

**Department of Geography & the Environment
Prospective Graduate Student
Frequently Asked Questions**

1. *What are the admission requirements and application deadlines?*

All graduate program admission requirements can be found on the Office of Graduate Education admissions website: <https://www.du.edu/academics/graduate-programs>.

Our on-campus programs (PhD, MA, and MSGIS) begin only in the Fall quarter (early September) each year. The priority application deadline is January 15 and final submission deadline is April 15. The online MSGIS program has quarterly matriculation dates and admission deadlines.

2. *Do I need to find a potential advisor before applying?*

Yes. Applicants to the on-campus graduate programs are STRONGLY encouraged to reach out directly to professors with common research interests. Establishing a relationship with a potential advisor and beginning to formulate a research thesis/dissertation/project idea can be very beneficial in the application process.

3. *Could you connect me to faculty members who are accepting new students for the next academic year?*

All applicants should contact potential supervisors directly. The full list of our faculty members and their research interests can be found at the following link: <https://science.du.edu/geography/content/geography-faculty-staff>.

4. *I have contacted Professor “ABC” and they have still not responded after many weeks. What do I do?*

If you’ve contacted many professors and haven’t received a response, don’t panic - this is very common. Professors receive a large volume of emails and many are away over extended periods conducting fieldwork. If your email is long or generic, it may get ignored. Make sure your message is concise. A strong email should clearly state *why* you’re interested in a given faculty member’s work. Attach the right materials (e.g., an updated CV, transcript, one relevant published paper/project link, etc.). If you haven’t heard back in 10 - 14 days, send a polite follow-up. Don’t send repeated follow-ups - one is enough. If you still don’t hear back, it may be a sign that the faculty member is not accepting any new students.

5. *What funding opportunities are available?*

Each year our department has a limited number of Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) positions. GTA award benefits include tuition waiver, a monthly stipend, and health care coverage. These positions are competitive, and awards are given based on the quality of the applicant and alignment of research interests with our department.

For non-native English speakers, there is an additional English speaking minimum requirement for Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) positions. Please consult the Office of Graduate Education admissions website for more information: <https://www.du.edu/graduate-education/admission/international-students/requirements-deadlines>.

On occasion Graduate Research Assistantships (GRA) opportunities are available directly from faculty members for a specific research project.

Other financial aid inquiries should be directed to the Financial Aid office.

6. *Do I need a separate application for Graduate Teaching Assistantship?*

In general, no. You will be considered for any available departmental funding awards when you apply for graduate study, and a separate application is not required. Graduate Teaching Assistantship positions are extremely competitive, and awards are given based on the overall quality of the application, including strong recommendation letters, GPA, and alignment of research interests with our department.

7. *How many Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) awards are given each year?*

Available GTA positions vary from year to year and can range from 1 to 7 awards per year.

8. *How much is the stipend for Graduate Teaching Assistants?*

The amount varies from year to year. Below are the figures for the 2024-2025 academic year:

MA Stipend	= \$22,663
MSGIS	= \$22,663
PhD	= \$25,775

9. *Are GRE scores required for admission to the graduate programs?*

No. GRE scores are no longer required.

10. *Can my application fee be waived?*

The Department of Geography and the Environment is unable to waive application fees. If you are in communication with a faculty member who may potentially serve as your advisor, that faculty member can make a special request on your behalf for the fee to be covered. Such requests can only be considered if: 1) you have established relationship with a faculty member who will serve as your advisor, and 2) you meet all the requirements for admission to the graduate school, including English language requirements for Graduate Teaching Assistantships.

11. *Could you provide an estimated timeline for when the admission decisions will be released?*

Below is the time frame you can expect from our department:

- Priority application deadline for incoming fall quarter students is January 15 each year.
- Applications will begin to be reviewed by faculty committee in mid-February.
- Decision letters go out late-February/early-March for priority applicants.
- Accepted applicants have until April 15 to accept or deny admission.
- April 16: Regular applicants will begin to receive decision letters.
- April 16 through about mid-August: We continue to send decision letters.

12. Are Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) paid in the summer?

No, GTAs are not paid in the summer. All GTA awards are for 9 months, starting from September 1 each year. The first paycheck is received on October 1 and the last paycheck on June 1.

13. Are there any Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) opportunities in the summer?

Yes, there are very limited GTA opportunities in the summer. These opportunities require a separate application that should be submitted to the Graduate Program Director in late May. Students need to be in good academic standing and be making satisfactory progress toward their degree before they are considered for these limited opportunities. All summer GTAs should be prepared to be on campus in person for instructional activities. A summer GTA award may be canceled if a course does not meet the minimum enrollment requirement.

14. I noticed in the Graduate Handbook that Graduate Teaching Assistantships can be renewed for up to four years for PhD students and two years for Masters students. What is the likelihood of renewal, assuming I maintain good academic standing and perform well as a GTA?

If you maintain good academic standing and perform well as a GTA, there should be no problem renewing your GTA award. GTAs are evaluated at the end of every quarter using a three-point scale: (3) Excellent, (2) Satisfactory, and (1) Poor. At the very least, we expect all GTAs to receive a “satisfactory” score. If a GTA consistently receives a “poor” score, the award may be withdrawn.

15. Could you provide more details about any specific guidelines for credit transfer?

The following link has information on the University of Denver’s Transfer of Credit Policy and Guidelines:

<https://bulletin.du.edu/graduate/academic-requirements-policies-and-procedures/transfer-of-credit/>

16. What are career placement opportunities after completing a graduate program in Geography at the University of Denver? Could you share insights into the types of positions that graduates of the program typically secure? Additionally, is the program geared more toward academic or non-academic career paths?

Our programs are geared toward both academic and non-academic career paths. It entirely depends on the aspirations of each student. If you are interested in a teaching or tenure-track position, we will prepare you for that. If you want to pursue a non-academic career, we will also prepare you for that. We have had students who have moved on to work with Federal Organizations, County Offices, Non-Profit Entities, etc. For academic jobs, our students have secured tenure-track positions at the following institutions: Colorado State University, Oklahoma State University, University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, Mount Holyoke College, University of Colorado-Boulder, Metropolitan State University of Denver, and Texas Tech University. Our PhD graduates have also secured post-doc positions at Columbia University, Oak Ridge National Lab, etc.

17. *On average, how long do PhD candidates take to complete the program?*

The PhD program is designed to be completed in four years. In the past few years, many students have been able to finish within this time frame, while others have taken 5 to 6 years.

18. *Who should write my recommendation letters?*

Letters of recommendation should come from academic or professional references who know you well and are qualified to evaluate your potential for graduate study. It is strongly recommended that at least one of these letters be from a university professor familiar with your academic work.

19. *I have reviewed this FAQ document and the application checklist, but I still have questions. Who should I contact?*

If you have any questions to which answers can't be found here, please email our Director of Graduate Programs, Professor Hanson Nyantakyi-Frimpong (hnyanta2@du.edu).