Northeastern University
Khoury College of Computer Sciences

PhD Program Frequently Asked Admissions Questions
Last updated 10/2026

This document is a collection of frequently asked questions from prospective PhD students and is intended to answer questions for prospective students interested in Khoury's PhD programs. The following information and resources apply to applicants who are interested in the three doctoral programs that are housed within Khoury College: PhD in Computer Science, PhD in Cybersecurity, and PhD in Personal Health Informatics. Applicants who are interested in the PhD in Network Science should reach out to the College of Social Sciences and Humanities, as the doctoral program is jointly administered by five colleges but housed in CSSH.

The Application

- **When is the application deadline?**
  - Khoury College's three PhD programs have a Fall admission cycle; students apply in December for admission into the subsequent Fall semester. There are no Spring nor Summer admission cycles. **The application deadline is 15 December for admission for the following fall.** Please refer to Khoury PhD Apply to learn more.
- **What are the required elements of an application?**
  - Applicants must submit an online application that includes transcripts from previous institutions; a statement of purpose; a resume; three letters of recommendation; and language scores for international students. Please refer to Khoury PhD Apply to learn more.
- **What is the required score on the TOEFL / IELTS?**
  - There is no minimum score required, but most successful applicants have a minimum score of 100 on TOEFL or 7.5 on IELTS. We accept both the at home edition of the TOEFL as well as the test center edition. Duolingo is not accepted. Please refer to Khoury PhD Apply.
- **Can the English proficiency test be waived?**
  - An exception can be made to the TOEFL/IELTS requirement if the student has received a bachelor's degree, master's, or PhD in a program where English is the medium of instruction. Proof that English is the medium of instruction is required. The medium of instruction being English can be listed on your transcript or another document provided by the University, such as a letter from said University. This document is not to be written by the student and documentation will be uploaded directly on the application / applicant portal and should not be emailed as an attachment. Emailed attachments will not be accepted. Please refer to Khoury PhD Apply.

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- **When must official transcripts and language examination results be provided?**
  - Official transcripts and language scores may be submitted after the student has been admitted and confirmed their enrollment to a given program. If official scores are unavailable before the application deadline, we strongly recommend that applicants submit unofficial transcripts and language examination results with their application, as missing documents will result in an "incomplete" application. Please refer to Khoury PhD Apply.
- **Is the GRE required?**
  - PhD applicants may apply with or without GRE test results. Applicants are not required by the university to supply GRE test results, although applicants may include unofficial copies of GRE scores voluntarily. Please refer to Khoury PhD Apply.
- **Is there a different admissions process for certain students, such as current Khoury master's students?**
  - No, the admissions process and requirements are the same for all applicants regardless of prior degree or current institution.
- **What is the application fee? Can the fee be waived?**
  - The application fee for Khoury PhD programs is $100. Students who attend one of our admission webinars will be provided with a fee waiver code, with which they can enter in the application to waive the application fee. Application fees already paid cannot be refunded. All prospective students, both international and domestic, are eligible for an application fee waiver if you attend an information session. Please refer to Khoury PhD Apply for dates of sessions.
  - How to use the application fee waiver code:
    - Navigate to the application information tab of the application
    - There is a question asking if you have an application fee waiver code
    - Select yes and input the code
- **What is the enrollment deposit fee? Can the fee be waived?**
  - The enrollment deposit fee is $100, which is paid toward student fees. The fee cannot be waived.
- **What should applicants put in the statement of purpose?**
  - The statement of purpose should address the question "Why do you want to earn a PhD in this particular field?" and include career goals and expected outcomes/benefits from the program; describe background and previous experience and how the applicant anticipates that to impact their work at Northeastern; technical experience, strengths, and areas that will need improvement; and evidence of prior research experience.
- **Who will review the application?**
  - An admissions committee consisting of program-specific faculty members evaluates all applications for admission to the program.

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- **Will an applicant be matched with a faculty advisor? Does an applicant need to have a specific faculty advisor mentioned in the application?**
  - All admitted students are assigned a faculty advisor upon admission; the faculty advisor is named in the offer of admission letter. Applicants are encouraged to be specific about their research interests as it relates to the research currently being done by Khoury faculty and current students.
- **How can an applicant learn more about a faculty member?**
  - Applicants can learn more about faculty members through our Khoury College Directory. Prospective students are welcome to email faculty to learn more about their research and whether they are currently recruiting PhD students. Please be advised that faculty members are not always able to respond to prospective students due to the volume of emails and interest that they receive. Applicants are also encouraged to learn more about faculty members by reading their research websites and most recent publications; as well as reach out to current Khoury PhD students to learn more about the research in each lab as well as the day-to-day life of a PhD student.
- **What are faculty looking for in a prospective student?**
  - Admission to a PhD program is quite different from admission to a bachelor's and even a master's program, and contingent upon a number of factors - but one of the most important being that there is a faculty mentor whose research interests align with the applicant's and who also has the funding to support a PhD student. Therefore, PhD faculty are looking for applicants who have some experience in research or whose interests align with theirs. Applicants are encouraged to learn more about faculty members through our Khoury College Directory, and by reading through faculty members research websites and recent publications.
- **Does Khoury have an accepted student's day?**
  - Yes, Khoury hosts a PhD Open House for accepted PhD students, usually in March. Please refer to this past 2026 Khoury College PhD Open House for an example.
- **Can admission be deferred?**
  - Admitted students may defer their offer of admission for up to one year. Admitted students who wish to defer their admission would need to coordinate this with their faculty advisor and with the College and should email Khoury-phdprograms@northeastern.edu to start the process.
- **Who should applicants contact if they still have questions?**
  - Applicants are welcome to reach out to Khoury-phdprograms@northeastern.edu with questions not answered here.

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The Programs

- **What doctoral programs does Khoury College offer?**
  - Khoury College is the home college for the doctoral programs in Computer Science, Cybersecurity, and Personal Health Informatics; and jointly administers the doctoral program in Network Science whose home college is the College of Social Sciences and Humanities.
- **Are the programs full-time, part-time, in-person, hybrid or online?**
  - Khoury College's doctoral programs are full-time and in-person only; there are no part-time nor online options.
- **What campuses are Khoury's PhD programs located on?**
  - All programs are located on our main campus in Boston. Some students may be admitted to our Portland, Maine campus if the faculty advisor is located there; Portland, Maine students begin in Boston and transfer for Portland after they reach Candidacy, generally 1-2 years.
- **Can students transfer to another Northeastern campus?**
  - Students can request to transfer to another Northeastern campus if they've reached Candidacy, generally after 1-2 years, and if their advisor is on ground at that specific campus.
- **How many classes do students take?**
  - Each of the three doctoral programs requires at least 48 Semester Hours (SH) of coursework. PhD students register for a full-time courseload of two 4 SH courses for a total of 8 SH each semester, including the Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters. *PHI students may register for one 3 SH and one 4 SH course for a total of 7 SH and still meet full-time registration criteria.*
- **Can students take online courses?**
  - Yes, students may take online courses depending on faculty advisor recommendations and visa eligibility. However, the majority of courses are offered on ground at our Boston campus.
- **What does a typical course load look like?**
  - Pre-candidacy PhD students generally take one 4 SH classroom course towards their coursework requirements and one 4 SH Readings course to work on research with their faculty advisor. After a student has achieved candidacy and has taken the 48 SH required by the program, students register for 0 credit dissertation classes, which confer full-time status and fulfill visa requirements for students here on a visa.
- **What is the average time to complete a doctoral degree at Khoury College?**
  - The average time to graduate from a Khoury College PhD program is 5-6 years.

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- **What are the program requirements?**
  - Please refer to the Northeastern Catalog for the program requirements for the PhD in Computer Science, PhD in Cybersecurity, and PhD in Personal Health Informatics.
- **What is included in Khoury's PhD funding package?**
  - Khoury College offers PhD students a five-year, three-part funding package that includes:
    - Coverage for the cost of the Northeastern University Student Health Plan;
    - Coverage for the cost of PhD tuition;
    - A stipend through a Stipended Graduate Assistantship appointment, a 20 hour per week Teaching or Research Assistant appointment; *$52,275 for the 2026-2027 Academic Year, or $17,425 per semester spread across the Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters*
    - For Research Assistant and Teaching Assistant positions, students are paid on the 15th and the last day of the month. There are 8 pay dates per semester, and taxes are withheld.
    - PhD funding does not include coverage for student fees, which are the responsibility of the student. A list of fees can be found here.
- **Do students hold Research Assistant or Teaching Assistant appointments?**
  - Yes, the majority of students are awarded Stipended Graduate Assistantship (SGA) appointments as either Research Assistants or Teaching Assistants. SGA appointments are typically 20 hours per week.
- **Is there a teaching requirement in these programs?**
  - All three PhD programs include a Teaching Requirement, wherein PhD students serve as either a Teaching Assistant or an Instructor of Record at least once, prior to their last semester. While serving as either a TA or Instructor of Record, the PhD student will teach at least three hours of classes; and prepare at least one assignment, or quiz, or equivalent.
- **Are fellowships available?**
  - Yes, students can be funded by fellowships instead of SGA appointments. There are a variety of fellowships available to Khoury PhD students and vary from fellowships awarded by the College to those awarded by companies and organizations external to the University. Please see Northeastern University's PhD Network Opportunities page and Khoury College's Graduate Student Recognition page for examples.
  - Fellowships are paid in two lump sums per semester and taxes are not withheld.
- **Can students transfer credit in from another institution?**

- Yes, credits can be transferred in and count towards Khoury's PhD program requirements. Please refer to Khoury College's full transfer of credit policy in Northeastern's Catalog.

- **What is Advanced Entry?**
  - Advanced Entry cannot be requested in the application; students must be admitted to the program and request Advanced Entry within their first semester. Advanced Entry is intended for students who are transferring into Khoury from another PhD program, usually because their advisor moved to Northeastern. If the student is not transferring into Khoury from another PhD program, then Advanced Entry wouldn't be recommended.
- **What if the student already has a master's degree?**
  - Students who already have a master's degree and / or work experience may be able to waive some of the required coursework and take elective coursework / spend more time doing research towards their dissertation. In the first semester, new students may waive required coursework with the help of their faculty advisor.
- **What are Readings courses?**
  - Readings courses are directed study courses that enable students to do research with their faculty advisor and count towards to overall 48 SH requirement. Generally, students take at least one 4 SH Readings course per semester, though they may choose two take two 4 SH sections in a given semester.
- **What is the PhD start-up funding?**
  - PhD Start-Up Funds are a one-time award of $5,000 from Khoury College that may be used for conferences, professional development, and research equipment. These funds are awarded at the mid-point of the first semester.
- **Do PhD students go on internships?**
  - Yes, many Khoury PhD students participate in internships. Internships mut be integral to the dissertation research and are approved by the faculty advisor and the College.

Further Resources

- **What other relevant offices are there at Northeastern?**
  - PhD students interact with a number of other offices including, but not limited to: the Registrar, the Office of Global Services, the PhD Network, Student Financial Services, and Disability Access Services
- **Who can assist international students with visa questions?**
  - The Office of Global Services is an active resource to Northeastern University's 20,000+ international students and scholars from 147+ different nations across the

world, and provide the professional expertise and support needed to maintain compliance through immigration, academic, and employment experiences.

- **Who should applicants contact if they still have questions?**
  - Applicants are welcome to reach out to Khoury-phdprograms@northeastern.edu.