

# Marine Science (MS) – Thesis Option

## Degree Requirements

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### Degree Requirements

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.

### General

#### Required Credit

A minimum of thirty-two (32) semester hours of course credit beyond the baccalaureate degree is required for students pursuing an MS degree. Details about the curriculum are given as follows.

#### Transfer Credit

A maximum of eight (8) 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 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 consecutive semesters of full-time study in residence is required. The residency requirements may be met at USA or the Dauphin Island Sea Lab.

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 five years from the date of matriculation. A student who has not satisfactorily completed a M.S. degree in a five-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. If the student does not complete the degree requirements in the defined extension period, the Director of Graduate Studies may recommend, and the Dean of the Graduate School may take, whatever action is necessary up to and including dismissal.

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.

#### Course Requirements

A field of specialization is required of all candidates for the MS degree. In addition, all students must have formal course work in at least three (3) of the following general areas of marine sciences; biological, chemical, geological, and physical oceanography. This requirement is normally met by completion of three of the four (4) core courses (see below), representing twelve (12) credit hours.

#### Core Courses

The four (4) core courses consist of four (4) semester hours each for a total of 16 semester hours in physical (MAS 601), chemical (MAS 602), geological (MAS 603), and biological oceanography (MAS 604), or equivalent transfer hours. Two (2) semester hours of seminar (two, one (1) semester hour enrollments) are required.

The remaining course work will be determined by the student's advisory committee, but must include six (6) semester hours of marine sciences electives. Although a thesis is not an absolute requirement, this program is oriented toward research, and

students will be expected to demonstrate research capability, preferably through completion of an acceptable thesis. For students pursuing a thesis program, the MS degree program of study may include up to nine (9) hours of thesis credit toward the minimum requirements of thirty-two (32) semester hours.

Schematic of Typical Program	Credit Hours
Core Courses (3 of 4)	
MAS 601	4
MAS 602	4
MAS 603	4
MAS 604	4
Seminar (two enrollments)	2
Marine Sciences Electives (as determined by advisory committee, but at least six (6) semester hours)	6
Directed Studies	6 (maximum)
Thesis	9 (maximum)
Minimum of 32 hours	
Comprehensive examinations	
Grades of "B" or better in all core courses will satisfy the requirement of a comprehensive exam.	

### Defense Of Thesis (When Applicable)

The final oral defense of the thesis is scheduled after the 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.

## Department Information

Department of Marine Sciences website  
<http://www.southalabama.edu/marinesciences>

### Undergraduate Minor In Marine Sciences

Seventy percent of the Earth's surface is occupied by oceans. This dominance means that oceans exert a major influence on atmospheric dynamics and terrestrial ecology. The societal and economic importance of healthy ocean ecosystems cannot be overstated or ignored. The Department of Marine Sciences welcomes qualified students who wish to better focus their academic training towards oceanography and marine biology. The undergraduate minor in marine sciences is designed to complement many science and non-science majors offered at USA. Ocean-related science is relevant to many contemporary environmental issues and problems and central to understanding earth-system evolution, dynamics, climate and sustainability. The minor consists of courses and research opportunities offered primarily by faculty and researchers in the Department of Marine Sciences and the Dauphin Island Sea Lab.

Requirements for a Minor in Marine Sciences include a minimum of 18 hours in Marine Sciences related classes. The student must take MAS 134 Ocean Science, MAS 134L Ocean Science Lab, MAS 331 Marine Sciences I and MAS 332 Marine Science II. In addition to these core requirements, students must take 2-3 elective courses (MAS 371, MAS 367, MAS 430, MAS 451, MAS 471, MAS 475 or other electives approved by the Chair). Up to 6 hours required by a student's major may be applied toward the minor. The Marine Science minor places a strong emphasis on a rigorous natural science foundation; thus, several of the upper division courses related to the minor have prerequisites. Students planning the minor should check catalog course descriptions carefully and should meet with advising staff in the Marine Science Program office.

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## Master Of Science (M.S.) In Marine Sciences

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The Master of Science (MS) Program in marine sciences is designed to train and prepare superior students for a career in this field. The marine sciences program offers courses and opportunities for research in four main areas: biological, chemical, physical, and geological oceanography. Each MS student receives formal training in at least three of these disciplines while concentrating in a specific research area. Thus, the program is structured to develop the capacity for productive and innovative research, founded on a solid background of broad scientific knowledge. The requirements and procedures that follow are specifically for the Department of Marine Sciences. However, the general rules and policies of the Graduate School also apply.

### Minimum Requirements For Admission

Application before January 15 is encouraged; beginning February 1, the admission committee will make initial recommendations about applicants for the following Fall class, with formal letters sent to applicants by the end of April. Although students are normally admitted in the Fall Semester, 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, minimal requirements for admission in full standing to the Marine Sciences MS Program are:

1. A baccalaureate degree in marine sciences or in a discipline related to marine sciences (e.g., biology, chemistry, geology, physics) from an accredited four year college or university
2. 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.
3. A minimum score of 300 combined on the verbal and quantitative subtests of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE)

The applicant will be required to submit:

1. A completed application including a statement indicating the student's interests and professional goals
2. Official transcripts from all undergraduate institutions attended
3. Three letters of recommendation
4. Official scores from the Graduate Record Exam (General Test)

Assessment of credentials will be supplemented by evaluation of letters of recommendation and the educational background of the student. Foreign applicants will be required to pass the TOEFL exam with a score of 525 or greater, or equivalent score on computer administered tests.

To insure compatibility between the student's research interests and the faculty expertise in the Marine Sciences Department, particular attention will be given to the statements of research interests. A faculty member will be asked to act as a "mentor" for the applicant based on the statement of interest and, if necessary, a personal interview. Through this process the student's interests will be matched to the expertise available within the faculty. Moreover, the mentor also may be able to offer the student financial support if a departmental stipend is not available. Students whose interests do not correspond to those of a faculty member and/or have not identified a faculty willing to serve as a mentor, will not be admitted into the MS degree program in marine sciences.

Application forms for admission can be found at <http://www.southalabama.edu/departments/admissions/>. Applications for fellowships (see below) are obtained by writing to: Chair, Department of Marine Sciences, University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL 36688-0002 or visit the website at <http://www.southalabama.edu/marinesciences>

### Fellowships And Assistantships

The Department of Marine Sciences offers a variable number of research assistantships that are sponsored by externally funded grants and contracts. The current stipend for MS students is \$17,000 per year. Additional funding for tuition fellowship may also be available through extramural grants. Information about assistantships is available from the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School, Mobile Townhouse 222, University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL 36688-0002.

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## Master Of Science (M.S.) In Marine Conservation And Resource Management

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The MS in Marine Conservation and Resource Management is designed to provide a formal course of training and professional development in the marine sciences that will enable students to contribute to the sustainable management of marine resources. The program does not require thesis research, but instead offers professional development through group projects and professional internships with government agencies, NGOs, and environmental consulting firms. The curriculum and other requirements can accommodate students currently in the workforce.

### Minimum Requirements For Admission

Applications for Fall admission are due by April 15 of each year. Enrollment normally begins in the fall semester; however spring admissions will be considered on a case by case situation. In addition to the general admissions requirements of the Graduate School, minimal requirements for admission in full standing to the MS Program in Marine Conservation and Resource Management are:

1. A baccalaureate degree in a discipline related to marine sciences (e.g., biology, chemistry, geology, physics, and engineering) or conservation biology (economics, sociology) from an accredited four year college or university
2. 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.
3. A minimum score of 300 combined on the verbal and quantitative subtests of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE)

The applicant will be required to submit:

1. A completed application including a statement indicating the student's interests and professional goals
2. Official transcripts from all undergraduate institutions attended
3. Official scores from the Graduate Record Exam (General Test)

### Doctor Of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Program

The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Program in marine sciences is designed to provide formal course work and advanced research in marine sciences that produces significant, original contributions to knowledge. The Ph.D. degree is awarded to students who have reached and formally demonstrated a level of competence and accomplishment that enables them to pursue careers as marine science professionals. The Ph.D. degree confers eligibility for many positions in academia, industry, and government. The marine sciences program offers courses and opportunities for research in multiple sub-disciplines: biological, chemical, physical, and geological oceanography as well as marine ecology and fisheries. Each student receives formal training in each of these disciplines while concentrating in a specific research area. The requirements and procedures that follow are specifically for the Department of Marine Sciences. However, the general rules and policies of the Graduate School also apply.

### 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 Ph.D. 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
2. Three letters of recommendation
3. For students with baccalaureate degrees:
  - A. Official scores from the Graduate Record Examination General Test with a minimum score of 300 combined on the verbal and quantitative subtests
  - B. A baccalaureate degree in a discipline related to marine sciences (e.g., biology, chemistry, geology, physics) from an accredited four-year college or university
  - C. 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.
4. For students with MS degrees:
  - A. An MS degree in a discipline related to marine sciences (e.g., biology, chemistry, geology, physics) from an accredited college or university
  - B. A graduate minimum grade-point average of 3.00 overall (A=4)
5. International students must submit an official score of at least 525 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), or equivalent score on computer administered tests

To ensure research compatibility between the student and the faculty in the marine sciences program, attention will be given to the statement of research interests. A faculty member will be asked to act as a mentor for the applicant based on the statement of interests and, if necessary, a personal interview. Through this process, the student's interests will be matched to the expertise available within the faculty. Moreover, the mentor may also be able to offer the student financial support if a stipend is not

available. Students whose interests do not correspond to those of a particular faculty mentor, and have not identified a faculty member willing to serve as a mentor, will not be admitted into the Ph.D. degree program in marine sciences. Application forms for admission to the program and for fellowships (see below) are obtained by writing to: Chair, Department of Marine Sciences, University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL 36688-0002.

### **Fellowships And Assistantships**

The Department of Marine Sciences offers at-large fellowships to Ph.D. students annually on a competitive basis. In addition, there are a variable number of doctoral assistantships that are sponsored by externally funded grants and contracts to faculty. The current stipend for Ph.D. fellowships is \$20,000 per year plus a tuition fellowship and waiver of out-of-state fees. Prospective students must submit applications by February 1 to receive consideration for at-large fellowships. Information about assistantships is available from the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School, Mobile Townhouse 222, University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL 36688-0002.