of X or MX* sometimes to make it shorter), through which students can earn a Master's degree in a specific topic in one year (some in two years), either immediately after graduation or later. These graduate degrees include such exciting topics as artificial intelligence and machine learning; cybersecurity and blockchain; robotics and autonomous systems; and so on. A full catalogue is available.

The University encourages its graduating students to participate in this program immediately after their graduation, as it will give them a clear edge in the workplace, especially as these graduate degrees are generally aligned with the undergraduate concentrations (but the concentrations are not required for them). This Master's program is also available to students who have worked in the industry and desire to specialize in any of the fields offered, and to students who obtained a Bachelor's degree from a university other than KFUPM.

It is expected that earning these degrees will not only prepare the students for the emerging requirements of the new job market and make them quite distinguishable, but also, as a result, significantly enhance their employment prospects and competitiveness, though there are several other factors that affect employability (for example, academic performance). KFUPM graduates, who are already sought after in the job market, will likely attain a substantially stronger degree of attractiveness. Others will join also to advance their careers through KFUPM's distinguished academic rigor.

This is a full-time program and condensed, which generally will run during the week with students in full attendance, but with evening classes. However, depending on the specific programs, some are offered over two years with a more relaxed schedule, and some in the HIVE environment, with split virtual and in-residence attendance. The program is designed for students who have completed their Bachelor's degrees but have not yet transitioned into full employment, or for those who have started their employment but desire to advance their career through further specialization in the offered fields. It is not considered a part-time program.

<sup>1</sup> The information in this document is preliminary and reflects the University's best effort to communicate with prospective students early and in the most transparent manner. However, it is subject to change and does not reflect a commitment by the University in any way.



Each degree consists of 30 credit hours, including one project of six credit hours. It requires no thesis. Students enrolling in these programs are expected to join or re-join the job market after graduation, or to be currently employed. In particular, these programs are not designed for those seeking a Master's degree as a stepping stone to an eventual Ph.D. degree (these need to get a Master of Science degree, which is typically a two-year degree and requires a thesis).

Annual offerings of these programs will depend on demand. This is not going to be an issue for popular disciplines (for example, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and so on.). However, less popular programs may not be offered in some years if there is little demand for them.

The process for enrolling in these programs is broadly as follows. Students register for their desired program and pay a small non-refundable processing fee (SR 100). Seats are limited and satisfying the minimum entry requirements does not guarantee acceptance. Admission is competitive, and only the top applicants will be admitted, based on a variety of factors, including GPA, English fluency, Bachelor's degree, quality of the application, work diversity, whether the student is sponsored by his/her company, and so on. Departments will assess demand for each program and can withhold those with very little demand. Students who selected those withdrawn programs can switch to another program on offer or cancel their registration and have their processing fee refunded.

The minimum University requirements to apply to the program are as follows:

- A recognized Bachelor's degree
- GPA of 2.5+ out of 4.0 or equivalent
- IELTS score of 6+ or TOEFL of 70+  
(waived for KFUPM graduates and English Speaking Country graduates)
- Two recommendation letters
- Non-refundable processing fee of SR 100

In addition, each specific program (discipline) has its admission requirements (listed in the program description). Some require a degree in specific disciplines. Satisfying all of these requirements only allows the student to apply. Actual admission is competitive, and only the top applicants will be admitted. Not all those who apply will be admitted.

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## Program Cost

The cost of the program (inclusive of VAT) depends on the type of student, and is as follows:

	Tuition (Full Program)	Fee Payment
<u>Sponsored</u>	Sponsor SR 150,000	Sponsor
<u>Non-Sponsored, Saudi</u>		
KFUPM Continuing*	SR 10,000 50% refundable at successful completion with the same cohort	To be paid in full within 2 weeks from admission letter
KFUPM Returning	SR 20,000	50% to be paid within 2 weeks from admission letter. The rest before the beginning of the 2nd semester irrespective of program duration
Non-KFUPM	SR 40,000	
<u>Non-Sponsored, Expat</u>		
KFUPM Continuing*	SR 20,000, non-refundable	50% to be paid within 2 weeks from admission letter. The rest before the beginning of the 2nd semester irrespective of program duration
KFUPM Returning	SR 40,000	
Non-KFUPM	SR 60,000	

\*Continuing: Those graduating in Terms 211, 212, or 213

As with any new initiative, there will be growing pains in this program. The University asks the students to be mindful and tolerant of this. It is our goal to enhance the academic credentials and employment prospects of our students to the maximum extent possible, without putting an additional burden on the students, but we also ask the students to be serious and patient as this initiative matures.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Why is the University offering new Master's degrees?

- This is to help the Kingdom achieve its objective of transforming its economy and becoming not only a participant, but a competitor in the new global digital economy. Graduating a cadre of specialists who have the required knowledge and training is a pillar of this transformation. Of course, this will also help the graduates in the job market; see the next question.

### 2. Will it help students?

- Yes. It is expected that earning these Master's degrees will not only prepare the students for the emerging requirements of the new job market and make them quite distinguishable, but also, as a result, significantly enhance their employments prospects and competitiveness. Note, however, there are several other factors that affect employability (for example, academic performance). KFUPM graduates, who are already sought after, will likely attain a substantially stronger degree of attractiveness in the job market, and others will also advance their careers through KFUPM's distinguished academic rigor.

### 3. For whom is this program designed?

- In general, there will be three categories of students: 1) KFUPM students who have just graduated with a Bachelor's degree (some of whom may not yet have gained employment), 2) returning KFUPM students who graduated from the University in earlier years (employed or self-employed), and 3) graduates of other universities. As far as employment is concerned, although classes will be offered during the evening to accommodate all interested students, we encourage participants in the program to dedicate sufficient time to the program, since it is condensed (one year or two years). For one-year programs, it is best for those employed to take a one-year break from work and focus on the program. Again, the one-year programs are quite condensed and require full-time dedication, especially that KFUPM is a tough school; you have been warned! Many employers send their students for graduate degrees abroad, and would in the same vein welcome sending them to KFUPM full-time.

### 4. Why should I consider taking this Master's program?

- If you have just graduated from KFUPM with a Bachelor's degree and have not yet accepted employment, it will be heavily discounted, and it will take only one year to complete. Thus, you will 1) have a better chance of employment and 2) your job placement



will most likely be at a higher pay grade. In other words, thinking about it mathematically, this one-year or two-year delay in your employment will result in a higher monthly salary than you would otherwise get with a lower entry position and a one-year or two-year pay raise. For those who have joined an employer, some employers will sponsor them for this full-time, one-year or two-year program, or allow them to take one year off the job to complete this program, simply because the program addresses new areas of demand that the industry and the Kingdom's economy needs and it is a win-win for both employer and employee, or you can take it whilst on the job if you can handle the load. For everyone, the program is a boon to their career.

#### **5. What are the topics?**

- These degrees include exciting topics such as artificial intelligence and machine learning; cybersecurity and blockchain; robotics and autonomous systems; big data science; modeling and simulation; and so on. A full catalogue is available.

#### **6. Why are you referring to this program as MX?**

- The official degree title is Master of X, where X is the major; for example, Master of Artificial Intelligence, Master of Materials Science and Engineering, Master of Supply Chain Management, and so on. This is an accepted naming convention worldwide. It is called the MX Program because of the aforementioned naming convention. This naming convention is used by many global universities such as Stanford and others.

#### **7. What type of degree is this?**

- This is essentially a Master of Engineering or Master of Business degree. Sometimes these degrees are also called a Professional Master's degree, to distinguish them from the conventional Master of Science, as the intent of this program is to lead to (or enhance) employment with a direct impact on the professional activities, not to progress to a Ph.D.

#### **8. Will it be open to those working in the industry?**

- Yes; please see the previous question. Note, however, that the one-year programs are full-time, not part-time, so those working in the industry must keep this in mind and avail themselves accordingly.

#### **9. Will it be open to graduates from other universities?**

- Yes, those who obtained a good GPA from renowned universities and with high English fluency have a good opportunity to be accepted. Please note, however, that weight is given



to students continuing with it after completing their Bachelor's degree at KFUPM and returning KFUPM graduates.

**10. Is the program open to expat students?**

- Yes, the program is open to both Saudi and expat students.

**11. Is the program open to female students?**

- Yes, the program is open to both male and female students.

**12. Are these degrees recognized by the Ministry of Education?**

- These degrees are recognized by the Ministry of Education and are classified as Level-7 Master's degrees in the Saudi Arabian Qualification Framework. Moreover, all programs offered by the KFUPM Business School have been accredited by the AACSB.

**13. I work in a company. Why should I apply as sponsored instead of as non-sponsored?**

- Some weight in the admission score is given to sponsored students, since sponsorship indicates commitment from the company for this enrollment and integration of this program in the holistic development plan of its employee (which, in turn, is expected to increase the return on this education).

**14. Are the classes going to be online?**

- For certain programs, HIVE (Hybrid Immersive Virtual Education) classes are available. For all other programs, the classes are in-person. However, during the coronavirus situation, the classes will follow the University's mode of teaching, so they will be online if the University decides to hold normal classes online until the pandemic abates.

**15. What is the HIVE option?**

- Hybrid Immersive Visual Education (HIVE) is a modern option available for some programs. The classes will be conducted for in-person and online students at the same time. For both categories of students, classes for the 4th, 8th, 12th, and 16th weeks will be need physical presence in Dhahran but will be held on weekends. All exams will be conducted during these weekend in-residence days in Dhahran; there will not be any online exams. Furthermore, all online participants must have on-camera presence at all times during the classes.



**16. How are the females going to be accommodated in the classrooms?**

- Depending on the class size, some sections will be female only and some male and female with a barrier in the middle. Both genders share the same building. The university cannot guarantee that any section will be female only; it depends on enrollment.

**17. What is the duration of the program? How many credit hours? Courses?**

- The duration of the program is one year or two years, with 9 courses in total, one of them is a project (no thesis) of 6 credit hours, and the rest are 3-credit courses. Students are expected to take:
  - 4 normal courses in the first semester,
  - 3 normal courses and the first part of the project in the second semester, and
  - 1 normal course and the second part of the project in the summer semester.

Students are not allowed to deviate from this plan. The two-year programs are similar, but the semester load is split over two years and is therefore half the normal load.

**18. Can I drop courses, or take them later?**

- No, the program is run in a cohort system. Students are not allowed to drop courses or reschedule their timing. Courses are offered in specific semesters according to the plan, and all those enrolled in the program must take them in that time and order. No light load is allowed. This is a full-time program.

**19. Can I enroll in this program on a part-time basis?**

- The one-year programs are full-time program intended to be completed in one year and will run with students in full attendance, but with evening classes. The two-year (including the HIVE) programs will accommodate part-time students to a greater extent since the load is lighter. However, both types of programs are cohort programs and do not allow rescheduling of courses (see above question). Those in the industry wishing to take it must keep this in mind. The total duration of the one-year programs is short (one year), so someone working in the industry is encouraged to obtain a sponsorship from his/her employers or take one year off. It may be difficult to have a full-time job and enroll in a full-time condensed program at the same time.

**20. Will the classes be in the evening so I can still work normally at my job?**

- Yes, the classes will be scheduled in the evening. However, the one-year programs are condensed (four courses per semester), so those on the job must keep this in mind. As



mentioned, it may be difficult to have a full-time job and enroll in a full-time condensed program at the same time.

**21. How much will it cost?**

- The University does not see this as a money-making exercise, but as a helping-students, helping-country exercise. This is taken into account for the cost of this program. The cost of program is described above.

**22. Will I be paid a stipend?**

- No. However, continuing KFUPM students who just graduated (or will graduate) during the current academic year, will be refunded 50% of the tuition with the condition that they graduate successfully with the same cohort.

**23. Will I be given University housing?**

- Continuing students will be offered normal University housing at a discounted cost. For others, limited University housing will be offered on a per-availability basis but uses normal market pricing. Students are encouraged to secure their own housing.

**24. Can I progress to a Ph.D. after earning the professional Master's degree?**

- The professional Master's / Master of Engineering degrees are considered terminal (engineering) Master's programs. They are not designed for those seeking a Master's degree as a stepping stone to an eventual Ph.D. degree (these need to get a Master of Science degree, which is typically a two-year degree and requires a thesis). It is not impossible to proceed to a Ph.D. degree from an MX program, but this is not the norm.

**25. What is the process of enrollment?**

- The process for enrolling in these programs is outlined in the main text above.

**26. How do I pay the processing fee?**

- Once you fill in the initial application form and submit it, an email will be sent to you with a link to pay SR 100 through a credit card or a Mada card.

**27. Is the application processing fee refundable?**

- No, it is not refundable, even if you are not accepted. It is refunded only if the program is cancelled by the University due to low demand or other reasons.





**28. Can I pay the tuition fee through a loan?**

- Yes, the University arranged with the Saudi Commercial Bank (SNB) and Al-Rajhi Bank for students to obtain an interest-free loan (subsidized by the University) to pay off the tuition fee. Enquire for more details.

**29. If I do not pay the initial portion of the tuition fee within two weeks of the admission letter, can I pay it later?**

- No. In this case your admission is permanently cancelled and your slot is given to another student on the waiting list. In this case, there is no way to secure a seat in the program this year. You may apply next year, however.

**30. Why should I pay the initial portion of the fee so early?**

- This is a very expensive program for the University. It involves a lot of courses and faculty, and the resources required from the University to run it are considerable. The University wants to ensure that those enrolling in the program will actually attend it, and that the resources dedicated to it do not go to waste. The University also wants to offer the degrees that are in demand, again to conserve resources (imagine running a suite of 10 course with very few students). The payment is intended to dissuade those not serious about enrollment.

**31. Is the initial portion of the fee refundable? Is it waivable?**

- No. It is neither refundable nor waivable. Those withdrawing/dismissed from the program at any phase, either before or after the commencement of classes, will not receive that amount back.

**32. Will all those who apply be accepted?**

- No, the enrollment process will be competitive, and priority will be given according to certain criteria that take into account, among other things, prior academic performance and industry diversity.

**33. If I withdraw from the program, will I be refunded the application processing fee or tuition fee?**

- No.



**34. Can I change my MX major after submitting the application or after approval of application or after starting the studies?**

- No. You need to plan carefully and choose the degree discipline in which you are absolutely interested.

**35. I have already studied some of the courses previously and would like to transfer their credit to my current MX program. What is the procedure?**

- Even if you have studied similar courses, you are supposed to take them at KFUPM, as this is a cohort program. Credit transfer is not possible.

**36. What is the procedure to withdraw from the MX program?**

- As mentioned earlier, dropping a course or courses is not allowed. Due to serious personal circumstances, if you are not able to continue the MX program, you will have to withdraw completely from the program. This may be done by sending an email to [mx@kfupm.edu.sa](mailto:mx@kfupm.edu.sa) before the last of day of withdrawal from all courses with a grade of 'W'. If you request to withdraw later, a grade of 'DN' will be assigned in all registered courses.