

GEOGRAPHY, PLANNING, AND DESIGN, PHD

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Overview

The Ph.D. in Geography, Planning, and Design at the University of Colorado is a research-oriented degree offered by the College of Architecture and Planning (CAP) at the University of Colorado Denver. Initiated in 1997, the program trains students to become high-impact faculty members, professionals, and intellectual leaders in fields that address urgent social and environmental issues.

Our unique, interdisciplinary degree prepares students to be critical thinkers, engaged scholars, and innovative researchers capable of addressing complex and emergent issues. Our students explore interactions between society and the built and natural environment and engage in research aimed at promoting sustainable, healthy, and socially just communities at local, regional, and global scales.

Students can take advantage of resources in all departments and fields in the university system, with more than 35 acclaimed faculty members from 11 departments able to supervise and advise dissertation research. Interdisciplinary study and cross-disciplinary inquiry occur in a congenial work environment in one of the most dynamic and fast-growing urban regions in the United States. Students also have the benefit of pursuing their studies only minutes from the beautiful Rocky Mountains.

By integrating the fields of Geography, Planning, and Design, our doctoral students receive an innovative educational experience that enables cutting-edge research and professional contributions. Solving critical urban and environmental problems in the 21st century requires that we move beyond traditional academic silos and modes of knowledge production.

Admission to the program is competitive and based on merit and available funding.

The minimum residency requirement is four semesters, not including summer semesters. In the first two years of residence, students take courses to satisfy the credits relevant to preparation for writing their dissertation and the core requirement of the program, as well as additional electives. After completing these requirements, the student takes a comprehensive exam.

After satisfying program requirements, students move on to preparing a dissertation topic and research proposal which is presented and defended in a public event. With the successful defense of the dissertation topic and research proposal, students are admitted to candidacy. Finally, the completed dissertation is defended in a public examination involving external examiners in addition to the members of the committee. Upon successful completion of the dissertation defense, the program recommends the awarding of the Ph.D. degree.

Admission Requirements

Prerequisites

Applicants admitted to the PhD program normally will have completed the requirements for the Master of Architecture, Master of Geography,

Master of Planning, Master of Landscape Architecture, or a related master's degree program. Students from allied fields are encouraged to apply. Field specialization and background are open.

GPA and TOEFL Scores

Consistent with the University requirements, applications are evaluated based on Grade Point Average (GPA) scores, and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores (where applicable). All exams must have been taken within a year before applying to the program:

- Academic achievement as evidenced by an undergraduate grade point average of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) or better, and a graduate grade point average of 3.5 or better.
- Applicants whose native language is not English must take either the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam, or have a graduate degree from a university in the U.S. or another English-speaking country. The minimum TOEFL score required for acceptance by the University of Colorado at Denver is 80 or higher on the TOEFL (sub-scores of 20 in Reading, Listening, and Speaking, and 24 in Writing) or 6.5 on the IELTS (sub-scores of 5.5 in each area). However, the Ph.D. program typically does not accept a student with a score lower than 85 on the TOEFL and 6.8 on the IELTS.

Application Checklist

The following documents must be submitted before an application will be considered:

- Application Forms - Apply online!
- Application Fee
- Three Letters of Recommendation
- Examples of previous research and written works
- Official transcripts from all previously attended institutions of higher learning
- Statement of Personal and Professional Goals
- Scores of Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) for non-U.S. residents whose native language is other than English
- Financial Statement (for non-U.S. residents/citizens)

Program Requirements

Overview

Successful completion of the PhD program requires fulfilling course requirements, passing the comprehensive examinations, preparing and defending a dissertation proposal, and undertaking research, writing and defending a dissertation. This is a multi-year process that involves a close mentoring relationship with the student's advisor.

A student's program of study must include at least 12 semester hours of Ph.D. Program core classes and 24 semester hours of study within the area(s) of focus established with the Primary Advisor. The student may focus on one main field of interest or a major and minor field.

Students shall complete the minimum of 36 semester hours in their area(s) of focus and Ph.D. Program core requirements prior to advancement to candidacy. Credit transfers are not allowed. Credits earned from previous courses before the student is enrolled in the Ph.D. program cannot be used as credit toward the Ph.D. degree.

Students must maintain a 3.0 GPA in all their coursework. A grade of less than B in any Ph.D. Program requirement shall not be accepted as meeting those requirements. For Program Core courses, the student must

retake the course. A Program Core course may be retaken only once. The student shall be terminated from the program if a grade less than B is received more than once in a Ph.D. Program Core Course.

In addition, students must also pass a comprehensive exam as well as write and defend a dissertation proposal and dissertation.

Graduate Education Policies and Procedures apply to this program

Residency and Enrollment Requirements

The minimum enrollment requirement at CU Denver for doctoral students is six semesters of full-time scholarly work beyond the attainment of a bachelor's degree.

The doctoral program requires a minimum of two years of residency (not fewer than four semesters enrolled in a minimum of six semester hours each, excluding summer) devoted to coursework and other preparation for advancement to doctoral candidacy status. Ordinarily, research for the dissertation will also be completed while in residence. After that time, special arrangements can be made with the CAP Ph.D. Committee if substantial work needs to be performed elsewhere.

Students must complete the comprehensive examinations and dissertation proposal within four years from the beginning of their first semester in which they are enrolled as a Ph.D. student at the University of Colorado Denver. In addition, the University of Colorado Denver requires that all degree requirements be completed within eight years of matriculation.

Active Status

To remain actively enrolled, students must register for six semester hours or more each academic semester (excluding summer) until they become a doctoral candidate. Once they become a doctoral candidate, students must register for at least one semester hour per semester. Students who are not so registered are automatically withdrawn from the University of Colorado Denver and must apply for readmission to the program. The readmission decision will depend on the student's academic record and progress toward the degree.

Doctoral students must register for a minimum of one hour of dissertation credit in the term of graduation. If all requirements for graduation, including submission of the final approved dissertation, have been completed prior to the last day of registration, and the student was registered for the preceding term, the student may apply for a waiver of the enrollment requirement.

Advising and Committees

Overview

Each student entering the program shall have a Primary Advisor. Students wishing to change their Primary Advisor should do so during their first year. All appointments of Primary Advisor must be approved by the Ph.D. Program Director. Students wishing to change their Primary Advisor after the first year must petition the Ph.D. Program Director for approval. The Dissertation Advisory Committee is comprised of a Primary Advisor and at least two additional members. Any of these three may serve as the Chair of the Dissertation Advisory Committee.

Primary Advisor

The Primary Advisor guides the student through the completion of the course requirements, the preparation for the comprehensive examinations, the dissertation proposal, and the dissertation. The Primary Advisor must have a doctoral degree and be a tenured/tenure-

track member of the College's Ph.D. Program or an invited affiliate faculty with a regular appointment to graduate education. The Primary Advisor may serve as the Chair of the Dissertation Committee but may not serve as the Chair of the Comprehensive Exam Committee.

Committee Chair

The Committee Chair's primary responsibility is serving on the student's Advisory Committee and chairing the dissertation defense.

Dissertation Advisory Committee

The Dissertation Advisory Committee provides guidance for the investigated dissertation topic, comprehensive examination, dissertation, and the final dissertation examination.

This Committee includes at least three faculty members: the Primary Advisor and at least two additional committee members. One of the committee members must be a full-time faculty member of the College, and the majority of the committee members must have a Ph.D. degree. All committee members must hold Graduate Faculty appointments. This Committee must be fully formed by the beginning of the student's third semester of study.

Membership of this Committee may change if the student's interests and needs change. Any changes should be developed in consultation with the student's advisor and must be approved by the Ph.D. Program Director. The Dissertation Advisory Committee must meet with the student at least once each year to assess progress.

Comprehensive Examination Committee

This Committee consists of a minimum of three graduate faculty members, including the Primary Advisor. Although it is not a requirement, this Committee should mainly consist of the Dissertation Advisory Committee. At least one member of the Comprehensive Examination Committee must be a full-time faculty member of the College, and the majority of the committee members must have a Ph.D. degree. All committee members must hold Graduate Faculty appointments.

Final Dissertation Examination Committee

The final Dissertation Examination Committee shall be formed according to the Policies and Procedures of Graduate Education. All committee members must hold Graduate Faculty appointments.

Special Circumstances

If the Primary Advisor leaves the faculty of the College before the comprehensive exam and/or dissertation topic is approved, the Ph.D. Program Director will work with the student to identify a new Primary Advisor and Chair for the Committee.

If the Primary Advisor leaves the faculty of the College after the comprehensive exam and/or dissertation topic is approved, and both the Primary Advisor and the student wish to continue in the advising relationship, the original Primary Advisor can continue to be co-advisor with the appointment of a co-advisor from within the Program. The Primary Advisor may be appointed as adjunct faculty in Graduate Education and will continue to hold a regular graduate faculty appointment until the student graduates, in order to recognize his or her continuing role, with approval of the Ph.D. Program Director.

If a member of the Dissertation Committee other than the Primary Advisor is unable to continue in this role, for any reason, the Primary Advisor will work with the student to identify a new member for the Committee. Upon accepting to serve in this role, the new member of the

Committee must sign on the dissertation topic and dissertation proposal documents as they were previously approved.

Curriculum

The minimum requirement is 36 semester hours of coursework, all of which must be at the Graduate level (5000 and above) and 30 hours of dissertation semester hours. All Ph.D. students are required to take 12 semester hours of core courses.

The curriculum is divided into three stages consisting of core courses, major and minor field courses, and the dissertation. The program requires a minimum of 66 semester hours of graduate work, 36 of which must be earned while in residence.

Each student’s curriculum is tailored to his/her individual needs and is determined in close consultation with the dissertation advisor. Within their area of specialization, students will identify a major area of study and an outside field of study. All students are required to enroll in the Ph.D. Colloquium and Research Methods core courses during the first and second years of course work.

Core Courses (12 semester hours, minimum with B or better grade)

Code	Title	Hours
(DSPL 7014)	Ph.D. Colloquium 1	1
(DSPL 7014)	Ph.D. Colloquium 2	1
(DSPL 7014)	Ph.D. Colloquium 3	1
(DSPL 7014)	Ph.D. Colloquium 4	1
(DSPL 7840)	Literature Review survey with committee chair	2
	Two Research Methods courses	6
Total Hours		12

Courses supporting the Area(s) of Interest (24 semester hours, minimum grade of B)

Students work with their Dissertation Advisory Committee to designate their area(s) of interest. This designation is not intended to reflect the particular focus of their dissertation topic but rather the disciplinary context within which their dissertation topic resides. Students, in consultation with their advising team, may select one central area of study or a major and minor area of study. This designated course of study forms the basis for their comprehensive exam.

Dissertation Credits (variable): (30 semester hours, minimum of B or better grade)

During the course of doctoral study, students may enroll for credits related to their preparation for comprehensive exams, the dissertation proposal and preparation, or advisor approved independent study as dissertation credits.

Typical Course of Study

First Year

Students develop their degree plan, take six semester hours of the required Core Curriculum, complete additional courses in their specialty area, and any prerequisite courses.

Second Year

Students take the remaining core courses, continue to take electives in their specialty areas, begin literature surveys and reviews, and prepare for their comprehensive exam.

Third Year

Students complete their specialization papers, prepare a dissertation proposal, complete the literature review, and take the comprehensive exam.

Fourth/Fifth Year

Fourth and fifth years are spent researching and writing the dissertation.

Ph.D. Degree Time Limit: Eight Year Completion Requirement

The University of Colorado Denver requires that doctoral students, whether enrolled full time or part time, must complete all degree requirements within eight years of matriculation. Students who fail to complete the degree in this eight-year period are subject to termination from Graduate Education upon the recommendation of the program director and concurrence of the Dean. For a student to continue beyond the time limit, the program director must petition the Dean for an extension and include:

1. reasons why the program faculty believes the student should be allowed to continue in the program and
2. an anticipated timeline for completion of the degree.

Approved leaves of absence do not automatically extend the time limits for earning a degree, but they may be used as a reason to request an extension if needed.

For more information on the Ph.D. in Geography, Planning, and Design, visit the College of Architecture and Planning website.