GEOGRAPHY, MS

The Department of Geography is a leader in the field of geography and offers exceptional opportunities for graduate education. The department has been consistently rated as one of the best in the country and for over 100 years has been the training ground for generations of geographers. The department's strength is reflected in its ability to attract top-caliber students, compete for significant research funding, and publish foundational scholarly work. The department maintains strength across the full spectrum of subfields within the discipline and is organized into four major thematic areas: physical geography and earth system science, people and environment, human geography, and cartography/GIS.

Department faculty and graduate students represent a diverse community within which a wide range of perspectives, approaches, and research strategies are accommodated. The faculty has long been recognized nationally and internationally for outstanding contributions to geography and beyond. Many graduate students have gone on to prominence within government, industry, and academia, and some of the most influential names in geography received their training in Madison.

The department offers two masters of science in geography (thesis option): a master of science in geography and a master of science in cartography and geographic information systems.

Graduate students at the MS level are expected to acquire a broad foundation in geography in addition to specializing in one or more areas of concentration. Students who earn the MS (Thesis) degree are prepared to continue on for the PhD or for positions in government agencies, planning organizations, environmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and private industry.

The department takes in roughly 10–15 new graduate students each year. In recent years, about half of all incoming graduate students have completed an undergraduate major in a subject other than geography.

FACILITIES

Housed in historic Science Hall, the Department of Geography offers exceptional facilities for advanced study in geography, cartography, and GIS. The department maintains the University Cartographic Laboratory, the Arthur Robinson Map and Air Photo Library, a computer lab, several computer classrooms, and laboratory facilities specializing in biogeography, biogeochemistry, paleoecology, geomorphology, and soil research. In addition, the building houses the Wisconsin State Cartographer's Office, the History of Cartography Project, and the Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies.

Graduate students may supplement their work in the geography department with study in other departments of the university, and there are frequent opportunities for advanced work in interdepartmental seminars. The location of the state capital at Madison makes possible easy contact with state agencies and some federal agencies.

ADMISSIONS

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Please consult the table below for key information about this degree program's admissions requirements. The program may have more detailed admissions requirements, which can be found below the table or on the program's website.

Graduate admissions is a two-step process between academic programs and the Graduate School. ***Applicants must meet* the minimum requirements (https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/) *of the Graduate School as well as the program(s).*** Once you have researched the graduate program(s) you are interested in, apply online (https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/).

Requirements	Detail
Fall Deadline	December 15
Spring Deadline	The program does not admit in the spring.
Summer Deadline	The program does not admit in the summer.
GRE (Graduate Record Examinations)	Not required.
English Proficiency Test	Refer to the Graduate School: Minimum Requirements for Admission policy: https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241 (https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241/).
Other Test(s) (e.g., GMAT, MCAT)	n/a
Letters of Recommendation Required	3

BREADTH REQUIREMENTS

This program requires admitted applicants to have taken coursework in several areas of Geography to show breadth of knowledge in the field. Most admitted applicants have completed the coursework for the breadth requirements prior to entering the program. Admitted applicants must have completed the equivalent of one undergraduate-level course in each subarea (Earth Systems Geography, Human Geography, People-Environment Geography, Cartography/GIS). Admitted applicants who begin the program lacking one or more of the breadth courses are expected to complete such coursework during the master's program. Courses taken for breadth can also be used to fulfill degree requirements.

GRADUATE SCHOOL APPLICATION

If the applicant's primary sub-area specialization is Cartography/GIS, please apply to the Cartography and GIS MS-Thesis program, not the Geography MS program.

Refer to the following links:

- Consult the Graduate School Admissions website (https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/) for information about applying to the UW-Madison Graduate School, including general admissions requirements (https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/).
- Please see the Geography Department web pages for prospective graduate students (https://geography.wisc.edu/research-graduate-programs/prospective-graduate-students/) for additional details about the program and the application process.

Materials

Upload the following to the online application:

- Three letters of recommendation (https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/#FAQ). The Graduate School will contact recommenders directly via e-mail once applicant enters information in the application. Be sure to

contact each recommender ahead of time to let them know that they will be contacted directly by the Graduate School.

- Statement of purpose. For more information, check out our guidelines for writing a statement of purpose on our prospective student site (https://geography.wisc.edu/research-graduate-programs/prospective-graduate-students/#admissions-and-application-information).
- CV
- Unofficial transcripts
- International degree-seeking applicants will need to demonstrate English proficiency. See the Graduate School requirements (https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/) for specific information.
- The online application to the Geography MS includes a "supplemental application" in which applicants are asked to identify primary sub-area specialization (Earth Systems Geography, Human Geography, People/Environment Geography). Applicants may also identify faculty with whom they wish to work, as well as three areas of (topical and/or geographic) interest.
- Submit the online Graduate School Application for Admission (https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/) and pay the application fee.

FUNDING

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GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

The Bursar's Office provides information about tuition and fees (https://bursar.wisc.edu/tuition-and-fees/) associated with being a graduate student. Resources to help you afford graduate study might include assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, and financial aid. Further funding information (https://grad.wisc.edu/funding/) is available from the Graduate School. Be sure to check with your program for individual policies and restrictions related to funding.

PROGRAM RESOURCES

See "How Does Funding Work?" at the Geography Master's FAQ (https://geography.wisc.edu/graduate/graduate-programs-faq/).

REQUIREMENTS

MINIMUM GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Review the Graduate School minimum degree requirements (https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#requirementstext) and policies (https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiestext), in addition to the program requirements listed below.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

MODE OF INSTRUCTION

Face to Face	Evening/ Weekend	Online	Hybrid	Accelerated
Yes	No	No	No	No

Mode of Instruction Definitions

Accelerated: Accelerated programs are offered at a fast pace that condenses the time to completion. Students typically take enough credits aimed at completing the program in a year or two.

Evening/Weekend: Courses meet on the UW–Madison campus only in evenings and/or on weekends to accommodate typical business schedules. Students have the advantages of face-to-face courses with the flexibility to keep work and other life commitments.

Face-to-Face: Courses typically meet during weekdays on the UW-Madison Campus.

Hybrid: These programs combine face-to-face and online learning formats. Contact the program for more specific information.

Online: These programs are offered 100% online. Some programs may require an on-campus orientation or residency experience, but the courses will be facilitated in an online format.

CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

Requirement	Detail
Minimum Credit Requirement	30 credits
Minimum Residence Credit Requirement	16 credits
Minimum Graduate Coursework Requirement	15 credits must be graduate-level coursework. Refer to the Graduate School: Minimum Graduate Coursework (50%) Requirement policy: https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244 (https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244/).
Overall Graduate GPA Requirement	3.00 GPA required. Refer to the Graduate School: Grade Point Average (GPA) Requirement policy: https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1203 (https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1203/).
Other Grade Requirements	n/a
Assessments and Examinations	A formal thesis is required.
Language Requirements	No language requirement.

REQUIRED COURSES

Code	Title	Credits
Core		
Students must complete the following courses.		
GEOG 765	Geographical Inquiry and Analysis: An Introduction	1
GEOG 766	Geographical Inquiry and Analysis: Techniques	3
Two geography (GEOG) graduate courses numbered 300 and above [1]		6
Seminars		
Students must complete one (3-credit) geography seminar numbered 900 with a core or affiliate Geography faculty member. See list of options below.		3
Additional Coursework		

In consultation with advisor, students must complete coursework to reach the minimum of 30 credit requirement.	17
Total Credits	**30**

Geography Seminars

Code	Title	Credits
GEOG 900		1-3
GEOG 901	Seminar in Cultural Geography	2-3
GEOG 918	Seminar in Political Geography	2-3
GEOG 920	Seminar in Physical Geography	1-3
GEOG 930	Seminar in People-Environment Geography	2-3
GEOG 970	Seminar in Geographic Information Science	1-3

POLICIES

GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICIES

The UW-Madison Policy Library (https://policy.wisc.edu/) reflects the Graduate School's official policies relevant to graduate students. Programs may set more stringent policies than the Graduate School. Policies set by the academic degree program can be found below.

MAJOR-SPECIFIC POLICIES

PRIOR COURSEWORK

Graduate Credits Earned at Other Institutions

With program approval, students are allowed to transfer no more than 6 credits of graduate coursework from other institutions. Coursework earned ten or more years prior to admission to a master's degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

Undergraduate Credits Earned at Other Institutions or UW-Madison

No credits from an undergraduate degree are allowed to transfer toward the degree.

Credits Earned as a Professional Student at UW-Madison (Law, Medicine, Pharmacy, and Veterinary careers)

Refer to the Graduate School: Transfer Credits for Prior Coursework (https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1216/) policy.

Credits Earned as a University Special Student at UW–Madison

With program approval, students are allowed to transfer no more than 6 credits of graduate coursework as defined above taken as a UW–Madison Special student. Coursework earned ten or more years prior to admission to a master's degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

PROBATION

The Department of Geography expects graduate students to progress through a sequence of benchmarks within prescribed time periods. These benchmarks constitute a reasonable rate of accomplishment for full-time students holding teaching or research appointments. The department recognizes that individual circumstances vary, and not all students progressing toward their academic goals will hit the benchmarks exactly. Thus a student's progress is considered unsatisfactory only after a period of time elapses following an unmet benchmark. A student not making satisfactory progress is placed on probation. For detailed information about these benchmarks and triggers for probationary status, see the department's Criteria for Satisfactory Progress (https://geography.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Criteria-for-Satisfactory-Progress.pdf).

ADVISOR / COMMITTEE

The chair (or co-chair) of a master's student's committee is the student's advisor. This individual must be graduate faculty in Geography or affiliated with Geography. The committee must have at least three members, two of whom must be graduate faculty (or former graduate faculty up to one year after resignation/retirement). Two of the three members must be affiliated with the Geography Department. The third member may be a qualified individual from within or outside UW-Madison. Inclusion of committee members who are not UW-Madison graduate faculty must be approved by the student's advisor.

CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED

15 credit maximum. Refer to the Graduate School: Maximum Credit Loads and Overload Requests (https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1228/) policy.

TIME LIMITS

For program-specific time limits, please see Probation Policy above. Refer to the Graduate School: Time Limits (https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1221/) policy.

GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS

These resources may be helpful in addressing your concerns:

- Bias or Hate Reporting (https://doso.students.wisc.edu/bias-or-hate-reporting/)
- Graduate Assistantship Policies and Procedures (https://hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp/#grievance-procedure)
- Hostile and Intimidating Behavior Policies and Procedures (https://hr.wisc.edu/hib/)
  - Office of the Provost for Faculty and Staff Affairs (https://facstaff.provost.wisc.edu/)
- Employee Assistance (http://www.eao.wisc.edu/) (for personal counseling and workplace consultation around communication and conflict involving graduate assistants and other employees, post-doctoral students, faculty and staff)
- Employee Disability Resource Office (https://employeedisabilities.wisc.edu/) (for qualified employees or applicants with disabilities to have equal employment opportunities)
- Graduate School (https://grad.wisc.edu/) (for informal advice at any level of review and for official appeals of program/departmental or school/college grievance decisions)
- Office of Compliance (https://compliance.wisc.edu/) (for class harassment and discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence)
- Office Student Assistance and Support (OSAS) (https://osas.wisc.edu/) (for all students to seek grievance assistance and support)
- Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/) (for conflicts involving students)
- Ombuds Office for Faculty and Staff (http://www.ombuds.wisc.edu/) (for employed graduate students and post-docs, as well as faculty and staff)

- Title IX (https://compliance.wisc.edu/titleix/) (for concerns about discrimination)

L&S POLICY FOR GRADUATE STUDENT ACADEMIC APPEALS

Graduate students have the right to appeal an academic decision related to an L&S graduate program if the student believes that the decision is inconsistent with published policy.

Academic decisions that may be appealed include:

- Dismissal from the graduate program
- Failure to pass a qualifying or preliminary examination
- Failure to achieve satisfactory academic progress
- Academic disciplinary action related to failure to meet professional conduct standards

Issues such as the following cannot be appealed using this process:

- A faculty member declining to serve as a graduate student's advisor.
- Decisions regarding the student's disciplinary knowledge, evaluation of the quality of work, or similar judgements. These are the domain of the department faculty.
- Course grades. These can be appealed instead using the L&S Policy for Grade Appeal (https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/22258/).
- Incidents of bias or hate, hostile and intimidating behavior (https://hr.wisc.edu/hib/), or discrimination (Title IX (https://compliance.wisc.edu/titleix/), Office of Compliance (https://compliance.wisc.edu/eo-complaint/formal-investigations/)). Direct these to the linked campus offices appropriate for the incident(s).

Appeal Process for Graduate Students

A graduate student wishing to appeal an academic decision must follow the process in the order listed below. Note time limits within each step.

1. The student should first seek informal resolution, if possible, by discussing the concern with their academic advisor, the department's Director of Graduate Studies, and/or the department chair.
2. If the program has an appeal policy listed in their graduate program handbook, the student should follow the policy as written, including adhering to any indicated deadlines. In the absence of a specific departmental process, the chair or designee will be the reviewer and decision maker, and the student should submit a written appeal to the chair within 15 business days of the academic decision. The chair or designee will notify the student in writing of their decision.
3. If the departmental process upholds the original decision, the graduate student may next initiate an appeal to L&S. To do so, the student must submit a written appeal to the L&S Assistant Dean for Graduate Student Academic Affairs within 15 business days of notification of the department's decision.
    a. To the fullest extent possible, the written appeal should include, in a single document: a clear and concise statement of the academic decision being appealed, any relevant background on what led to the decision, the specific policies involved, the relief sought, any relevant documentation related to the departmental appeal, and the names and titles of any individuals contributing to or involved in the decision.
    b. The Assistant Dean will work with the Academic Associate Dean of the appropriate division to consider the appeal. They may seek additional information and/or meetings related to the case.
    c. The Assistant Dean and Academic Associate Dean will provide a written decision within 20 business days.
4. If L&S upholds the original decision, the graduate student may appeal to the Graduate School. More information can be found on their website: Grievances and Appeals (https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/grievances-and-appeals/) (see: Graduate School Appeal Process).

OTHER

n/a

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

Take advantage of the Graduate School's professional development resources (https://grad.wisc.edu/professional-development/) to build skills, thrive academically, and launch your career.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

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1. Articulates, critiques, or elaborates the concepts, theories, methods, and/or approaches to design and inquiry in Geography.
2. Identifies sources, assembles evidence, and/or builds justification for addressing questions or challenges in Geography.
3. Demonstrates understanding of Geography in a historical, social, global, and/or technological context.
4. Selects and/or utilizes the most appropriate methods, technological solutions, and practices to address challenges in Geography.
5. Analyzes, synthesizes, and evaluates information pertaining to questions or challenges in Geography and related fields.
6. Communicates clearly in written, verbal, and visual ways appropriate to Geography.
7. Demonstrates state-of-the-art technical skills relevant to future careers.
8. Recognizes and applies principles of ethical and professional conduct expected in Geography.