Graduate education at the University of Colorado began in 1892. In 1909, the Graduate School was organized with a separate faculty. The mission of the Graduate School is to facilitate and enhance the educational experiences of all graduate students and to guarantee a standard of quality and cohesion across all disciplines, ensuring the continuing integrity and value of a CU Boulder graduate degree. Currently overseeing more than 120 graduate programs, the Graduate School is responsible for planning, implementing and evaluating graduate programs and graduate education policies and procedures.

The Graduate School along with the Graduate Faculty develops and administers programs according to the needs of the campus and in accord with the general standards of excellence and sound academic administration established by the Graduate School and the Graduate School Rules (http://www.colorado.edu/GraduateSchool/policies/_docs/GraduateSchoolRules.pdf). Academic policies governing graduate education are initiated by the faculty in accordance with the Laws of the Board of Regents. The Graduate School Executive Advisory Council, which consists of members of the Graduate Faculty, advises the Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost for Graduate Affairs on issues concerning Graduate School policies and programs. The Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost for Graduate Affairs reports to the Provost.

The Graduate School also supports a variety of centers and programs that are not affiliated with any single college. These include the Center for Humanities and the Arts, the Center for STEM Learning, the Center for Native American and Indigenous Studies, the Center for the Study of Origins, the Center for Critical Thought, The Colorado European Union Center of Excellence, and the Program in Environmental Design.