Frequently Asked Questions
(Last update: 1/11/2017)

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, as an ESRI Development Center a free student edition of ESRI’s ArcGIS software is provided to all students. Free access to other software is provided through our VMWare server.

3. **Does the MPSGIS program offer an online option?**
   Yes, the MPS GIS program is an on campus program that provides students the option of attending online or in person. All courses are offered in traditional classrooms or GIS labs and simultaneously broadcast online. The online teaching is interactive and dynamic through Adobe Connect, very much like sitting in a real classroom. Entire lectures (lecture slides, presentations, 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. The quarter system allows students to better spread out course work over the entire calendar year, rather than be restricted to the traditional academic calendar. 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.

5. **Are students allowed to take additional courses outside of the Plan of Study?**
   Yes, with prior approval from your advisor. There is also the possibility for students to take courses after they graduate as alumni.

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. **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.)

3. **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.

4. **Do you accept international applicants?**
   Yes, starting Fall 2017 the MPS GIS program is able to accept international students. Please visit our website for more details regarding deadlines and requirements.

**Application**

1. **What are the application deadlines?**
   The MPS programs accepts applicants for both Fall and Spring enrollment. 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 July 27 for Fall and February 16 for Spring. Applicants will be considered as long as there is room in the program However, earlier applications are encouraged.
   **Domestic**
   - Fall Priority Deadline: May 16
   - Fall Firm: July 27
   - Spring Priority: December 15
   - Spring Firm: February 16
   **International**
   - Fall International Deadline: March 15
   *Please check the program website for updates on admission deadlines: [www.geog.umd.edu/gis](http://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.