

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 to the MSGIS, MA, and PhD programs?***

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. ***How do I know which faculty members are accepting new students?***

Faculty members with the following titles can accept MA and PhD students: Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor. Other titles, such as Teaching Assistant Professor, Teaching Associate Professor, Teaching Professor, and Professor of Practice, do not advise MA and PhD students but can accept MSGIS students. You may email faculty members to ask if they are considering taking on new advisees during the next application cycle. Most are, but some faculty members may take a year off from admitting new students due to their current advising load.

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

If you have contacted a professor and have not received a response, do not panic. Professors receive a large volume of emails daily, and many are away for extended periods teaching travel courses or conducting fieldwork abroad, often in remote locations with limited internet access. If your email is long or generic, it may get ignored. Make sure your message is concise. A strong email should be professional and clearly state why you are interested in a given faculty member’s work. Attach the right materials (e.g., an updated CV, transcript, one relevant published article/project link, etc.). If you have not heard back within 10 to 14 days, send a polite follow-up. Do not send repeated follow-ups. If you still do not hear back, it may be a sign that the faculty member is not accepting new students. Also, please note that some faculty members may take a year off from admitting new students due to their current advising load.

6. ***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.

7. ***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.

8. ***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.

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

The amount varies from year to year. Below are the figures for the 2025-2026 academic year:

MA Stipend	= \$23,232
MSGIS Stipend	= \$23,232
PhD Stipend	= \$26,548

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

No. GRE scores are no longer required.

11. ***Can my application fee be waived?***

The Department of Geography & the Environment cannot 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 a professional 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.

12. ***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.

13. ***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.

14. *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.

15. *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.

16. *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/>

17. *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 each student's aspirations. 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 Colorado State University, Oklahoma State University, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Mount Holyoke College, the University of Colorado Boulder, Metropolitan State University of Denver, and Texas Tech University, among others. Our PhD graduates have also secured postdoctoral or research positions at Columbia University, Seattle University, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and other institutions.

18. *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 completed within this timeframe, while a few have taken 5 or more years.

19. *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 studies. It is strongly recommended that at least one of these letters be from a university professor familiar with your academic work.

20. *I'm an international student and would like to bring my family to Denver. Could you provide more information on the visa application process and housing options for students with family?*

For all questions regarding visas and housing for international students, please contact the University of Denver's International Student and Scholar Services (iss@du.edu ; 303-871-4912): <https://internationalization.du.edu/iss>

21. *Have you ever had any international students in your graduate programs?*

Yes, we've had international students who have enrolled and successfully completed degrees in MSGIS, MA, and PhD. In the past few years, international students have come from Australia, Bangladesh, China, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua, and Nigeria, among other countries.

22. *Are your graduate programs designated as STEM?*

Yes, our MSGIS, MA, and PhD programs all currently have a STEM designation.

23. *Can I view some past dissertations?*

Yes, you can browse our student dissertations on the DU Digital Commons website: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/> . Search by using the keyword "geography."

24. *What is the fastest time (in quarters) that I would be able to complete the MA or MSGIS program as a full-time student with no transfer credits?*

6 quarters (two years)

25. Can you please provide a general ballpark range for all-in tuition (without financial assistance)?

You can find this information by using the DU tuition calculator. See the following link:
<https://www.du.edu/admission-aid/financial-aid-scholarships/graduate-financial-aid/cost-attend-du/tuition-fees> .

If you still have questions, please contact DU Student Billing (studentbilling@du.edu)

26. Are any of the required courses only offered in particular quarters?

Yes,

- GEOG 4000: Fundamental Geographic Perspective – offered only in the Fall Quarter
- GEOG 3000: Advanced Geographic Statistics – offered only in the Winter Quarter
- GEOG 4020: Geographic Research Design – offered only in the Spring Quarter

27. I'm a prospective international student. Can the University or Department of Geography waive the International Degree Evaluation Fee?

If you earned your degree outside the U.S., your transcripts and proof of degree will be reviewed by a third-party credential evaluator once your application is complete. This service has a non-refundable fee that unfortunately can't be waived.

28. I understand that the MSGIS program has no thesis requirement, but can students who complete this degree go on to do a PhD?

Yes, students who have completed the MSGIS program have been able to gain admission to top PhD programs in the country and abroad.

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

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

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