

2024 Geophysics Virtual Information Session Q&A

Q: If I am particularly interested in a faculty member whose research aligns closely with my own, would it be appropriate to email them directly?

A: Yes, definitely email them!

Q: Regarding faculty advisors, if I reach out to a faculty member and they do not (or are unable to) respond, would it still be advisable to mention their name in my Statement of Purpose or include them as a potential advisor in my application? I'm concerned that doing so without confirmation might inadvertently jeopardize my application or compromise its consideration.

A: Faculty are expecting emails from potential students. In the event they do not reply before you submit your applications, yes, please do list those faculty members you believe align with your interests (and explain this alignment in your written statement you include with your application). Confirmed opportunities with current geophysics faculty for this year can be found at: <https://scripps.ucsd.edu/doctoral/program-areas/geophysics-gp>

Q: Does the Geophysics department typically consider/ accept applicants from other scientific backgrounds (like Biochemistry)?

A: Absolutely! Geophysics is increasingly interdisciplinary, and we appreciate diverse backgrounds and perspectives. We do expect incoming students to have taken sufficient STEM coursework to be able to process and learn new concepts in the context of Earth physics. Aside from that, the key is to identify potential mentors whose research overlaps with your scientific interests.

Q: Is there an application fee waiver for international students?

A: Unfortunately, application fee waivers are only available for United States citizens and permanent residents who meet eligibility requirements. More info can be found here: <https://scripps.ucsd.edu/doctoral/admissions/how-apply>

Q: I would appreciate any insights on balancing coursework and research in the first year of grad school.

A: It is generally understood that the 1st year of the program is focused on coursework and getting a good foundation in geophysics. But people do participate in research in their first year. It is a conversation that you can have with your advisor, but for the most part, the coursework will take precedence.

Q: Is there any program at UCSD/Scripps for grad students to engage with high school students, maybe to introduce them to geophysics and its exciting applications?

A: There are high-school engagement programs (SCOPE is one of them) and other community involvement opportunities (link: <https://scripps.ucsd.edu/about/community>). Of course, if you are particularly passionate about a specific form of outreach, there is always a way to work to create a specific program you want to see.

Q: Does the department provide students with grants or support to present their research at international conferences/seminars?

A: There is a thrice-per-year application cycle where students can apply for funding to travel (called the SIO travel fund). You can apply for up to \$3000 over the course of your entire time in the program. There are other ways to get funding (through grants that your advisor writes or fellowships you can apply for).

Q: Is there a difference in the timeline/program if entering with a masters degree instead of a bachelors degree?

A: All students take the geophysics departmental exam at the end of their first year, at which point everyone is on a relatively equal intellectual footing. Research starts in earnest in the second year. Students with a masters degree may find aspects of the curriculum or their research easier than their peers, especially at the outset, and they are certainly free to advance to candidacy and graduate as early as their preparation and subsequent work allow.

Q: What are you looking for in a letter of recommendation that would make a student stand out?

A: Our review is holistic, which means we put less weight on recommendation letters than one might imagine. The factors we use to evaluate applicants include, but are not limited to: (1) academic preparation; (2) scholarly potential; (3) diversity, equity, and inclusion contributions; (4) alignment with the program; (5) realistic self-appraisal; and (6) long-term goals. More information about our evaluation criteria can be found here: <https://scripps.ucsd.edu/doctoral/program-areas/geophysics-gp>

Q: Is R (a computer programming language) still used a lot?

A: R often shows up in the social sciences and statistics-heavy disciplines. Python, and to a lesser extent, Matlab, are the primary languages that students use in the Scripps geophysics program.

Q: Have you integrated accommodations for students with disabilities within your program? I have found that sometimes the process can be daunting.

A: The UCSD Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD, <https://osd.ucsd.edu>) supports students with disabilities at both the graduate and undergraduate level.

Q: How can I get in touch with the Geophysics student who presented in the information session?

A: Email Madeleine Kerr (PhD student) at mkerr@ucsd.edu