

**Research Prospectus Guidelines**

**for graduate students in the**

**School of Marine and Environmental Sciences  
University of South Alabama & Dauphin Island Sea Lab**

**Created January 2013**

**Revised October 2022**

**Cover page**

PROJECT TITLE

[Should succinctly and accurately describe the project]

by

STUDENT'S NAME

A [Dissertation or Thesis] Proposal

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of South Alabama in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree of [Doctorate of Philosophy or Masters of Science] In  
Marine Science

DATE [month, year]

**Approved by** (must include space for signatures of each committee member)

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Name, PhD Chair of Committee	Date
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Name, PhD Member of Committee	Date
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Name, PhD Member of Committee	Date
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Name, PhD Member of Committee	Date
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Name, PhD Outside Member of Committee	Date
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Name, PhD Associate Director or Director School of Marine and Environmental Science	Date
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Name, PhD Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, College of Arts and Sciences	Date
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For those graduate students whose degree requirements include a thesis/dissertations, please see the revised guidelines for a prospectus. They will also be posted on the Schools web site. Please understand the word limits are suggestions and there is no one size fits all. The point of the word targets was to stress brevity to both the students and their advisory committee. The prospectus is more focused on the ideas, theory and concept and general approach so your committee can get you feedback on novelty, importance, and whether the objectives are realistic in the time frame we want you to complete your degree in and the methods are sufficiently rigorous to ensure publication.

Ultimately, students should be deferential to the instructions of their advisory committee, we hope the general guidance will encourage timely submission of your prospectus and not make the task overwhelming. Your committee may require additional information and that is their prerogative on a case by case basis. View the guidelines as your starting point.

Please remember that you must also complete a prospectus presentation prior to your final submission of the prospectus to my office. You should coordinate with the DISL seminar schedule.

### **Abstract (300 words)**

Concise summary of the research to be conducted, brief rationale for the proposed work, major objective of the study, list of hypotheses, and scientific importance. Place on a separate page.

### **Body of text (~1500 words)**

**Introduction**—Background and rationale of the proposed work. Include a review of relevant literature and develop a rationale for study objectives. Explain how the proposed work's biological and ecological significance and how it will advance scientific knowledge. Broader implications of the work may be discussed but do not substitute for scientific merit.

### **For each expected Chapter provide a Chapter Title and the following:**

**Objective**—A general statement of the overarching goal of the proposed work.

**Hypotheses**—List specific hypotheses to be tested; clearly define null ( $H_0$ ) and alternative ( $H_A$ ) hypotheses.

**Methods** (~ 3000 words, length may vary but brevity is encouraged)—Summarize the general conceptual approach and general experimental design in a topic paragraph. Then, provide a

detailed description of the proposed plan of work. Include a description of the proposed study site(s), experimental procedures to be used, and measurements and analyses to be made, including numbers of replicates, calculations or equations, and statistical methods. Statements should clearly indicate the purpose of each method and distinguish treatments from controls. Provide sufficient detail for the review committee to evaluate the merit of the proposed study and your ability to test your stated hypotheses. Provide citations for all established methods.

***Figures and tables***—Use figures, tables or schematics to share preliminary or relevant background data to help reviewers visualize your experimental concept, design or set up. All figures and tables must have a legend (placed below figures, above tables). Number figures and tables in the order they appear in the text. Figures and tables may be inset in the text or placed each on a separate page at the end of each Chapter section.

***Expected results*** (~500 words)—Explain anticipated outcomes and why by expanding on hypotheses. List expected tangible outputs (maps, tools, data layers, publications, etc.)

### **Milestones**

In a table, list specific academic requirements, target completion date established by the University of South Alabama, and expected or actual completion date, include completion of coursework, field or lab work, qualifying exams, and defense dates. Other relevant objectives may be included.

### **Literature cited**

References should be arranged first alphabetically and then sorted chronologically, if necessary. For web references, give the full URL and date when the reference was last accessed.

### **General Guidelines**

- 1) Font should be 12 point Times New Roman throughout.
- 2) 1.5 line spacing throughout.
- 3) One inch (2.54 cm) margins on all sides
- 4) Number all pages after the cover page
- 5) Citations should follow the format of a peer-reviewed journal such as MEPS, L&O, or equivalent, which uses the (Author Year) format in text; two authors should include both authors' names and the year of publication; three or more authors should include first author's name followed by "et al." and the year of publication (Author et al. Year)