



New Master's Degrees Information to Students

TO INTENDED RECIPIENT ONLY. DO NOT CIRCULATE¹

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, either immediately after graduation or afterwards. These graduate degrees include such exciting topics as artificial intelligence and machine learning; cybersecurity and blockchain; robotics and autonomous systems; etc. A list of the proposed degrees is available, though there is no guarantee that all will be offered.

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. The program is open to both Saudi and expat students, and to both genders.

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 employments prospects and competitiveness, though there are several other factors that affect employability (e.g. 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 will run during the week with students in full attendance, *but with evening classes*. It is advised that students be really free from other commitments to take it, since it is condensed. It 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.

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 who are 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

¹ 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.



(those 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 (e.g. artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, etc.). 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. A week in July is *Registration Week*. 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, etc. 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. Once admitted, students are expected to pay a small deposit (SR 2000) that is refundable upon successfully completing the program.

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)
- 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.

The cost of the program depends on the type of student, and is as follows:

	Tuition (Full Program)	Stipend
Sponsored	Sponsor	Sponsor
<u>Non-Sponsored, Saudi</u>		
KFUPM Continuing*	Waived	SR 1000
KFUPM Returning	SR 20,000	-
Non-KFUPM	SR 40,000	-
<u>Non-Sponsored, Expat</u>		
KFUPM Continuing*	SR 20,000	-
KFUPM Returning	SR 40,000	-
Non-KFUPM	SR 60,000	-

*Continuing: Those graduating in Terms 191, 192, or 193



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As with any new initiatives, 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 a new Master's degrees?

- This is to help the Kingdom achieve its objective of transforming its economy and become 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 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 (e.g. academic performance, etc.). 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 Bachelor's degrees (some of whom may not yet accepted 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 in evening time to accommodate all interested students, we encourage participants in the program to fully dedicate their time to the program, since it is full-time and condensed (one year). It is best for those employed to take a one-year off and focus on the program. 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 free, 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 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 pay raise. For those who have joined an employer, some employers will sponsor them for this full-time, one-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; etc. A full catalogue is published.

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, etc. 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 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 this is a full-time, not a part-time program, 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 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 the classes going to be online?

- The classes are physical. However, during the current 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.

13. 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, but with different entrances and different cafeterias, lounges, and prayer areas. The university cannot guarantee that any section will be female only; it depends on enrollment.



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

- The duration of the program is one year, 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.

15. 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.

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

- No. This is a full-time program intended to be completed in one year and will run with students in full attendance, but with evening classes. Those in the industry wishing to take it must keep this in mind. Although it is full-time, the total duration of the program is short (one year), so someone working in the industry is encouraged to obtain a sponsorship from his employers or take a 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.

17. 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 program is 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.

18. When will the program be offered?

- A number of these Master's degrees have been developed, and they will be offered in the upcoming academic year (Term 201).

19. 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 in its first year is described above.

20. Will I be paid a stipend?

- Continuing KFUPM students who just graduated (or will graduate) during the current academic year, will be given a stipend and the tuition fee is waived. This is to encourage them to continue their studies and graduate with a Master's program rather than just a Bachelor's program, part of the Companion Master track. They are strongly encouraged not to take up a job until completion of the program because it is full-time and quite condensed.



21. Will I be given University housing?

- No, University housing will not be provided, even for continuing students, as there is no such adequate housing resources available. Students must secure their own housing.

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

- The professional Master's degrees are considered terminal (engineering) Master programs. They are not designed for those seeking a Master's degree as a stepping stone to an eventual Ph.D. degree (those need to get a Master of Science degree, which is typically a two-year degree and requires a thesis).

23. What is the process of enrollment?

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

24. How do I pay the processing fee?

- Make a transfer/deposit to the following account, and send a proof of the payment (e.g. snapshot) to the email below. *Be sure to include your name and National ID/Iqama clearly in the email.*

Bank: Riyadh Bank
Account holder: King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals
Account number 3120158799901
IBAN: SA8920000003120158799901
Email: mx@kfupm.edu.sa

25. 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.

26. Why should I pay a deposit at enrollment?

- 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 high. 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 deposit is intended to dissuade those not serious about enrollment, and is refunded to those who ultimately complete the program.

27. Is the deposit refundable? Is it waivable?

- Yes, it is refundable to those who ultimately complete the program. No, it is not waivable.

28. If I am not accepted, do I have to pay the deposit?

- Of course not. It is only for those admitted into the program.



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29. 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.