

M.S. Earth Science Graduate Program UNC Charlotte

Graduate Assistantships: An assistantship provides a student funding (i.e., a salary) while they work toward degree completion, and thus is much like a part-time job. The assistantships can also offer valuable training opportunities and work experience. Students then use the funding to *help offset* the cost of tuition, fees, and living expenses. Salaries are nationally competitive.

There are two types of graduate assistantships available – *teaching assistantships* and *research assistantships*. A select number of competitive teaching assistantships (TAs) are assigned based on the student's academic background. Students with a TA are expected to either teach laboratory sections of introductory geology and/or physical geography or assist faculty members with upper-level undergraduate courses. In most cases, students holding a TA are not permitted to hold an off-campus job in order to maintain a flexible daily schedule for teaching and meeting with students outside of class – TAs are often assigned to full-time students. The nature of a research assistantship (RA) depends entirely on the needs of the supervising faculty member, and does not necessarily limit off-campus employment – RAs can be assigned to either full-time or part-time students.

All graduate assistantships are arranged for either one entire semester or for an entire academic year (2 semesters or 9 months). They are normally scheduled for 16 weeks per semester and the student is expected to work 20 hours per week. The department makes every effort to provide funding to every full-time student in the program.

Important Deadline: Applicants who wish to be considered for a teaching assistantship must have their *completed application* submitted to the Graduate School no later than **February 1**. Review of applications will begin on this date and continue until all available teaching assistantships for the following academic year are filled.

Other Financial Considerations:

Housing: There are on-campus housing options (see above), but most graduate students live off-campus with 1-2 roommates in rented apartments, condos, or houses due to the short-term nature of graduate school. Depending on your preferred lifestyle, there are numerous apartments and condos within walking, biking, or a short-drive from campus. A typical 2-3 bedroom apartment runs \$700-\$900 per month and is affordable on a standard TA or RA stipend.

Insurance: The University offers a basic health insurance plan (including coverage for accidents, sickness, prescriptions, preventative care, vision, and optional dental at a reasonable cost – see above) to all graduate students, but most students find insurance through outside sources (either through parents, a spouse/partner, or from an independent provider).

Out-of-State Residents: Similar to most other state-supported universities, out-of-state students (also called non-residents) are required to pay a higher tuition than in-state students. To help offset this extra financial obligation, there is some university support to offset *a portion* of these costs. Recently, this support has been ~\$2000 per semester, but it has changed from year to year

based on the state legislature and the university budget. Furthermore, the support is competitive (i.e., not automatic), but we try hard to help our graduate students earn this support.

One method to reduce/remove the out-of state tuition costs is to *become an in-state resident*. In most cases, this is not possible before for your first year, but it can be done before your second year with some early planning (i.e., before starting your first year). The following link through the UNC Charlotte website provides guidance and lists requirements as to how to begin and complete this process (<http://resdetermination.uncc.edu/residency-requirements>). We *strongly encourage* all of-state students to consider becoming NC residents in order to significantly reduce their tuition burden in their second year and beyond.

Additional Information: Many prospective students request additional information about our program, the department and faculty, the university, the Charlotte area, and/or general information about life as a graduate student. Here we try to provide some answers (or at least direction) regarding some frequently asked questions:

- Department of Geography and Earth Sciences (<http://geoearth.uncc.edu/>)
- Our Graduate Faculty (<http://geoearth.uncc.edu/Full-Time-Faculty/>)
- UNC Charlotte Graduate School (<http://graduateschool.uncc.edu/>)
- Graduate Catalog (<http://catalog.uncc.edu/graduate-catalogs>) – lots of good details here!
- Financial Aid (<http://finaid.uncc.edu/graduate-student-information>)
- Student Health Insurance (<http://studenthealth.uncc.edu/insurance>)
- On-Campus Housing Options (<http://housing.uncc.edu/>)
- Facts about UNC Charlotte (<http://www.uncc.edu/landing/about>)
- Graduate Student Tuition & Fees (<http://finance.uncc.edu/tuition-and-fees-main-campus>)
- City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (<http://charmbeck.org/>)
- Charlotte Re-location Guide (<http://charlottesights.com/>)
- Apartment Finder (<http://www.apartments.com/>)