



FAQs for Prospective Geography and Geoinformation Science Students

What are the admission requirements for a specific graduate program?

Please visit the university [Graduate Admission Policies](#) in the University Catalog, which is the final authority on all relevant policies.

For specific program requirements, please visit our department's [Graduate Program](#) web site and then choose the program in which you are interested. Then, you will be led to the corresponding pages in the University Catalog for more information on admission requirements

Do I need to take the GRE to be admitted to one of your graduate programs?

The GRE is not required for the admission of any of GGS' graduate programs. However, the GRE is encouraged for those who are looking for financial support. GRE scores provide additional insight into a student's academic background so that faculty can gain a fuller picture of your candidacy. We do not have any specific minimum score requirements for financial support. We expect students seeking GTA/GRA support to have strong quantitative scores.

A special note: if you find any web site saying GRE is needed for our graduate program, it is a legacy issue. We have contacted University officials about this issue.

Where can I find information on tuition?

Tuition and fees are set at the University level and change from year to year. Please visit the [Approved Tuition & Fees](#) page for current information. All our programs are listed under the College of Science.

Where should I start my application?

You may find all necessary regarding the application process at <https://www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid/how-apply>

Can I have the application fee waived?

Neither GGS nor the College of Science can provide fee waivers at this time.

What is the requirement on English Proficiency?

English language proficiency is required for all international graduate applicants. You may visit:

<https://www.gmu.edu/admissions-aid/apply-now/how-apply/international/english-proficiency-requirements> to find details on the minimum scores and waivers for students who have graduated from specific countries.

May I have my English Proficiency requirement waived?

The **English Proficiency** requirements are set by the University. GGS is unable to waive this requirement. You may contact either the [College of Science Graduate Admission Office](#) or the [University Graduate Admission Office](#).

If you are studying at a U.S. institution and you are expecting to graduate with a U.S. degree in the coming semester, University policy states that you must provide an **“updated transcript showing that you are currently enrolled along with your anticipated date of degree conferral required for INEV/TOEFL waivers.”**

Could you help me with questions about my transcript(s) (unofficial or evaluation)?

Transcript evaluation is done at the University level and academic departments are not involved. You may contact the [College of Science Graduate Admission Office](#) or the [University Graduate Admission Office](#).

Application Deadlines and Start Time

The University posted application deadlines are for reference purposes only. Applications for GGS graduate programs are reviewed on a rolling basis. Although most of our students enroll for the fall semester, we enroll for fall, spring, and summer terms. Please note that course offerings are quite limited during the

summer term. You can view the [University Calendar](#) to learn more about anticipated start dates for each semester.

Could you answer my questions about visa requirements?

Please contact the [Office of International Programs and Services \(OIPS\)](#) for visa-related questions.

Can I apply to a graduate certificate program and get a visa as an international student?

Please contact the [Office of International Programs and Services \(OIPS\)](#).

Can I get my certificate or degree fully online?

Presently, GGS offers graduate courses in-person and online on a rotating basis. While students can complete a certificate or MS degree fully online, they should expect it to take longer than if they were attending classes in person.

With that said, please note that individual instructors may choose their preferred teaching style (online or in-person or hybrid) for each semester. Therefore, we cannot guarantee any course will be offered online in a specific time frame.

If a student only needs one course to graduate and the course is not available online in the coming semester, a substitute course could be considered.

Special notes on joint programs:

If you are interested in a joint program, Earth System Science (ESS) MS or Environmental GIS and Biodiversity Conservation (CONS) graduate certificate, you should contact the corresponding department for CONS/EVPP or AOES (CLIM/GEOL) courses. The points of contact are:

ESS: Dr. Geoffrey J Gilleaudeau, ggilleau@gmu.edu

CONS: Dr. Joseph Kolowski, kolowskij@si.edu

May I take courses without formal admission?

Yes, it is possible. Please check the University policy on this at [AP.6.4.1 Non-degree Student Status](#). Please note the limitation for transferring non-degree credits to a certificate or a degree.

What is the academic background of students in your program?

Our graduate student population is incredibly diverse. We have students in our programs from all educational backgrounds. Some students are very familiar with geography, geospatial sciences, and data sciences, while others may have only taken one or no courses in our field.

What are the employment statistics of your graduates?

Unfortunately, we do not have exact data on employment for our recent graduate students. We do not have a good system to track that. Many of our students pursue their MS degree while also working full time.

Can you provide me with the contact information of current students or recent graduates?

Given student protections under FERPA, we are not able to share the contact information of current students or graduates. There are some university/college/department events where you may be able to meet current students or graduates. We will update the information on this page when we have more specific information regarding these events.

Is there preference given in the admission process for those students who apply for full-time status?

No. We accept part-time and full-time students in all our graduate programs.

How do I determine my student status (part-time or full-time)?

Graduate students are considered full-time if they are enrolled in at least 9 graduate credits per semester or hold a full-time assistantship (total 20 hours a week) and are enrolled in at least 6 graduate credits per semester. Graduate students are considered half-time if they are enrolled in at least 4.5 graduate credits per semester. For details, please visit the [University Catalog, AP 6.2.](#)

What will happen if I miss one or two required course(s) for admission?

Students missing one or more course requirements are still given full consideration in our admission process. If a student is missing suggested background coursework, they may receive a conditional admission offer. Conditional admission requires that a student receive a B or better for the first

few courses or to take specific course(s). Provisional admission is not offered to international applicants.

The academic requirements for admission at the department level are the same for domestic students and international students. However, the University has policies on **English Proficiency** and **International Transcript Evaluation** that are not controlled by the department.

May I carry my graduate credits from other institutions to my graduate program in your department?

Yes, University policy allows graduate credit transfer from other qualified institutions. The department follows the University policy described in the University Catalog: [AP.6.5.2 Transfer of Credits](#). The key points are: graduate credits are eligible for credit at Mason if those credits have been earned within the past 10 years; a student must have earned a B- or better for a course to be eligible for credit. We strongly recommend you read the full transfer of credits policy linked above.

Can you offer suggestions for my Goals Statement?

The statement is for the University and faculty to know you better. Most statements include a brief self-introduction of related background, why you are interested in the program to which you are applying, your career goal and how the degree will help you achieve this goal. For PhD statement, please state your research interest and identify the fields and related faculty members with whom you share common interest.

Whom should I ask for letters of recommendation?

Your recommendations should preferably come from faculty who have taught you or worked with you in your current program. These letters should speak to your performance in your current program of study (grades, classroom presence/participation, etc.), your research potential (applicable to PhD program only), and why you are suited for the target graduate program. Some recommendation letters do address personality for potential teamwork.

Can I apply for the PhD directly with BA/BS degree only?

Although most students with BS/BA will apply for an MS program first before the PhD program, we do accept PhD students with BS/BA only. The application procedures are the same as for those with a master's degree.

The department prefers that applicants to our PhD program have completed a master's degree. However, if a student prefers to apply for PhD admission without an MS degree, we will still consider the application.

The advantage of applying for the PhD program directly from a BA/BS program is that the chance to get financial support may be a little higher than that of MS students, especially if you have contact with faculty members who share mutual research interest and are looking for students. The disadvantage is that you will not be eligible to transfer any credits into the program and therefore will need to be mindful of the time limit to complete your coursework and research.

What are the differences among the 3 MS programs?

The *MS in Earth Systems Science* (ESS, offered jointly with the Department of Atmospheric, Oceanic and Earth Sciences) provides a global systems approach to the study of the atmosphere, hydrosphere and lithosphere. The degree emphasizes the observation and quantitative analysis of earth systems. The *MS in Geographic and Cartographic Sciences* (GECA) focuses on techniques to compile, display and analyze spatial data. The *MS in Geoinformatics and Geospatial Intelligence* (Geol) focuses primarily on computational approaches that support the synthesis and analysis of diverse spatial data types to identify and monitor complex events and phenomena that manifest themselves over space and time.

May I apply to more than one graduate program at the same time?

According to the [University Catalog \(AP 6.8.1\)](#), students may be enrolled in one graduate certificate program while also pursuing a master's or doctoral degree. However, simultaneous multiple program applications may complicate the application process and should be avoided. Students admitted into a master's or PhD program may add a graduate certificate after they start the program.

Students not admitted to any graduate degree program (master's or doctoral) may be admitted to two graduate certificate programs at the same time. The graduation application for each graduate certificate must include at least 12 credits that apply only to that certificate, not to another.

Do I need permission to list a potential advisor?

No. During your application, you should identify one or more faculty members with whom you like to work. Those faculty members are your potential assigned advisor if you are admitted to the program. You may change your advisor after you join us for funding support, for research areas or for any other reason. You should find faculty information at [College of Science web site](#). It is not necessary to contact faculty members to put their names on the application.

What kind of financial support opportunities are available?

We have two types of support, GTA and GRA. The GTAs will be assigned by the department based on credential, availability, and needs. GRAs are independently determined by individual faculty members. The decision on GRA financial support is determined by individual faculty on a case-by-case basis. Some students may obtain funding well after admission depending on new funding availability or position openings. However, there is no guarantee of funding after admission. Most financial support is given to full time students pursuing a PhD degree, although we do support a few MS students with GTAs.

Although most funding is awarded at the start of the academic year in the fall semester, occasionally, new opportunities may appear for the spring semester.

What special application materials should I submit for financial support opportunities?

No special application materials are needed with your admission application for financial support except you need to indicate your interest in financial support. Before your application is complete, no financial support will be considered.

Since the needs of GTAs are determined near the start time of a semester, existing or admitted students should apply for a GTA position by following [this link](#) during the Spring semester. Please note that the GTA application is usually available in late February/early March.

You may also contact individual faculty members for GRA opportunities. The faculty members who need GRAs may be willing to respond to inquiries, but they cannot guarantee any type of support before your admission.

Do I still have chance to receive financial support if such support was not granted with the admission?

The department tries to provide financial support for all highly qualified students; however, we simply cannot guarantee that financial support will be available after admission.

Could you help me to check my application status?

All inquiries regarding the completion status of your application should be directed to the [College of Science Graduate Office](#) or the [University Graduate Admissions](#); 703-993-9700.

If you are notified that your application is complete, you may contact us to check your status. Please note that we need time to review your application and make our admission decision. Most applications take at least 4 weeks to be reviewed, and some applications may take longer.

Can I defer my admission to the following semester?

Yes. With a reasonable reason, you may defer your admission. Please visit <https://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/graduate-policies/#text> and click the [Deferred Application Decision Pending Additional Coursework](#) for details on how to start that process. Since the deferral is not determined by GGS, you should address additional questions on this to either [University Graduate Admissions](#) or the [College of Science Graduate Office](#).