

Partnership Departments Request for Proposals 2025-2026 AGU Bridge Program Cycle

1. INTRODUCTION

In alignment with [AGU's mission](#), [strategic plan](#), and [core values](#), the AGU Bridge Program aims to advance opportunities for all students in graduate geoscience departments and to support cohorts of students pursuing advanced degrees in the geosciences. Talent is equally distributed, but opportunities are not. By providing support to students, the program recognizes the potential for all students to excel in the geosciences. The AGU Bridge Program is dedicated to ensuring that anyone with an interest in the geosciences has access to educational opportunities and pursuit of success in the field. The AGU Bridge Program disseminates leading practices in higher education and facilitates a graduate application pathway in partnership with geoscience graduate departments across the U.S. To address today's global challenges, we need a scientific community that is engaging for all students who are interested in pursuing advanced degrees in the geosciences.

As part of our commitment to expanding opportunities for all students in the geosciences, we expect our partner departments to:

1. Engage departmental faculty/staff/students both internally and externally in discussions and actions that improve the access to and experience of graduate education for all students
2. Develop and implement a sustainable bridge experience specific to departmental resources, needs and context that supports all students entering the department
3. Work with AGU Bridge program to track student progress and submit progress reports (Grades, GPA, and transcripts are not collected)
4. Submit annual impact reports to reflect departmental efforts on above items
5. Participate in collaborative discussions with other partner departments and the AGU Bridge Program on practices that improve all programs
6. Work to promote and disseminate successful program components to the geoscience community

2. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The AGU Bridge Program invites your department to consider joining a network of Partner departments that are working to provide students with supportive and engaging environments in graduate education. This document provides guidelines by which departments can apply to become a Partner, including the criteria we use to select these departments. The procedure for becoming a Partner requires departments to submit a brief proposal detailing programs and practices that support students entering and successfully completing their graduate program.

3. ELIGIBILITY

The Partner department must be part of a university or college that offers a Master's and/or Doctoral degree in the geosciences and be located and accredited in the United States or U.S. Territories. The institution must have active research programs readily available to students throughout the academic year.

4. BENEFITS

Departments that become Partners will be able to take advantage of the following benefits:

- Access to the AGU Bridge Program student applicant database. The annual student application is open to students who have not applied to graduate school or applicants who applied to one or more geoscience graduate programs but did not accept an offer or commit to a specific department/program in the current academic year.
- Recognition by AGU of the department's commitment to a supportive future in the geosciences.
- Recommendation of the department's supportive post-baccalaureate educational environment to prospective and current Bridge Program students.
- Secure a five-year partnership with the potential to renew.

5. APPROVAL PROCESS

Eligible partner department applications will be reviewed by the AGU Bridge Program Review Committee. See section 5.4 for additional details. If your department has previously submitted an application to the AGU Bridge Program and is reapplying, your new application must demonstrate substantial changes from previously submitted applications to be considered by the Review Committee.

5.1 Proposal Submission

To be considered for partnership, your department must submit your proposal via an online submission platform. The proposal is comprised of two parts:

- A short answer form consisting of 8 prompts
- 1-page narrative uploaded as a PDF. Narratives that exceed the 1-page limit will not be considered.

Proposals will be reviewed annually for approval. The proposal must be submitted online via the submission platform at the link below and **must** include the completed short-answer section and the 1-page narrative (submitted as a single PDF document). Application link can be found [here](#). **The deadline for proposals is 10 September 2025 at 11:59 PM ET. Late proposals will not be accepted.**

5.2 Narrative Formatting Guidelines

Narrative must be clear, readily legible, and conform to the following requirements:

Use of only the approved typefaces identified below, a black font color, and a font size of 10 points or larger must be used:

For Windows users: Arial, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype, or Georgia

For Macintosh users: Arial, Helvetica, Palatino, or Georgia

For TeX users: Computer Modern

A Symbol font may be used to insert special characters; however, the font size requirement still applies.

- b. No more than 6 lines within a vertical space of 1 inch; and
- c. Margins, in all directions, must be at least an inch.

Please note that no supplemental documents can be sent as an attachment or submitted after the submission deadline. They will be discarded. Additionally, the committee is not obligated to follow or review hyperlinks embedded in your application. Any listed citations or references must be part of the 1-page narrative or otherwise included in the word count of the online form. Please do not use footnotes in the document.

Important: The PDF narrative must have your institution and department name listed at the beginning of the document (as the main title for this page) and the same institution and department name must be used in the naming of the file. (e.g., University of XYZ_Dept Name.pdf)

5.3 Parts of the Proposal

The proposal is comprised of two parts: a short answer submission and a 1-page narrative (uploaded as a single PDF file within the submission platform).

A: Short Answer submission

The short answer section of the proposal has some basic contact and department information collected for data purposes as well as the below eight sections about practices within your department submitted via text boxes in the submission platform.

The following 8 sections list the components to be addressed in the short answer section of the online submission platform. All 8 sections are essential to helping the committee engage in a holistic review of your application. The list below details the formatting for each section. See

section 5.4 for additional detail on how each section will be evaluated by the review committee, including detailed descriptions of components that should be included with each section.

1. DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW (Short description/overview of department, not to exceed 250 words)
2. FACULTY ENGAGEMENT (Bulleted or Numbered list, not to exceed 400 words)
3. MENTORING ACTIVITIES (Combination of bulleted or numbered list and short description, not to exceed 500 words)
4. ADMISSION PRACTICES (Combination of bulleted or numbered list and short description, not to exceed 400 words)
5. ADVISING AND INDUCTION (Combination of bulleted or numbered list and short description, not to exceed 400 words)
6. PROGRESS MONITORING (bulleted or numbered list, not to exceed 400 words)
7. DEPARTMENT DATA (bulleted or numbered list, not to exceed 200 words)
8. EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY (Description not to exceed 500 words)

B: Narrative (to be submitted as a one-page PDF attachment uploaded on the proposal submission platform)

The narrative is a one-page summary document that consists of a high-level overview of your department's motivations and actions that have been taken.

The narrative should not be an abstract of Part A of the application, but rather a self-contained summary. It should be written in the third person and must clearly address three separate statements (within the one-page limit):

1. **Motivation:** Description of departmental commitment and why your department is pursuing AGU Bridge partnership – what motivated the department to apply to become a Bridge Partner?
2. **Current Practices:** Description of what the department considers two best examples or cases for unique interventions from Part A that have proved successful. You must select an example from Mentoring Activities and one additional activity from either Progress Monitoring or Advising and Induction.
3. **Continuous Learning:** Description of at least two initiatives that indicate new activities or interventions that are beginning to be implemented or will be implemented soon based on recent/new learnings or trainings undergone by the department faculty. This demonstrates the department's willingness to try new things to improve aspects of graduate education in

their programs.

This narrative is the most important part of the department's application and the first thing a reviewer will read. The narrative is your best chance to grab the attention/interest of the reviewers and convince them of the importance of the work that your department is doing to attract, retain, and graduate students. (Hint: Applicants should write this portion last after all the above 8 questions from Part A of the application have been answered.)

5.4 Review of Proposals

The AGU Bridge Program Review Committee will review applications. The following considerations are used in evaluating every eligible proposal.

- **Narrative**
 - Motivation to become a Bridge Partner
 - Description of Mentoring Activities and one other current practice selected from one of two categories: Progress Monitoring or Advising and Induction
 - Evidence of continuous learning by the department faculty in advancing graduate education
- **Department overview**
 - Description of the department
- **Engaged & Committed Faculty**
 - Active faculty participation is defined as a group that includes a minimum of 10-15% of tenured faculty in the geoscience department. This group must include the chair and/or the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or equivalent.
 - List should include details of how faculty members will directly contribute to the AGU Bridge Program and support of incoming Bridge students.
- **Mentoring Activities**
 - Mentoring and Mentor Training experience (only those faculty who have undergone mentor training will be allowed to recruit and advise students via the AGU-BP)
 - List mentor trainings departmental faculty/staff have participated in to enhance their ability to advise and mentor students.
 - Required mentoring trainings for faculty/staff
 - Usage of mentor-mentee compacts
 - Description of efforts to mentor and support students
 - Usage of peer mentoring
 - Required training or mentoring for peer mentors and/or TAs and RAs
 - List supports related to student professional development, social-emotional development, and general non-academic support
 - Description and examples of previous mentoring successes within the department
 - Outline how your department has or will engage with institutional or external resources to support students recruited via the AGU-BP

- **Admissions Practices and Beliefs**

- Description of the admissions process and how graduate admission decisions are made - what inputs are considered. Examples could include the use of multi-faceted admission criteria that, along with traditional measures of academic preparation, examine a broad range of indicators of a student's potential to conduct original research, and that specifically do not employ the GRE.
- Specify if GRE is used in admissions decisions and how. Please specifically identify which of the below reflects your program's requirements and note any exceptions or additional information.
 - *Does not accept:* Institution does not accept GRE scores
 - *Accepts, not required:* Institution does not require GRE scores, but applicants may submit their scores. Identify how scores are then used in admissions decisions.
 - *Required, no cutoff:* Institution requires GRE scores be submitted, but has no defined minimum score requirements.
 - *Required, with cutoff:* Institution requires GRE scores be submitted and has set a minimum score requirement for admission.
- Listing of financial support package and health benefits awarded to students.
 - The financial support package should include information about the length of the award and any requirements students must follow to maintain funding. (*# of years that financial support is provided to a Master's student, # of years financial support is provided to doctoral student, conditions to maintain support*).
 - Information detailing the cost of attendance for graduate students at your institution. Any additional resources to reduce financial burdens for students. (Examples: Summer support, relocation assistance, computer and other educational purchases, reduced transit fare programs, open educational resources, etc.)

- **Advising & Induction**

- Description of procedures (evaluation and advising) for accepted students to fulfill any missing prerequisites from undergraduate education (e.g. can students take upper-division undergraduate courses? What does this process look like?).
- Description of how students find an appropriate research advisor.
- Indicate whether the department uses Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for the professional advancement of students (Y/N)
- List activities and procedures for inducting students into graduate student academic and social cultures and into the department.
- Listing of department level housing initiatives, student handbook, etc.

- **Student Progress & Monitoring Procedures**

- List the timeline for student progress milestones and whether IDPs are used to track progress
- How student progress is monitored in the first few semesters, including when in the term this occurs

- Early intervention plans in case student is doing poorly, including tutoring assistance, considerations of add/drop dates, and having students enroll in different level courses.
 - Exam structure for reaching candidacy
 - Comprehensive or qualifying exam (*List requirements for attempting, passing, passing and retaking the exam, and the pass rate for students*)
 - PhD candidacy exam (*List requirements for attempting, passing, passing and retaking the exam, and the pass rate for students*)
 - Long term progress monitoring plans for students
 - Presence of an Ombudsman and procedure on how grievances are handled in the department
- **Department Data**
 - Student retention rate from admission to graduation.
 - Reasons why students left the graduate program in the past five years if known. (*receive degree, transfer, obtain MS, full or part-time employment, personal reasons, etc*); *include data if available*
 - Applicant acceptance rate
 - Current number of students enrolled
 - **Expanding Opportunity Efforts**
 - Describe efforts that your department is undertaking to expand opportunities for access to graduate studies for all students in a supportive environment
 - Describe efforts that your department is undertaking to support students during the duration of their studies
 - Highlight specific department efforts focused on career development and student preparation for life after graduate school
 - *This section should include new information on components of departmental practices and efforts and should not merely repeat information from the above sections.*

5.5 Review by AGU Bridge Partner Review Committee

AGU Bridge Partner Review Committee members will review all completed and eligible submissions. Possible outcomes from the review committee are as follows:

1. Approved
 - Full approval: Department designation as an AGU Bridge Partner, invitation to join onboarding event, MOU process commences.
2. Denied
 - Denied proposals will receive notification of application status

6. Expectations of a Partner Department

The following are expectations for continuing as a recognized Bridge Partner:

1. Participate in collaborative discussions with other partner departments and the AGU-BP on practices that improve all programs
2. Engage faculty/staff/students both internally and externally in discussions that improve access to and create a supportive environment for all students
3. Provide evidence of faculty mentor training as part of the annual report (see #6), only faculty who have participated in mentoring training are eligible to recruit students via the AGU-BP
4. Inform AGU-BP of all offers and student acceptances from the AGU-BP application portal
5. Work with AGU-BP to track student progress and submit progress reports each semester including enrollment status, accomplishments and program milestones (Grades, GPA, or transcripts are not collected).
6. Submit an annual report about impact of Bridge Program on the overall graduate program and/or department.
7. Fulfill requirement of Memorandum of Agreement with AGU including mentoring education.
8. Opportunity for renewal of certification will be completed every 5 years.

More information about the program is available at the [AGU Bridge Program website](#). General inquiries can be directed to Bridge Program staff at Bridge@agu.org

Applications **must** be submitted via the online proposal submission platform form found [here](#). The submission platform includes space for both part A and B of the proposal. Please ensure that the narrative PDF file name also identifies your institution (e.g University of XYZ_Department_Bridge Partner Application). Refer to section 5.2 for additional formatting requirements. Applications are due by 10 September 2025 at 11:59 PM ET.