

# Part-time Graduate Enrollment Measures and Effectiveness — Taking the Enrollment of Applied Statistics Major at China University of Geosciences (Beijing) as an Example

Engang Hou\*, Yuxin Wang, Hairong Lian

China University of Geosciences (Beijing), Beijing 100083, China

\*Corresponding author: Engang Hou, houengang@cugb.edu.cn

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the current situation and problems of part-time graduate enrollment, taking the enrollment of the Applied Statistics major at China University of Geosciences (Beijing) as an example. It introduces the enrollment measures and their effects on expanding enrollment publicity, standardizing education and teaching management, strengthening teacher, textbook, and course construction, enhancing the construction of joint training bases outside the university, and strengthening cooperation with advantageous disciplines of the university.

**Keywords:** Part-time graduate students; Enrollment measures; Application statistics

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, part-time graduate education has gradually received social attention. Pursuing a part-time graduate degree has become an important way for many working professionals to improve their education and enhance their professional competitiveness. However, the enrollment of part-time graduate students in universities faces many problems and challenges. This article first analyzes the current enrollment status and existing problems of part-time graduate students. Then, taking the enrollment of the Applied Statistics major at China University of Geosciences (Beijing) as an example, it explores corresponding solutions and introduces the measures and effectiveness of part-time graduate student enrollment, to provide a reference for relevant universities and enrollment units.

## 2. Challenges in part-time graduate enrollment

### 2.1. Insufficient number of students and unreasonable structure

In September 2016, the General Office of the Ministry of Education issued the “Notice on Coordinating the Management of Full-time and Part-time Graduate Students” (Teaching and Research Department [2016] No. 2). This document accurately defines the concept of part-time graduate students and stipulates that part-time and full-time graduate students have the same enrollment and examination policies, and adhere to the same quality standards in their training. Their academic degree certificates have the same legal status and effectiveness. These policies have played an important role in promoting the coordinated development of full-time and part-time graduate education, ensuring the improvement of training quality, and perfecting training mechanisms.

However, part-time graduate students are generally recruited as on-the-job-oriented employment personnel. During the process of reviewing and preparing for exams, employees need to balance work, study, and life, and their study time is relatively tight. Under the unified examination policy for part-time and full-time candidates, which sets the same score line, the initial exam scores of employed personnel are generally low, making it difficult for them to enter the interview.

This leads to the following phenomenon: many enrollment units are unable to complete their enrollment plans in the first-choice admission process, and there is a large shortage of enrollment, resulting in a shortage of students. To complete the enrollment plan, many schools have to transfer full-time candidates to part-time graduate students, resulting in an unreasonable student source structure and an excessive proportion of fresh undergraduate students. Although some universities can complete the task of part-time graduate enrollment, most of the admitted students are not from the first choice, and the proportion of transfer students is significantly higher.

Taking China University of Geosciences (Beijing) as an example, the enrollment ratio in the past three years has been 12:1, 10:1, and 6:1 respectively, which is much higher than the national master’s student enrollment ratio of 3.5:1. In addition, in our part-time postgraduate enrollment in recent three years, the proportion of transfer students has exceeded 50%, and the proportion of fresh undergraduates has reached 13%. These data highlight the difficulty of the entrance examination for part-time graduate students and the high proportion of transfer students and fresh undergraduate students (see **Table 1**).

**Table 1.** Statistics of part-time graduate enrollment at China University of Geosciences (Beijing) from 2022 to 2024

Year	Enrollment plan	Number of applicants	Number of online users	Number of transfers	Number of fresh graduates
2022	230	962	78	143	37
2023	230	713	74	147	25
2024	230	692	110	111	31

Source: Internal information from the Graduate School of China University of Geosciences (Beijing)

### 2.2. Uneven enrollment of majors and limited development of disciplines

Influenced by the employment situation, enrollment units often favor popular majors, such as business administration and accounting, in professional settings and the allocation of enrollment quotas for part-time

graduate students. However, some basic disciplines, and even some advantageous disciplines and majors in schools, face enrollment difficulties. This not only affects the balanced development of disciplines but also deviates from the original idea of part-time graduate education.

For example, China University of Geosciences (Beijing) is a research-oriented university with geology, resources, and environment as its main characteristics. Geology, geological resources, and geological engineering are two disciplines under the national “Double First Class” construction. Unfortunately, taking 2024 as an example, the proportion of part-time graduate students admitted by the school in geology and related majors is less than 8%. The enrollment majors are mainly concentrated in business administration, public administration, applied statistics, sports, and accounting, with these popular majors accounting for over 80% of the enrollment (see **Table 2**).

**Table 2.** Statistics of Part-Time Graduate Enrollment by Major at China University of Geosciences (Beijing) in 2024

Major	Number of enrollments
Business administration	80
Public administration	35
Applied statistics	33
Sports	22
Accounting	15
Finance	9
Geological Engineering	8
Law (Jurisprudence)	5
Public Administration	3
Resources and Environment	2
Surveying and Mapping Engineering	2
Civil engineering	2
Marxist theory	1
Safety engineering	1
Business Administration	1
Computer technology	1
Environmental Engineering	1

Source: Internal information from the Graduate School of China University of Geosciences (Beijing)

### 2.3. Candidates have concerns about part-time education

Candidates have certain concerns about the drawbacks of part-time graduate education. For example, the tuition fees for part-time graduate students are usually significantly higher than those for full-time graduate students, and most schools do not provide scholarships and accommodation to part-time students, resulting in heavy living pressure and financial burden for students. Part-time classes are generally not on working days, and students are concerned that the school may not place enough emphasis on them, resulting in lower teaching quality compared to full-time classes.

They also do not provide supporting online course resources, which may lead to academic difficulties. Some companies have lower recognition of part-time education than full-time education, and students are concerned that the practical benefits of part-time education are limited, and the time, energy, and financial resources spent may not receive the expected returns.

Candidates have the above concerns about the shortcomings of part-time education, which leads to a lack of attractiveness in the enrollment process of part-time graduate education and makes it difficult to attract high-quality students.

### **3. Measures for part-time graduate enrollment and their effectiveness**

In response to the above issues, especially the doubts and concerns of candidates when applying for part-time graduate programs, universities should timely improve their enrollment and training strategies for part-time graduate students, and develop reasonable enrollment plans to cope with the challenges faced by part-time enrollment. Next, this article will take the experience of China University of Geosciences (Beijing) in applying statistical enrollment and education as an example to explain the enrollment measures and their effectiveness for part-time graduate students.

#### **3.1. Expand enrollment promotion in various forms to enhance social influence**

Universities should increase their publicity efforts for part-time graduate education, by organizing lectures, summer camps, and other activities to introduce the enrollment policies for part-time graduate students, so that candidates can understand the characteristics and advantages of part-time graduate education. Simultaneously, enrollment promotional videos can be recorded to expand the scope of publicity through media and online platforms, making society more accepting and recognizing part-time graduate students, and improving the coverage and influence of enrollment information.

Taking the Applied Statistics major at China University of Geosciences (Beijing) as an example, the school sends graduate supervisors and teachers responsible for graduate enrollment to participate in national graduate enrollment on-site consultation meetings every year. Concurrently, each discipline will send graduate supervisors to Hebei, Henan, Shandong, Shanxi, Liaoning, Jilin, and other provinces to conduct graduate enrollment lectures and promote graduate enrollment policies both online and offline. The college lecture will introduce both full-time graduate enrollment and part-time enrollment policies.

The college annually produces promotional videos for graduate enrollment across various disciplines, highlighting the strengths of each discipline and providing the latest enrollment information for both full-time and part-time students. During the enrollment period, these videos are published on the college's official social media accounts. Many teachers and students actively share the videos and related content, increasing the visibility of the programs and enhancing the effectiveness of enrollment efforts on online platforms.

The college hosts an annual national summer camp for outstanding college students and graduate enrollment lectures. Master's and doctoral supervisors from various disciplines are invited to give academic presentations, introduce their research directions, and invite distinguished alumni to share insights on graduate life. By combining subject-specific lectures, enrollment presentations, and the selection of outstanding recommended students, the college has enhanced the visibility and influence of its programs, receiving widespread attention and praise from students across universities nationwide.

Additionally, the college has established connections with schools that have admitted a large number of students in previous years, strengthened intercollegiate promotion and cooperation, and encouraged previous students to spontaneously promote full-time and part-time graduate enrollment policies to undergraduate graduates, as well as their working classmates and colleagues. This has played an important role in stabilizing and developing high-quality student sources.

### **3.2. Standardize and strengthen education and teaching management to improve dissertation quality**

Universities should enhance the management and oversight of the entire part-time graduate education and teaching process to ensure high-quality instruction and thesis writing. The Graduate School and teaching units should hold regular joint symposiums to facilitate communication and collaboration on graduate training programs, maintaining a unified high standard for the quality of theses across both part-time and full-time graduate students.

Using the Applied Statistics major at China University of Geosciences (Beijing) as an example, the college places significant emphasis on key stages, including coursework, thesis proposals, mid-term reports, and thesis defenses, while consistently standardizing and strengthening teaching management. Mentors provide thorough guidance on topic selection, research, and writing, supporting students in completing their theses and raising overall thesis quality. At each stage, students submit applications and corresponding documents online, which are strictly reviewed and approved by the supervisor and support team to ensure clarity and compliance with standards. Before and after the thesis defense, the mentor and support team conduct one-on-one sessions with students to understand and address their progress and challenges, ensuring timely solutions and guiding them through all tasks needed for graduation.

In summary, the training process strictly adheres to the policy of maintaining equal standards for both part-time and full-time students, ensuring the quality of training for part-time students. This approach has gradually built a positive reputation for part-time graduate programs and has had a favorable impact on part-time graduate student enrollment.

### **3.3. Strengthen the construction of teaching staff, textbooks, courses, and teaching platforms to ensure quality education**

The teaching staff, graduate courses, and textbooks are essential resources in graduate education, playing a crucial role in building knowledge systems, enhancing research capabilities, deepening professional expertise, and cultivating innovative thinking and practical skills. Universities should prioritize strengthening their teaching staff, developing high-quality graduate courses and textbooks, establishing effective teaching management systems and quality evaluation mechanisms, and regularly inspecting and assessing teaching quality.

Using the China University of Geosciences (Beijing) as an example, the college has comprehensively planned the teaching approach for both full-time and part-time graduate students in applied statistics after extensive practice and research. To accommodate part-time students who are working while studying, the college utilizes weekends to schedule courses in applied statistical theory and practice. It also leverages the “China University of Geosciences Network Teaching Platform” to provide online resources. Important subjects offer online course videos and accompanying exercises to meet the needs of part-time students,

allowing them to conveniently review and preview material after class and stay on track with their studies.

Moreover, the college prioritizes textbook development. A mentor with extensive teaching experience in applied statistics has created textbooks, such as “Statistical Calculation,” which integrate decades of teaching experience with the latest advancements in the field. This enables students to more effectively grasp contemporary research methods and trends in the information age and big data era, significantly enhancing their practical skills.

### **3.4. Provide policy support, strengthening off-campus joint training bases, and addressing students’ concerns about their future**

Universities should strengthen the construction of off-campus joint training bases and enterprise internship bases, and build a non-full-time graduate talent training practice system that deeply integrates schools and enterprises. Taking China University of Geosciences (Beijing) as an example, the school’s applied statistics major has established a long-term and stable cooperative relationship with the Chinese Academy of Sciences Aerospace Information Innovation Institute, the Institute of High Energy Physics, the Institute of Atmospheric Physics, the Academy of Agricultural Sciences and other scientific research institutes. Before candidates apply, the college conducts extensive publicity to make them aware of relevant policies. After part-time students enroll, the college arranges for them to meet with on-campus and off-campus supervisors. Students learn about various research directions in the field of applied statistics, as well as the research tasks and related arrangements of the base. Supervisors gain a deep understanding of students’ ideas and needs and complete a two-way selection process.

Some part-time students who are temporarily unemployed choose to stay at the base, study under external mentors, and participate in research projects, quickly entering the research state. Off-campus bases provide students with salaries and dormitories, which greatly alleviate their financial pressure and enable them to study in Beijing with peace of mind and actively engage in scientific research work.

In the construction of enterprise internship bases, the school has established cooperative relationships with well-known enterprises to jointly develop training programs and teaching plans for students’ practical activities. The enterprise provides data professional training courses, and the school sends students to the enterprise to complete practical and research-based learning during the summer semester. Experienced lecturers in the enterprise use vivid cases to introduce the processes of various projects in the enterprise to students.

Through on-site explanations and online practice system exercises, students have gained a deep understanding of the application of statistical and data science knowledge in the industry. Students have strengthened their communication and interaction with enterprises during the learning process. The practical experience in enterprises has broadened students’ horizons, enabling them to no longer be limited to textbook knowledge and understand the needs and expectations of enterprises for talents. After the practice is completed, students have a two-way choice with the company. Students who perform well can further communicate with the company in depth and have the opportunity to stay and work in the company.

Furthermore, in response to the difficulties faced by part-time graduate students in their daily lives, the school provides a series of policy support, such as scholarships and grants, to solve students’ household registration and file issues, and help them better complete their studies. Through the above measures, the training of part-time graduate students majoring in applied statistics in the college has gradually established

a good reputation. Students are willing to share their learning experiences and observations at school and base with their classmates and friends, and actively promote the school's policies, which further increases the enthusiasm of candidates to apply for part-time graduate programs at our school and forms a virtuous cycle.

### **3.5. Strengthen cooperation with the school's advantageous disciplines and build the overall brand image**

Although some universities have strong strengths in key disciplines, they do not have an advantage in part-time graduate enrollment. Recruiting popular majors can make full use of the school's resources, strengthen exchanges with the school's advantageous disciplines, and achieve win-win cooperation. Taking China University of Geosciences (Beijing) as an example, the school focuses on geology as its main characteristic and advantageous discipline. Deep cooperation and integrated development between mathematics, statistics, and geology, deeply cultivating mathematical problems in earth science, achieving breakthroughs in the search for mineral resources, and continuously improving scientific research level.

The college guides some graduate students in applied statistics to collaborate with geosciences in conducting interdisciplinary scientific research, enabling students to proficiently master the basic knowledge of modern mathematical geology and apply statistical knowledge to geoscience research. Students have gained richer and more cutting-edge learning experiences. The relevant measures have played a positive role in building the overall brand image of the school and promoting the recruitment of high-quality students in various disciplines.

## **4. Conclusion**

Part-time graduate education faces many challenges and problems in the enrollment process. However, by expanding enrollment publicity in various forms, standardizing education and teaching management, strengthening the construction of teaching staff, textbooks, and courses, providing policy support, strengthening the construction of external joint training bases, and enhancing cooperation with advantageous disciplines of the university, these problems can be gradually solved. High-quality students can be recruited, the development of part-time graduate education in universities can be promoted, and the original intention of reforming part-time graduate education can be achieved. With the continuous improvement of part-time graduate education in universities, society will increasingly recognize it, and part-time graduate education will become an important choice for more working professionals to enhance themselves and achieve career development.

## **Disclosure statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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