

MARINE SCIENCE (MS) - NON-THESIS OPTION

Master of Science in Marine Sciences

The Master of Science degree in Marine Sciences is awarded in recognition of the student's demonstrated ability to successfully complete a prescribed program of courses. It also is preferred that students undertake original scholarly research, which culminates in writing and defending an acceptable thesis.

Minimum Requirements for Admission

Students are normally admitted in the Fall Semester. Although applications for admission and fellowships are accepted throughout the year, application before February 1 is encouraged; beginning February 15 the admissions committee will make initial recommendations about applicants for the following Fall class, with formal letters sent to applicants by the end of April. Depending on availability of space and funding, applications may be approved and students admitted throughout the year.

In addition to the general admissions requirements of the Graduate School, requirements for admission to the Marine Sciences M.S. program are:

1. A narrative statement indicating the student's research interests, professional goals and commitment to full-time study for completion of degree requirements. It is highly encouraged that prospective students reach out to the faculty to discuss research interests. All of our M.S. students are funded on grant-funded research assistantships. Thus, acceptance of new students may be a condition of available funding.
2. Three letters of recommendation.
3. For students with baccalaureate degrees:
 - a. A baccalaureate degree in a discipline related to marine sciences (e.g., biology, chemistry, geology, physics) from an accredited four-year college or university.
 - b. Applicants to graduate programs in Arts and Sciences typically have a minimum GPA of at least a 3.0 on all undergraduate work. In exceptional cases, applicants may be considered with at least a 2.5 GPA on all undergraduate work, or at least a 2.75 GPA on the last 60 hours of undergraduate work.
 - c. The GRE score is not required for admission. You may optionally submit your GRE scores if you wish for them to be considered as part of your application to any graduate program in the Stokes School of Marine and Environmental Sciences, but this is not required. Individual faculty members may consider available GRE scores as part of a holistic evaluation of the candidates.
4. International students must submit an official score of at least 71 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), or equivalent score on computer administered tests.

Degree Requirements

Required Credit

A minimum of thirty (30) semester hours of approved graduate credit is required. Details about the curriculum are given below.

Transfer Credit

A maximum of twelve (12) semester hours of graduate courses taken at another accredited university in the same (or closely related) subject as that of the masters program may be considered as part of the MS degree requirements at USA. Only grades of "A" or "B" may be accepted as transfer credits. The student's mentor (major professor), in consultation with the Chair, and if necessary, the student's advisory committee, will evaluate transfer credit. The final approval is by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Residence, Full-Time Study, and Continuous Registration

A minimum of two (2) consecutive semesters of full-time study in residence is required. The residency requirements may be met at USA or the Dauphin Island Sea Lab. Students are considered full-time if registered for six (6) or more hours during fall and spring semesters. Students on assistantship must be registered continuously, i.e., every semester (fall, spring, and summer), during their program. Typical summer registration is 3 hours.

Employment other than University activities directly associated with graduate study is not allowed during full-time study, unless specifically approved by the Chair.

Time Limit

All requirements for the MS degree must be completed within three (3) years from the date of matriculation. A student who has not satisfactorily completed a M.S. degree in a three-year period must apply for a defined extension to complete the degree. This request must be recommended by a major professor, the Chair, the Director of Graduate Studies, and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Failure to complete the work within the periods specified shall necessitate reevaluation of the student's program, and may result in a recommendation of dismissal by the Director of Graduate Studies to the Graduate Dean.

Curriculum

All students pursuing the non-thesis option must have formal coursework in the following general areas of marine sciences; physical, chemical, geological, or biological oceanography. This requirement is met by completion of four (4) core courses, representing sixteen (16) credit hours.

Coursework

The required core courses are each four (4) semester hours. In addition, two (2) seminar courses are required that are one-hour each.

The remaining course work will be determined by the student's advisory committee and may include marine sciences or other graduate electives, directed studies, and thesis hours.

Code	Title	Hours
Core Courses		16
MAS 601	Physical Oceanography	
MAS 602	Chemical Oceanography	

MAS 603	Geological Oceanography	
MAS 604	Biological Oceanography	
Seminar		2
Two (2) enrollments in seminar, one (1) hour per semester		
Minimum Number of Hours for Electives and Directed Studies		12
Electives		
Select Marine Sciences or other electives (500 or 600 level courses) as determined by advisory committee		
Directed Studies		
Maximum of six (6) hours		
Total Hours		30

- Minimum of thirty (30) hours
- Comprehensive examinations
- Grades of "B" or better in all core courses will satisfy the requirement of a comprehensive exam.

Non-Thesis Program

Students pursuing the MS degree in Marine Sciences are encouraged to follow the thesis option. However, a non-thesis curriculum is available for students, upon agreement of the major professor and advisory committee, who so elect. The student will be required to complete the same degree requirements as those for a student who chooses the thesis option, with the following exceptions:

1. A thesis will not be required, consequently thesis hours can not be applied to the thirty (30) hour minimum requirement.
2. Course work must include all four (4) core courses.
3. The student must take written and oral comprehensive exams to be given by the advisory committee.
4. The student must complete Directed Studies under the direction of the major professor. The student must also have an advisory committee whose members will decide if the student's report relating to the directed study is satisfactory. The committee normally will consist of the major professor and two others. The student is required to present an open seminar about the directed study during the last semester of residency.