

Statement of Purpose

Applications for acceptance into the Texas A&M Geography Department Graduate program requires the submission of an application letter that details an applicant's objectives, research experience, professional accomplishments, research focus, and relevant skill sets. The application letter will also serve as a sample of the applicants written communication skills which are an important consideration in admissions decisions. Before submitting an application, you are strongly encouraged to contact and communicate with a department faculty member who may be interested in supervising your research given a common interest. Applicants should mention these faculty by name in their letter and ensure that the mentioned faculty members have expertise in the research topic.

This is essential so that applicants can develop and describe the nature of the research topic. Experiences and career objectives should be described to facilitate the intention of your application. Objectives may include personal goals and professional career paths including: 1) work positions in corporate or government entities, 2) PhD. Graduate school; 3) academic positions; and/or 4) research positions.

It is important that students list and describe their research and problem-solving experiences to provide the Department with insights into their ability to successfully conduct graduate research. Common experiences include internships, senior thesis projects, corporate or government employment, graduate research and research with faculty. This should translate into listing or describing professional accomplishments including scholarships, funded research, presentations, publications, and/or any geospatial technology products developed (e.g., software tools, information support systems).

A critical component of the application letter should be the applicants research topic and focus. Be sure to list which sub-discipline in geography you are most interested in (GIST, human, physical, and human-environment) and describe the nature-of-the-problem related to your topic. Listing of overall and specific research objectives or questions is encouraged. Please note that specificity is important, and generalized and ambiguous statements of research interests, such as "I want to do research in biogeography, geomorphology, remote sensing, geospatial data science, sustainability or other sub-components of the sub-disciplines" does not provide adequate information regarding the nature of the research you wish to pursue in graduate school. Applicants should demonstrate that they understand the basics of their research topic and its significance. Finally, applicants should describe relevant skill sets that will permit them to be successful in graduate school. These include communication, fieldwork, laboratory, quantitative, script development, computer programming, and software related skills, and experience with qualitative research (e.g., ethnographic, participant observation), survey implementation, community-based participatory research, and computer-assisted qualitative data analysis.

A strong application letter provides an argument for why an applicant seeks graduate study in our Department and demonstrates that they have a plan for conducting research. Application letters that are generic and ambiguous, focus on personal histories and idiosyncrasies, or elaborate on themes unrelated to graduate school are neither persuasive nor compelling.