Doctor of Philosophy in Geography

Why study geography?

The PhD program is for students interested in research, teaching opportunities, careers with NGOs, government consulting and more. The program offers concentrations in cultural-regional geography of Africa, East Asia, Latin America, Russia/Eurasia, and the United States; geographic information science (including cartography and remote sensing); and physical/environmental geography. 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 auxiliary departments. Learn more about our faculty (http://geog.ku.edu/faculty) on our website.

Admission to Graduate Studies

An applicant seeking to pursue graduate study in the College may be admitted as either a degree-seeking or non-degree seeking student. Policies and procedures of Graduate Studies govern the process of Graduate admission. These may be found in the Graduate Studies (http://catalog.ku.edu/graduate-studies) section of the online catalog.

Please consult the Departments & Programs (http://catalog.ku.edu/lawl-arts-sciences) section of the online catalog for information regarding program-specific admissions criteria and requirements. Special admissions requirements pertain to Interdisciplinary Studies degrees, which may be found in the Graduate Studies section of the online catalog.

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. Graduate Record Examination scores (verbal, quantitative, and analytical) are required of all applicants.

Submit your graduate application online (http://graduate.ku.edu/prospective-students). Send all other requested application materials to the geography and atmospheric science department:

The University of Kansas
Department of Geography and Atmospheric Science
Lindley Hall
1475 Jayhawk Blvd., Room 213
Lawrence, KS 66045

Geography Ph.D. Degree Requirements

The aspirant is expected to demonstrate proficiency in research and achieve a teaching competence in geography. The student may concentrate in 1 area or may offer a concentration in a second area in the department or an outside discipline. Whatever the choice, the student develops the plan of research and study with the advice and supervision of professors in the chosen area(s) of concentration who also sit on the student’s examination and dissertation committees. A minimum of 30 hours of course and seminar work in addition to dissertation credit usually is required beyond the M.A.

Required Courses

GEOG 805 (History of Geographic Thought); 2-day (non-credit) orientation before classes begin in the fall semester; GEOG 980 (Seminar in Geography: Colloquium) for 1 credit hour during each of the first 2 semesters of residence at KU; Non-credit 8-hour Responsible Scholarship session held just before classes start in the spring semester.

Research Skills Requirement

Research skills are important elements of any graduate program and should complement the student’s research topic. 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 and student’s committee members. A student’s Research Skills requirement may be met by 1 of the following:

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 and committee members.
   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) of specialization 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 Affairs 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 and committee members. Using a native language to fulfill the Research Skills requirement must have GSC approval.

In addition, the department requires that any PhD student admitted after Fall 2011 must successfully complete the Responsible Scholarship seminar offered by the department.

Handbook for Graduate Students

Detailed information on departmental regulations is included in Policies for Graduate Study in Geography at the University of Kansas, available on the department’s website (http://www.geog.ku.edu).