

# GRADUATE STUDIES IN GEOLOGY



DEPARTMENT OF EARTH SCIENCES  
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY  
BOZEMAN, MONTANA

## APPLYING FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL: A PRIMER

The purpose of this primer is to provide an overview of how to apply for acceptance into the Master of Science (M.S.) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) graduate degree programs in the **geology area of specialization** in the Department of Earth Sciences at Montana State University. In addition, it answers some of the most commonly asked questions concerning application and admission to the Earth Sciences graduate program in the geology specialization.

The most important step in the application process is to determine, prior to applying, the faculty member whose research interests most closely match the research area you would like to pursue in graduate school. Because final acceptance is determined by the individual faculty advisors, it is important that you establish contact with your potential advisor to determine if they are accepting new graduate students for the year you wish to enter the program and to discuss mutual research interests **prior to applying**. More information about the Department of Earth Sciences geology faculty and their research programs is available on the Department website at: <http://www.montana.edu/wwwes/facstaff/index.htm> .

### **What are the minimum acceptance requirements?**

Acceptance requirements of the Graduate College include a minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0. A minimum Verbal GRE score of 480 is required to be eligible for an in-class Teaching Assistantship. For foreign students, a minimum TOEFL score of 550 (paper) or 213 (computer-based) is required.

In addition, the Department of Earth Sciences requires all incoming graduate students pursuing geology research to have completed a geology field course. Because final acceptance is up to the prospective graduate student's faculty advisor, the Department places strong emphasis on the applicant statement of intent and letters of recommendation. Letters from faculty who can assess your academic potential for success in graduate school are weighed most heavily. Letters from former non-geology employers, friends, landlords, or relatives carry essentially no weight in this regard.

Acceptance involves a two-step process comprising acceptance by the College of Graduate Studies and acceptance by the Department of Earth Sciences. The Department first evaluates your application and makes a recommendation to the College of Graduate Studies. Final acceptance is made by the Graduate College. It is important to keep in mind that acceptance by the Department is ultimately decided by the prospective faculty advisor.

### **Will I be accepted if I do not have a degree in geology or a closely related field?**

No you will not. If you seek admission to the Earth Sciences graduate program to specialize in geology with substantial course deficiencies, the best course of action is to seek admission to the College of Graduate Studies as a non-degree candidate, and then make up all undergraduate course deficiencies prior to apply for acceptance to the Graduate College and Department as a degree candidate. Application for non-degree graduate student status does not require acceptance by the Department, only the Graduate College.

### **I want to do paleontology research, so do I have the same requirements?**

Yes you do. The Department does not make any distinction between geology and paleontology in terms of requirements for acceptance into the graduate program. Substantial undergraduate training in a geology (or closely related) curriculum is required of all successful applicants. Paleontology research in the Department is strongly field-based and requires a strong foundation of geological knowledge.

### **Does the Department require a preliminary application?**

No, the Department of Earth Sciences does not require a preliminary application. We do however strongly suggest that you contact the faculty member(s) with whom you would like to work prior to applying.

### **When is my application due?**

In order to be considered for either a Teaching or Research Assistantship, it is imperative that the Department receive all of your required application materials by **February 15**. Applications received after this date may be considered for acceptance but not for financial assistance. ***Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.***

### **What are the required components of the application?**

As described on the College of Graduate Studies Web Page, the application for admission to the Graduate College includes a completed application form, official transcripts from all undergraduate institutions attended, GRE scores, a statement of intent, and three letters of recommendation from persons qualified to assess your potential for success in graduate school. All applicants are required to submit GRE scores. A detailed checklist of required application items may be found at: [http://www.montana.edu/wwwdg/pdf\\_files/AppInstr.pdf](http://www.montana.edu/wwwdg/pdf_files/AppInstr.pdf) .

### **Do I have to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE)?**

Yes, all applicants are required to take the GRE. As this is Board of Regents policy, no exceptions can be made to this requirement under any circumstances. It is imperative that you take the GRE at a time such as to ensure that your scores arrive by the February 15 application deadline if you want to be considered for an assistantship.

### **How do I apply?**

You may apply by visiting the application web page for the College of Graduate Studies found at <http://www.montana.edu/wwwdg/apply.shtml> . Contact the Department of Earth Sciences at the contact address below if you can not access the on-line application and would like to request that a paper application be mailed to you.

### **What are the application requirements for foreign students?**

The application process for foreign students is the same as it is for domestic students. Foreign students are required to submit TOEFL scores and a financial statement in addition to the standard application. Details concerning Graduate College requirements for foreign student applications may be found at:

[http://www.montana.edu/wwwdg/cat\\_appl&deadlines.shtml#intl\\_app](http://www.montana.edu/wwwdg/cat_appl&deadlines.shtml#intl_app) .

### **What can I do to strengthen my application?**

Acceptance into the geology component of the Earth Sciences graduate program is highly competitive. The strongest applications have a relatively high GPA (above 3.0), good GRE scores, and strongly supportive letters of recommendation. In addition, a clearly articulated statement of intent focused on career goals and research interests rather than recreational opportunities afforded by living in southwest Montana is highly recommended.

### **Where do I send my application materials?**

All of your application materials must be sent to the Department of Earth Sciences. If you apply on-line, your application form will be sent to the Department. However, you must ensure that all other materials including GRE scores and letters of recommendation also be sent to the Department. The mailing address for the Department is:

Geology Graduate Coordinator  
Department of Earth Sciences  
Room 200, Traphagen Hall  
Montana State University  
Bozeman, MT 59717

### **Who do I contact with questions concerning the application process?**

In addition to the information provided in this primer, you will find a detailed description of the application process at the College of Graduate Studies web site <http://www.montana.edu/wwwdg/index.shtml> and the Department of Earth Sciences web page for prospective students <http://www.montana.edu/wwwes/programs/graduate.htm> . It is strongly recommended that you review the information provided at these sites in detail. If you have questions concerning the receipt of your application materials, you may contact the Department via email at [earthsciences@montana.edu](mailto:earthsciences@montana.edu) or by phone at (406) 994-3331.