Frequently Asked Questions

(Last updated: 1/11/2016)

Curriculum

1. **What are the characteristics of MPSGIS curriculum?**
   The MPSGIS curriculum tends to be technically oriented and covers a wide range of topics, such as spatial analysis, spatial statistics, scripting and programming, modeling, remote sensing, digital image processing, spatial databases, Internet GIS, and Mobile GIS. The curriculum is also frequently updated and upgraded to keep up with the fast development of geospatial science and related technologies and also to match the skills demanded by the job market.

2. **Do I need to buy software for the courses in this program?**
   No, we provide a free student edition of ESRI’s ArcGIS software.

3. **Is the MPSGIS program online?**
   Yes, all the classes are broadcast online as well as being offered at the same time as regular lectures in classrooms. For the online teaching, these classes are interactive and dynamic through the use of webcams and headsets, offering an experience very much like sitting in a real classroom. In addition, entire lectures (lecture slides, presentation, and Q&A interactions) are video-archived for reviewing.

4. **Why is the MPSGIS program on quarter system while the rest of the university uses the semester system?**
   As most students in the program work part-time or full-time, they usually learn better if they only take one, or at most two classes at one time so that they can concentrate on these classes. Under the semester system, in order to complete the program in a timely fashion, students would have to take multiple courses during the semester. The 10-week quarter-based courses are shorter, but more intensive, which allows students to achieve improved learning outcomes.

Admission

1. **What are the admission criteria?**
   To be admitted into the MPSGIS program, a candidate usually has to meet the following criteria:
   - A bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution
   - A GPA of 3.0 or above (rare exceptions can be made for applicants)
   - Strong motivation and interest in studying geospatial information sciences

   While previous work or an intention to work in a GIS-related field is desirable, applicants are not required to have any prior GIS or remote sensing background to apply to the MPSGIS program. However, applicants should meet the prerequisite requirements (listed below) before they begin the program.

2. **Do you offer spring enrollment?**
   Yes.
3. What are prerequisite requirements?
Before they start the program, students must meet the following prerequisite requirements:
- Master of Professional Studies degree track (Students must have had course work in GIS, remote sensing, and statistics with final grades of at least a “B” in each course.) Students who don’t have course work on these subjects but have practical or working knowledge of GIS/RS should submit example work to demonstrate their proficiency.
- Graduate Certificate track (Students must have had course work in GIS and statistics while getting grades of at least “B” in each course.)

4. Can I switch from Graduate Certificate track to Master degree track?
Yes, it is possible to switch from the Graduate Certificate track to the MPS track after you take some classes. You will need to submit a new application through the Graduate School, however, you can use the same application materials. Many GC students switch into the MPS track.

Application

1. What are the application deadlines?
You are encouraged to contact us with any questions on the application deadline. The actual deadlines may vary depending on the applicant's background. U.S. citizens and permanent residents, who have completed the prerequisites, may apply as late as August 1 and will be considered as long as there is room in the program. However, earlier applications are encouraged.
   - Fall Admissions Deadline: May 30
   - Spring Admissions Deadline: January 31
   *Please check the program website for any admissions updates and deadlines: www.geog.umd.edu/gis

2. What documents are required for the application?
Besides the standard Graduate School Application Form, applicants are required to submit the official transcripts from previous colleges or universities. Applicants will electronically submit thru the application portal a cover letter or personal statement, resume, and at least two recommendation letters.

Graduation

1. How long does it take to complete the Graduate Certificate?
Students can complete the Graduate Certificate in one year or less, usually taking one course per quarter.

2. How long does it take to complete the MPS degree?
Students who study full-time (two courses per quarter) can finish the program in two years or less, while the part-time students (one course per quarter) approximately in two and half years.