

# MARINE SCIENCE (MS) - 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 and 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 transfer credit is approved by the Dean of the Graduate School only after completion of a minimum of eight (8) semester hours of graduate course work in the MS program in marine sciences at USA.

### 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 must be registered continuously, i.e., every semester (fall, spring, and summer), during their program.

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 must have formal coursework in two (2) of the following general areas of marine sciences; physical, chemical, geological, or biological oceanography. This requirement is met by completion of two core courses, representing eight (8) credit hours.

### Coursework

The required two (2) 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. This program is oriented toward research and students will be expected to demonstrate research capability through completion of an acceptable thesis. Up to nine (9) hours of thesis credit may be directed toward the minimum requirement of thirty (30) semester hours. Thesis hours are taken after completion of

the student's research prospectus (described below), which is due within 1.25 years of matriculation.

Code	Title	Hours
<b>Core Courses (Take 2 of 4)</b>		<b>8</b>
MAS 601	Physical Oceanography	
MAS 602	Chemical Oceanography	
MAS 603	Geological Oceanography	
MAS 604	Biological Oceanography	
<b>Seminar</b>		<b>2</b>
Two enrollments in seminar, one hour per semester		
<b>Minimum Number of Hours for Electives, Directed Studies, and Thesis</b>		<b>20</b>
<b>Electives</b>		
Select Marine Sciences or other electives (500 or 600 level courses) as determined by advisory committee		
<b>Directed Studies</b>		
Maximum of six (6) hours		
<b>Thesis</b>		
Maximum of nine (9) hours		
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>30</b>

- Minimum of 30 hours
- Grades of "B" or better in core courses

## Research Prospectus

Beyond beginning coursework, the first milestone is to develop a written research prospectus in consultation with a thesis advisory committee.

The research prospectus is a document that lays out the student's rationale, methods, and objectives for their thesis research. It must include enough detail for the committee to evaluate both the novelty of the proposed work as well as the techniques needed to achieve the research objectives. Students are expected to complete this task with 1.25 years of matriculation.

## Defense of Thesis

The final oral defense of the thesis is scheduled after the written thesis is completed except for such revisions as may be necessary as a result of the defense. The final oral defense will not be given before all required course work has been completed or is currently in progress.