

Doctor of Philosophy in Geography

The Ph.D. program is for students interested in research, teaching opportunities, careers with NGOs, the corporate world, government consulting, and more. The program offers courses that allow for areas of focus in human geography, notably geopolitical and socioenvironmental issues; the regional geography of various world regions, ; geographic information science (including cartography and remote sensing); and physical/environmental geography. Students receive training in contemporary theoretical perspectives and methodologies in order to conduct independent research. The program includes courses, seminars, individual research and reading, and preparation of a dissertation. Although no “outside minor” is formally required of candidates, the department favors study in related disciplines. Learn more about our faculty (<http://geog.ku.edu/faculty/>) on our website.

Admission to Graduate Studies

Admission Requirements

- All applicants must meet the requirements outlined in the Admission to Graduate Study (<https://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/admission-to-graduate-study/>) policy.
- Bachelor’s degree: A copy of official transcripts showing proof of a bachelor’s degree (and any post-bachelor’s coursework or degrees) from a regionally accredited institution, or a foreign university with equivalent bachelor’s degree requirements is required.
- English proficiency: Proof of English proficiency (<https://gradapply.ku.edu/english-requirements/>) for non-native or non-native-like English speakers is required. There are two bands of English proficiency, including Admission and Full proficiency. For applicants to online programs, Full proficiency is required.

Graduate Admission

Applicants without prior training in geography are welcome but are required to improve their basic knowledge of the broad divisions of geography: systematic, methodological, and regional. Courses taken to remedy deficiencies may not count toward graduate degrees.

The following items must be received to complete the application file:

1. **A completed Graduate Application Form found on the Graduate Admissions website.**
2. **A current resume/CV**
3. **A Statement of Interest and Goals.** This is included in the on-line application form. The Graduate Studies Committee places considerable importance on the thoughtfulness of your remarks – in particular, we are interested in learning about (1) your specific interests within geography and why they are important and interesting to you, (2) what you envision as your educational and career objectives and how a geography degree from KU helps to meet those objectives, and (3) which of our faculty members you think would be an appropriate graduate advisor and mentor.
4. **A scanned copy of an official transcript** can be uploaded at the time of application. Official, degree conferred transcripts will be required prior to the second semester of study. NOTE: Documents uploaded with your application are not considered official. KU does

not consider transcripts that come from applicants or that have been in the applicant’s possession as official.

5. **Three confidential letters of recommendation** sent by referees who are familiar with your academic and/or professional activities and who can address your likelihood of success in graduate school. If possible, we prefer letters from professors, but applicants returning to school after a lengthy absence may substitute letters from supervisors. Note that it is the responsibility of the applicant to request and to confirm that the required letters have been sent by the deadline. When using the on-line reference form to list references, you must include valid e-mail addresses. Once you have completed and submitted your application, your references will be contacted directly via email with directions for submitting their letters of recommendation.

Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores are not required for the application. Applicants may choose to submit GRE scores if they feel it will help inform the department of their academic abilities. However, choosing not to submit scores will not affect your chances of admission.

Submit your graduate application online (<https://gradapply.ku.edu/apply/>). For questions, contact:

The Graduate Program Coordinator

Students develop their plan of research and study with the advice and supervision of their faculty advisor and dissertation committee.

Code	Title	Hours
GEOG 805	Perspectives in Geography	2
GEOG 980	Seminar in Geography: _____	2
Non-credit 8 hour Responsible Scholarship Seminar		
Electives: These courses are selected with the student’s faculty advisor. They may be Geography courses or courses outside of the department		17
Research Skills: In consultation with the advisory committee, the student must choose at least 9 credit hours of coursework relevant to their research.		9
Total Hours		30

Research Skills and Responsible Scholarship Requirement:

The University requires that every doctoral student receive training in responsible scholarship pertinent to the field of research and obtain research skills pertinent to the doctoral level of research in their field(s). These requirements must be completed by the end of the semester that the student takes the oral comprehensive exam. For students in the Geography Ph.D. program, this requirement is satisfied by completion of one of the following options listed below. Coursework necessary to meet this requirement should commence early in the program. Selection of a particular Research Skills option must be approved by the student’s advisor.

1. Demonstrate a reading, writing, and speaking capability in a single foreign language sufficient to enable the student to do field work

without an interpreter. An examination for competence, including written and oral portions, will be conducted by the appropriate language department having expertise in that language.

2. Demonstrate a satisfactory capability in 1 research skill from the list below. The actual courses must be approved by the student's advisor.
 - a. Computer Science--complete a computer-programming course in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (e.g., C++, Fortran, or Visual Basic) with a grade of B or higher and create a substantial computer program that illustrates a geographic application of that language. Both the course and computer program must be approved by the Computer Programming Committee of the Department of Geography.
 - b. Mathematics--complete 9 hours of courses at the 500-level or above with a grade of B or higher.
 - c. Statistics--complete 9 hours of courses outside the Geography Department at the 500-level or above with a grade of B or higher.
 - d. An outside discipline relevant to the student's field(s) within geography (e.g. anthropology, biology, economics, geology, history, or psychology) -- complete 9 hours of courses at the 500-level or above with a grade of B or higher (Atmospheric science courses may be used for this option, but not courses listed or cross-listed as geography.) Students may petition the Graduate Studies Committee to have 9 hours of courses at the 500-level or above in multiple departments fulfill this requirement.

Students whose native language is not English may, in some cases, use their native language to fulfill Research Skills but only if the language is considered an adequate research tool for their program and is endorsed by the student's advisor. Using a native language to fulfill the Research Skills requirement must have Graduate Studies Committee approval. The courses for the Research Skills requirement must be taken during the PhD program.

Students must participate in the department's 8 hour non-credit hour Responsible Scholarship Seminar to meet the Responsible Scholarship requirement.

Dissertation Proposal/Oral Comprehensive Exam:

The comprehensive examination is scheduled when the student and the faculty advisor believe that competence in the student's selected topic has been achieved. It consists of two parts: written questions submitted by the committee members and then oral examination. For the written questions, they may be open-book or closed at the discretion of the individual committee member submitting the questions, and the student normally will have up to 8 hours to complete each set of questions. At the conclusion of the written portion of the examination, the committee chair will poll the committee. A majority of the members must approve their individual written portions of the examination in order for the oral portion to take place. In the oral section, students often are asked to elaborate and comment on their written answers. The focus is on the proposal, however, with probes into its scope, justification, and methodology being common.

To give committee members sufficient time to read and discuss responses to the written comprehensive examination questions, at least 7 calendar days must elapse between the date of the last written exam question and the meeting for the oral examination. The gap between the last written exam question and the oral exam may be up to 30 calendar days. Any exceptions to these policies must be unanimously agreed upon by all examination committee members and the Director of Graduate Studies.

Two grades are possible for the overall examination: "satisfactory," and "unsatisfactory." In the unsatisfactory case, the student may be allowed to repeat the process one more time upon recommendation of the committee. Such repetition can be undertaken no sooner than 90 days after the last exam. Approval from the Office of Graduate Studies must be secured for the scheduling of this procedure and the request must be submitted two weeks prior to the proposed date for the examination.

Upon passing the comprehensive examination, the student becomes a candidate for the Ph.D. degree and is approved to proceed with their dissertation research and project. At least once each year after passing the comprehensive examination, the student must schedule a meeting with their dissertation committee to discuss progress towards the completion of the dissertation and any other concerns. Starting the semester following successful completion of the oral comprehensive exam, students must enroll in accordance with the Office of Graduate Studies' Doctoral Candidacy Policy (<https://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/doctoral-candidacy/>). This enrollment includes, but is not limited to, at least 1 dissertation hour every semester until graduation. See the Doctoral Candidacy policy for more information about this University level requirement.

Final Defense:

The student must complete an oral defense of their dissertation. The committee will be made up of at least 4 members in compliance with the Doctoral Student Oral Exam Committee Composition policy (<https://policy.ku.edu/graduate-studies/doctoral-student-oral-exam-committee-composition/>). A majority of the committee members must approve the defense outcome. The possible outcomes for the defense are "honors", "satisfactory", or "unsatisfactory".

Students that fail the defense on their first attempt may repeat the defense at the recommendation of the degree program one more time. Such repetition can be undertaken no sooner than 90 days after the last defense.

While completing degree requirements, graduate students are expected to understand and follow Office Graduate Studies policies (<https://ogs.ku.edu/policies/>) relevant to their student status and academic standing.

At the completion of this program, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of both general research themes and trends within geography and also specific themes and trends within their subfield of geography. Students are able to articulate the definitions of, connections between, and differences among fundamental concepts, models, and theories in geography.
- Apply research methodologies appropriate to their subfield of geography (e.g., geographic information science tools, qualitative methods, foreign language fluency, or others).
- Demonstrate sub-disciplinary depth of training and comprehension and advanced competency in the design and implementation of original research that reflects theories and methods within their subfield.
- Communicate effectively orally, graphically, and in writing for diverse audiences.