Application FAQs

What do I need to know to APPLY?

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

• MSc in Geological Sciences or Geological Engineering, Mining Engineering or Civil Engineering are acceptable.

• Grade requirements: minimum B average.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

• If English is not a native language, prospective students must meet the English language proficiency requirements in writing, speaking, reading, and listening. The School of Graduate Studies requires the following minimum scores: TOEFL (paper-based): 550, (2) TOEFL iBT: Writing (24/30); Speaking (22/30); Reading (22/30); Listening (20/30), for a total of 88/120 applicants must have the minimum score in each test as well as the minimum overall score), or (3) IELTS: 7.0 (academic module overall band score), or (4) PTE Academic: 65.

KEY DATES & DEADLINES

• Application deadline: February 1 for September submissions.

• Notification of acceptance: 4 weeks after the full application has been received.

Before you start your application, please review the Graduate studies application process.

What about FUNDING?

The minimum funding guarantee for Geological Sciences PhD students is $23,000 per year for domestic students and $38,000 for international students throughout years 1-4. Research Assistantships are in consultation with the student’s supervisor.

We encourage all students to apply for external funding from OGS, NSERC and other sources. Queen’s will automatically issue a $10,000 award to incoming PhD students who have won federal government tri-council awards. For more information, see the School of Graduate Studies’ information on awards and scholarships.

Program STRUCTURE

PHD (4 years): Thesis. The department has no minimum formal course requirement (beyond the MSc program requirements).

RESEARCH Areas

• Economic Geology & Mineral Exploration

• Petrology & Structural Geology

• Sedimentology, Sedimentary Geochemistry & Paleobiology

• Geophysics and Geochronology

• Applied Geoenvironmental Sciences & Geotechnique

We encourage you to identify an area of research interest and contact a potential supervisor before applying.

Visit the Geological Sciences Department website to read faculty profiles and learn more about faculty members’ research areas. When you find a faculty member with similar research interests to yours, contact him/her and tell them about your interest in graduate work and related experience. This is also an opportunity for you to find out if the faculty member is accepting new graduate students to supervise.
YEAR I

- Key priorities include your relationship with your supervisor, forming your committee, coursework, field exams, and language exam.
- Meet early with your supervisor to set expectations and discuss roles, responsibilities, program requirements, resources, research/occupational goals, timelines, and any required accommodation plans.
- Look to Student Academic Success Services for a variety of supports.

YEAR II

- Priorities include completing your comprehensive examination and pursuing substantive research.
- Write and defend your thesis proposal.
- Find your way through the academic process with the help of Expanding Horizons and the SGS Habitat.
- Set up regular meetings with your supervisor to discuss progress and obstacles to timely completion.
- Seek experiential/professional development opportunities.

YEAR III

- Continue to meet regularly with your supervisor, review research progress and write your dissertation. Check out the SGS Dissertation Boot Camp or Dissertation on the Lake.
- Use conference presentations to create, discuss, and explore ways to disseminate research findings. Learn from the Expanding Horizons Publishing workshop.
- Begin discussion of potential thesis defence examiners.

YEAR IV & TRANSITIONING

- Plan date of thesis submission for examination.
- Present your research at conferences and work with your supervisor to prepare for defence.
- Review submission and examination guidelines.
- Secure necessary oral defence accommodations.
- Discuss career pathways, reference letters, and publication options with your supervisor.

MAXIMIZE RESEARCH IMPACT

- Think about audiences for your research.
- Complete ROMEO online module on research ethics if doing research with living people or sensitive topics.
- Apply to SSHRC, OCI, and other funding.
- Attend conferences in your field.
- Serve on departmental, faculty or university committees. Talk to the Joliffe Club (graduate student society) for tips on getting involved.
- Consider positions in student services, the SGS, or media outlets like the Queen’s Journal, CFRC, and the SGS Blog. Look in the AMS Clubs Directory.
- Use a Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant position to develop your skills and experience.
- Consider volunteering with different local community organizations, such as Martha’s Table or Loving Spoonful.
- Participate in your graduate and professional community through activities such as graduate student outreach programs, organizing conferences, and research groups like Material Matters.

ENGAGE WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

- Hone skills for non-academic employment by continuing involvement on committees and in community.
- Start keeping an epistemology of your skills, experiences, and competences.
- For help with teaching, get support from the Centre for Teaching and Learning, enrol in SGS901 or the PUTL certificate for more professional development in teaching and learning.
- Begin teaching as a departmental Teaching Fellow.
- Find opportunities for extra training through CTL, Expanding Horizons, Mitacs, or other sources to boost your skills. Investigate internships from Mitacs and other sources.
- Prepare for work or studies in a multi-cultural environment by taking QUE’s Intercultural Competency Certificate.
- Do some targeted networking with people working in careers of interest, through QueensConnects on LinkedIn, the Queen’s Alumni Association professional associations, and at conferences. Get help from a Career Services workshop.

BUILD SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

- Attend or present at a graduate conference.
- Expand your research audience through social media such as Twitter or a blog.
- Apply for the Graduate Dean’s Travel Grant for Doctoral Field Research.
- Continue to present at conferences.
- Consider participating in the 3 Minute Thesis (3MT) competition.
- Contact the Queen’s Media Centre for guidance on speaking to news outlets about your work. List yourself on the Arts and Science University Research website.
- Practice articulating the skills you have been developing in settings outside the university, such as casual conversation, networking, and interviews. Get help from a Career Services workshop.
- Consider joining professional associations like the Geological Association of Canada.
- Join groups on LinkedIn reflecting specific careers or topics of interest.}

WHAT WILL I LEARN?

A graduate degree in Geological Sciences can equip you with valuable and versatile skills, such as:

- Knowledge and technical skills
- Effective communication skills in multiple forms for diverse audiences
- Information management: prioritize, organize and synthesize large amounts of information
- Time management: Meet deadlines and manage responsibilities despite competing demands
- Project management: develop ideas, gather information, analyze, critically appraise findings, draw and act on conclusions
- Creativity and innovation
- Perseverance
- Independence and experience as a collaborative worker
- Awareness, an understanding of sound ethical practices, social responsibility, responsible research and cultural sensitivity
- Professionalism in all aspects of work, research, and interactions
- Leadership: initiative and vision leading people and discussion

WHERE CAN I GO?

A PhD in Geological Sciences can take your career in many directions. In Canada, less than 40% of all PhDs will work in post-secondary education – the majority will work in industry, government, or non-profits.

Graduates from the Geological Sciences PhD program have found careers in:

- Academia and research
- Mineral and oil exploration
- Mining and hydrocarbon extraction
- Policy analysis
- Surface and underground construction
- Environmental assessment
- Protection and rehabilitation
- Resource management

Taking time to explore career options, build experience, and network can help you have a smooth transition to the world of work after graduation.