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Purpose and Scope of this Document

The Coastal Sciences Graduate Student Handbook contains the policies and guidelines for doctoral and masters level graduate students in the Division of Coastal Sciences (COA) in the School of Ocean Science and Engineering (SOSE). These guidelines augment those stipulated in The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) [Graduate Bulletin](#). It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with all policies and deadlines in these documents. The student is subject to the versions of the USM Graduate Bulletin and COA Graduate Student Handbook associated with the semester of their admission.

SOSE, GCRL & USM Information

Overview

The School of Ocean Science and Engineering (SOSE) harnesses elements from key areas of The University of Southern Mississippi including the Division of Coastal Sciences at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL) in Ocean Springs, the Division of Marine Science (DMS) at the John C. Stennis Space Center in Hancock County, and internationally recognized leader in marine science.

GCRL is a marine/coastal research and education enterprise and with all of SOSE is part workforce of 200 faculty, researchers, graduate students, and support staff. Research at GCRL is multidisciplinary and applications-oriented with a focus on sustainable coastal and marine resources, development of new marine technologies, and the education of future scientists and citizens. Education opportunities span graduate degree programs in coastal sciences, undergraduate field courses in marine biology and hands-on discovery programs for precollege students and teachers.

Research and education activities at GCRL are conducted through the Division of Coastal Sciences and often in collaboration with research centers including the Center for Fisheries Research and Development, the Marine Education Center, and the Thad Cochran Marine Aquaculture Center. Details about SOSE and each GCRL department/center can be found on their webpages:

[School of Ocean Science and Engineering](#)
[Division of Coastal Sciences](#)
[Center for Fisheries Research and Development](#)
[Marine Education Center](#)
[Thad Cochran Marine Aquaculture Center](#)

Contacts

Any Emergency: 911

Ambulance Service: 800.677.1124

Hospital: 228.818.1111

Ocean Springs Police: 228.875.2211

Facilities

The GCRL is comprised of two sites. The Halstead site includes GCRL administrative offices, many COA faculty and students, the Student Work Space area (Oceanography 1-161), Center for Fisheries Research and Development, Gunter Library, and the GCRL Museum. The Cedar Point site includes many COA faculty and students, a Student Work Marine Environmental Research Laboratory, Toxicology building, Thad Cochran Marine Aquaculture Center, Marine Education Center, and the GCRL Physical Plant. Campus maps can be found in Appendix A.

Internet Access

You can access the USM/GCRL wireless network by logging in to the wireless network w#@usm.edu, with # representing your multi-digit USM ID number; Ex: w123456@usm.edu) and password (the same as for your SOAR account). You can also use the [Eduroam Configuration Assistant Tool](#) to connect to the network. Eduroam is used on all USM campuses.

If you experience connection problems, contact the USM i-Tech Help Desk for assistance at 601.266.HELP.

iTech

iTech services are available through the main helpdesk in Hattiesburg (601.266.4357). If you have technology-related issues, you must log a support ticket through the [Self Service Portal](#). Issues will be resolved through Hattiesburg or by the GCRL iTech representative.

Libraries

Days/Hours Open:

Monday-Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm, closed during the lunch hour, 12:00pm to 1:00pm

Closed for USM holidays

Gunter Library is open nights and Sundays during the GCRL Summer Field Program sessions.

The Gunter library is located in the Caylor Building at the Halstead site. The Gunter Library provides technical information and research support for School of Ocean Science and Engineering students, faculty, researchers, and other library users. The collections available include over 7,000 print books on site, 1300 scientific journal titles, 31,000+ reprints, expedition reports, dissertations and theses, and reference works. Subject areas include all coastal and marine related topics including biology, geology, chemistry, conservation, ecology, botany, oceanography, ocean engineering, and toxicology. Search <http://lib.usm.edu/>.

There are subject guides for finding books, accessing online journals and databases and

and Zotero.

http://libguides.lib.usm.edu/citation_help

Research Data Management

This guide provides an overview of research data management best practices and

below the standards above have potential to receive conditional admission. Students granted conditional admission to the Division of Coastal Sciences are not eligible for any graduate assistantship positions regardless of the source of funding. Refer to the [USM Graduate Bulletin](#) and [Quality of Work](#) section in this document.

The assistantship stipend levels are currently as follows:

\$1,900/month beginning M.S. students; \$1,950/month for M.S. students after advancing to candidacy

\$1,950/month beginning Ph.D. students; \$2,000/month for Ph.D. students after advancing to candidacy

Students advance to candidacy by completing all coursework with at least a 3.0 GPA, completing an approved thesis prospectus, and successfully passing the comprehensive examination. Once candidacy is achieved, the GA is eligible for a \$50/month stipend rate increase (dependent on funding availability). Students and/or Major Professors should notify the COA Financial Coordinator when this milestone has been met in order to implement the stipend increase. The stipend increase will be processed as soon as the Financial Coordinator is notified the increase is not retroactive.

Recipients of student assistantships are considered USM employees and are subject to the expectations of attendance of the staff and faculty of USM. Allotted holidays are those of the staff and faculty of USM. All other personal time away from USM must be discussed with the Major Professor. GAs are also required to read and understand the USM employee handbook and comply with USM policies. Failure to comply with USM employment policies or unsatisfactory performance in the role of GA

Disclaimer: The primary title for this role is Major Professor, but Faculty Advisor, Faculty Mentor, Committee Chair, and other titles may be used interchangeably. Major Professor is used consistently throughout this document, but be aware that other titles are often used for this position distinction.

Graduate education in COA is implemented through the relationship between the student and a Major Professor, thus the choice of Major Professor is critical to the success of the graduate student. Students planning on enrolling in COA should familiarize themselves with faculty members and then arrange a visit to discuss research interests and ideas, possible course work schedule, and financial support. After acceptance into COA, the student and chairing the Advisory Committee.

The Major Professor:

Provides the student office and research space.

Assists the student in selecting the Advisory Committee.

Works with student to formulate a research prospectus.

Obtains the resources necessary for the chosen research project.

progress.

For students admitted to COA without a Major Professor, the Associate Director will serve as interim Major Professor for a period of up to 12 months after which time the student must have an official Major Professor to be able to continue in the graduate program.

The Advisory Committee:

approves the thesis or dissertation research prospectus and the thesis or dissertation

administers the appropriate written and oral examinations.

program.

It is the duty of the Advisory Committee to oversee the academic development of the student. To ensure that the student has educational experiences commensurate with the degree sought, the Advisory Committee may require a student to complete specific courses and meet specific competencies. The Associate Director is an ex officio non-voting member of all Advisory Committees.

Students must email the COA Academic Coordinator to set up an official Advisory Committee. This must be done in the first semester and before any major milestones are attempted. All members of the proposed Advisory Committee must have Regular or Associate Faculty Status. It can take several months to receive final approval for a new Associate Graduate Faculty status request.

Grievance Procedure

Students may encounter problems in areas such as academics, student life and financial support. If a student feels a need to pursue grievance, the graduate student should first consult his/her Major Professor. However, if the student is uncomfortable or dissatisfied using this route, the student should meet with the Associate Director who will counsel the student on a confidential basis and will assist in selecting an appropriate grievance procedure. Students may also refer to the [Division of Student Affairs](#) for more details on grievances and appeals.

Leave of Absence

Under certain circumstances (chronic illness, family crisis, extreme hardship, military deployment, etc.) a student may request a leave of absence from his/her/their graduate program. A leave of absence will be granted for one semester; the student may petition for one additional semester as circumstances warrant. The maximum leave allowable is one academic year. Requests for a leave of absence should be submitted using the [Leave of Absence Request Form](#)

A student who applies for degree but finds that he/she cannot finish as anticipated must submit a new Application for Degree. This is called a deferment. There is no fee associated with the *first* deferment. Any subsequent deferments must be accompanied by a fee payment. Students should notify the Graduate School Communication and Documents Specialist of a deferment.

Changing from M.S. to Ph.D., or Ph.D. to M.S.

M.S. track students may be reclassified as Ph.D. track students. Demonstrated excellence is required in coursework and a passing grade in the comprehensive examinations before -track student can be officially reassigned to the doctoral program. The student must submit a memorandum to their Major Professor declaring their intention. The

-track degree plan, they may be required to reapply and submit a full application to the COA Ph.D. program through the USM Graduate School Admissions portal.

In contrast, if a Ph.D. student fails the qualifying exams on the second attempt, the memorandum to the Associate Director indicating such a change, and the Associate Director will notify the Graduate School.

Class Registration

and register in a timely manner through [SOAR](#). Failure to do so may result in late

summer and fall classes in early April. Students should enroll for spring classes in early October. If you are a GA, you must be enrolled in the appropriate number of hours (9-13 hours in Fall and Spring; 1-3 hours in Summer) for your tuition waiver to be applied.

Special Topics, Special Problems, and Research courses are typically listed with a 600-level and 700-level section (e.g., COA 690/790). When enrolling in one of these courses, M.S. students should enroll in the 600-level course and Ph.D. students should enroll in the 700-level course with their faculty advisor.

First-time registration assistance is available from the COA Academic Coordinator. New [SOAR](#) soon after acceptance. You should change your contact information to your (new) local address and phone number. This ensures all university correspondence will arrive as soon as possible. *All university correspondence will be through the university email account issued by USM.*

For continuing students, early registration must be accomplished using SOAR. For instructions on how to register for classes using SOAR, refer to [SOAR tutorials](#). Refer to the [current academic calendar](#) for important student-related deadlines and dates.

Continuous Enrollment

Students must be enrolled continuously (each fall and spring semester) after completing required coursework and passing the comprehensive examination through the completion of the degree program. Students must enroll as stipulated below:

Students must enroll for a minimum of one (1) hour each fall and spring semester to maintain continuous enrollment.

Students must enroll for one hour of thesis (698) or dissertation (898) during the semester they expect to take the comprehensive exam or defend and complete the thesis or dissertation. The final version of the document, approved by both the

Graduate School no later than the [specified deadline](#). If a student fails to meet the deadline for submission, he/she must register for one (1) hour of thesis (698) or dissertation (898) until graduation.

Failure to enroll for at least one (1) hour during the fall and spring semesters will result in discontinuation from the university. A student who has been discontinued and seeks readmission must apply for readmission, pay an application fee, and remit payment for one hour of tuition, at the current tuition rate, for each fall and spring semester not enrolled.

All forms must be typed (except for signatures). Handwritten forms are not accepted by the Graduate School. Complete forms must be sent electronically to the COA Academic Coordinator for approval and submission to the Graduate School. Electronic signatures are preferred on all forms.

Course Revalidation

A student who has successfully petitioned for an extension of time limit for graduation due to extraordinary circumstances that slowed degree progress must revalidate all graduate courses taken at USM outside the time limit for the degree before the student can graduate. The revalidation plan must be developed by the Major Professor and approved by the Associate Director and Dean of the Graduate School. A \$50 fee for each course to be revalidated must be paid before the revalidation is attempted, up to a maximum of \$400 in revalidation fees. Over-age extension and transfer courses cannot be revalidated. The Major Professor must submit a [Revalidation Request Form](#) for approval to proceed with the course(s) revalidation. Once the courses have been revalidated, the Major Professor must submit a [Revalidation Verification Form](#).

Academic Forms

Use the links below to access progress to degree and graduation forms. Some forms should be completed by [students](#), while others require completion by the [Major Professor](#).

PIMC /Span ACID 12/Lang 12 0792 reW* nBT/F1 RGpBDC q0.00000912 0 68Tff1 0 0 1 303.63 515.9 Tn

Dismissal Form
Thesis, Dissertation, or Doctoral Project Proposal (in SOAR)
Results of Comprehensive Exam (in SOAR)
Results of Oral Defense
Approval of Thesis, Dissertation, or Doctoral Project
Revalidation Request Form
Revalidation Verification Form
Transfer Credit Approval Form

Quality of Work

Students granted conditional admission to the Division of Coastal Sciences are not eligible for any graduate assistantship positions regardless of the source of funding.

To obtain *Regular Status* a student admitted conditionally must maintain a grade point average of at least 3.0 on the first nine (9) hours of coursework at or above the 600 level, not including research hours and not to include Special Problems. The 9 hour requirement must be met no program for full time students; for part time students it must be met no later than the end of the second semester (Semester here is defined as Fall/Spring academic semester). If, prior to satisfying the requirements to have the conditional status removed, the student attempts more than 9 hours of coursework at or above the 600 level, he or she must achieve a 3.0 overall grade point average on all coursework. Only USM courses will be applied toward the 9 hours required. Lower-level coursework (599 or lower) taken to remedy perceived deficiencies may not be counted toward the nine-hour requirement. All courses taken to remove conditional status must be taken on a campus of The University of Southern Mississippi. Failure to achieve these requirements will result in dismissal from the graduate program.

To obtain *Regular Status* a **Ph.D.** student admitted conditionally must maintain a grade point average of at least 3.5 on the first nine (9) hours of coursework at or above the 600 level, not including research hours and not to include Special Problems. The 9 hour requirement must be met no

program for full time students; for part time students it must be met no later than the end of the second semester (Semester here is defined as Fall/Spring academic semester). If, prior to satisfying the requirements to have the conditional status removed, the student attempts more than 9 hours of coursework at or above the 600 level, he or she must achieve a 3.5 overall grade point average. All courses taken to remove conditional status must be taken on a campus of The University of Southern Mississippi. Failure to achieve these requirements will result in dismissal from the graduate program.

must write a memorandum and complete a change of status form, through the Associate Director, to the Graduate School requesting such a change.

A minimum 3.0 GPA in coursework is required for graduation. If the student's cumulative GPA falls below 3.0, the student has 1 (one) probationary semester in which to elevate the cumulative GPA to 3.0 by taking coursework, not including research hours. Failure to elevate the cumulative GPA to 3.0 is grounds for termination from the graduate program.

A minimum 3.0 GPA in coursework is required for graduation. Only courses with earned letter grades of C or better will be accepted for credit towards the degree, and no more than two (2) grades of "C+" or "C" across six (6) credit hours is allowable in any coursework attempted.

No grade of "C-" or lower is allowable in any coursework attempted. In this case, the student is automatically put on probation until the course is retaken. A course retaken to return a student to good academic standing must be retaken the next semester the course is offered. In the case of Special Topics or Special Problems courses, the student is required to retake the course covering the same material and earn a better grade. A student may retake one course to improve his/her grade point average. The original grade in the course will remain on the transcript but will not be used in the calculation of the GPA once the repeat has been recorded. A course retake form must be submitted to the Graduate School during the semester the course is retaken.

Failure to demonstrate satisfactory progress towards completion of degree requirements as determined by the Advisory Committee and Associate Director will result in the assistantship being revoked and may ultimately entail termination of the graduate program. Dismissal from the graduate program will be initiated as a recommendation

will act on this recommendation and forward the dismissal request to the Graduate School.

A student will be placed on academic probation for the next regular semester of enrollment (fall or spring) for the following reasons:

The cumulative grade point average (GPA) or program GPA falls below 3.0.

A grade of "C-" or lower is awarded.

A seventh hour of C+ or below is awarded.

non-voting members may be added to the committee with the approval of the Associate Director. An additional COA faculty member may be appointed by the Associate Director to attend the oral comprehensive examination and one to attend the thesis defense to observe the proceedings. The committee evaluates the prospectus, provides guidance on courses the student should take, administers the comprehensive exam, and evaluates the written and oral defense of the thesis. Successful completion of the prospectus, comprehensive exam and thesis defense requires the approval of a majority of the committee members.

A Graduate Committee Request Form must be submitted to the Graduate School with the assistance of the Academic Coordinator early in the student's degree program, prior to defense of proposal or the comprehensive exam, whichever comes first. All proposed committee members must have active Regular or Associate Graduate Faculty status. The student or the Major Professor should email the names of the committee members to the Academic Coordinator to initiate the form.

for students admitted Fall 2017 to present

Effective for all Fall 2017 newly admitted graduate students, the Graduate School will utilize Degree Progress Reports (DPRs) to monitor progress to degree. Students 792 reW* nBT/F1 12 Tf1 0

Students are required to prepare a concise, yet detailed, written thesis prospectus. An approved prospectus is a research plan detailing the scope of work and associated deliverables that fulfills the thesis requirements of the M.S. degree. This written document must be presented to the Advisory Committee at least two weeks prior to the student making an oral presentation on the prospectus.

Any subsequent revisions to the research prospectus must then be approved by the Advisory Committee within one (1) semester of the presentation, and only after approval can the thesis research project be considered acceptable for earning the degree. Modifications to an approved prospectus during the implementation of the research is acceptable. Minor modifications need approval of the Major Professor only; however, major changes in scope or direction of the research must be approved by the Advisory Committee.

After completing all coursework (typically in the third semester or at another time acceptable to the Advisory Committee) a written and/or oral comprehensive examination will be conducted by the Advisory Committee. The format of the exam will be determined by the Major Professor and Advisory Committee. The examination is passed by a majority vote of the Advisory Committee members and may be taken twice only. Failure to pass the M.S. comprehensive exam on the second attempt is grounds for termination from the program. The Major Professor must submit the results of the M.S. comprehensive exam via SOAR on the Results of Comprehensive & Qualifying Exams form immediately after completion of the exam.

Students advance to candidacy for the M.S. in Coastal Sciences by completing all coursework with at least a 3.0 GPA, completing an approved thesis prospectus, and successfully passing the comprehensive examination.

Students must enroll for a minimum of one hour during the semester they expect to take the comprehensive exam.

Instructions for writing your thesis and completing the submission process can be found here: <https://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/internalportal/instructions-and-videos.php>

After courses are completed and the comprehensive examinations passed, the M.S.

for students admitted Fall 2017 to present

Effective for all Fall 2017 newly admitted graduate students and continuing forward, the Graduate School will utilize Degree Progress Reports (DPRs) to monitor progress to degree. The DPRs will replace Plan of Study (POS) forms and graduate degree auditors in the Graduate School will not accept POS forms from these students. Any coursework taken by any student (including Fall 2017 admits) prior to 01/01/2015 will not be populated on the DPR.

Students and faculty should utilize the DPR to track progress to degree and assist in course scheduling. DPRs can be accessed through SOAR. Use this [tutorial](#) for instructions on how to access this information in SOAR.

A minimum of 84 graduate credit hours beyond the Baccalaureate degree or a minimum of 54 graduate credit hours beyond the M.S. degree is required for the Ph.D. in Coastal Sciences. The [Graduate Bulletin](#) should be consulted for the breakdown of specific hours required per course type (Electives, Research, Dissertation, etc.) for a COA degree.

Below is a guideline to credit hour requirements for Ph.D. students. The [Graduate Bulletin](#) should be consulted for specific details related to any COA degree plan.

Note: COA 791- Research, COA 797- Independent Study, and COA 898- Dissertation do not count toward credit hours of electives or Research Tools for the Ph.D. degree.

Requirements for students entering with the B.S. degree

Course Type	Hours Required
COA 791 (Research)	28
COA 898 (Dissertation)	12
Research Tools	15
Electives (Determined by Major Professor & Advisory Committee)	29
Total Hours Required	84

Requirements for students entering with the M.S. degree

Course Type	Hours Required
COA 791 (Research)	16
COA 898 (Dissertation)	12
Research Tools	15

Students are required to prepare a concise, yet detailed, written dissertation prospectus. An approved prospectus is a research plan detailing the scope of work and associated deliverables that fulfills the dissertation requirements of the Ph.D. degree. This written document must be presented to the Advisory Committee at least two weeks prior to the student making an oral presentation on the prospectus.

Any subsequent revisions to the research prospectus must then be approved by the Advisory Committee within one (1) semester of the presentation and only after approval can the dissertation research project be considered acceptable for earning the degree. Modification to an approved prospectus during the implementation of the research is

Instructions for writing your dissertation and completing the submission process can be found here: <https://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/internalportal/instructions-and-videos.php>

Appendix B: Travel Authorization Checklist

Employee: _____ Department: _____
Date of Travel: _____ Destination: _____

1. Pre-Travel:

PTT completed in its entirety

