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The Coastal Sciences Graduate Student Handbook contains the policies and guidelines for graduate students in the Department of Coastal Sciences (COA). These guidelines augment those stipulated in The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) graduate Bulletin (<http://www.usm.edu/graduatestudies/bulletin2007/graduate/>). Ms Kalin Lloyd is the COA Graduate Student Coordinator and facilitates registration, completion of necessary paperwork, and related procedures. It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with all policies and deadlines, and to adhere to these in a timely manner.

COA is part of the School of Ocean and Earth Sciences (SOES) and the College of Science and Technology (CoST). COA offers two degrees in Coastal Sciences, Master of Science - MS and Doctor of Philosophy – PhD.

### **Graduate Faculty**

The Graduate Faculty implements graduate education in COA. Only members of the Graduate Faculty may teach graduate courses, sit on Graduate Advisory Committees, or serve as Major Professors. General requirements for all Graduate Faculty include an earned terminal degree and demonstrated quality performance in teaching and research. However, Graduate Faculty membership and status is determined on an individual basis. Requests for Graduate Faculty status is made by the COA Chair to the university's Graduate Council which acts on those requests.

There are various categories of Graduate Faculty. Regular Graduate Faculty are tenured or tenure track members of the university faculty, whereas associate Graduate Faculty are not.

Regular Graduate Faculty are divided into three levels. Level 1 members may teach graduate courses and sit on MS Advisory Committees. Additionally Level 2 members may serve as the Major Professor for MS students and sit on PhD committees. Level 3 members may serve as the Major Professor for PhD students.

Associate Graduate Faculty status is typically held by individuals either outside the university or in non tenure track positions who provide teaching expertise and add value to graduate Advisory Committees. Associate Graduate Faculty may not serve as Major Professors, although in some cases they may serve as Co-Major Professors.

Students may check with the COA graduate student coordinator for a list of COA faculty and their Graduate Faculty status.

### **Major Professor**

Graduate education in COA is implemented through the relationship between the student and a Major Professor. *It can not be over emphasized that the most important individual in a graduate student's degree program is the Major Professor.* The Major Professor is the primary mentor, advising the student and chairing the Advisory Committee. The Major Professor provides the student office and research space and assists the student in selecting the Advisory Committee, developing a program of study (POS), formulating a research prospectus, and obtaining resources necessary for the research project.

Before applying for admission, prospective graduate students are strongly encouraged to contact a faculty member who will agree to serve as the Major Professor. In the rare event that a student is admitted without a Major Professor, the COA Chair will serve as interim advisor for planning the 1<sup>st</sup> semester's coursework. However, a Major Professor must be chosen before the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> semester.

### **Advisory Committees**

The Advisory Committee (1) guides development and implementation of the student's graduate program, (2) approves the POS, the thesis or dissertation research prospectus, and the thesis or dissertation, and (3) administers the appropriate written and oral examinations.

The committee may require a student to complete particular courses, meet specific competencies, or obtain other educational experiences commensurate with the degree sought.

Committee members must have at least associate graduate status. Committee membership is recommended by the COA Chair and appointed by the dean of CoST. The COA Chair is an ex officio non-voting member of all Advisory Committees.

Forms for establishing a committee can be obtained from the Graduate Studies Office web site at <http://www.usm.edu/graduatestudies/>.

### **Quality of Work**

#### *Conditional status*

Students granted conditional admission to the Department of Coastal Sciences are not eligible for departmental Assistantship but can be awarded a research stipend from a Major Advisor's grant.

To obtain *Regular Status* a master's 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 500 level, not including research hours and not to include more than three (3) hours of Special Problems. 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 500 level, he or she must achieve a 3.0 overall grade point average on all course work. Lower-level coursework (500) 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.

To obtain *Regular Status* a doctoral 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 more than three (3) hours of Special Problems. 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.

#### *Regular status*

Graduate students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 for all courses in the POS. If the student's cumulative GPA falls below 3.0, the student has 1 probationary semester in which to elevate the cumulative GPA to 3.0. Failure to do so is grounds for termination of the graduate program. After the probationary semester the student must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 until graduation. Failure to do so is grounds for termination of the graduate program.

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Only courses with earned letter grades of C or better will be accepted for credit towards the degree. Earning 3 C's or earning 1 D or lower is grounds for dismissal from the graduate program.

Failure to demonstrate satisfactory progress towards completion of degree requirements as determined by the Advisory Committee and COA Chair will entail termination of the graduate program.

#### **Financial Support**

Graduate student financial support is available through work/study as Departmental Teaching Assistantships (TAs), Departmental Research Assistantships (RAs), or Project RAs. Departmental TAs and RAs are provided by the COA and CoST whereas Project RAs are usually provided by the Major Professor through an extramurally funded research program. Students on Assistantships must work 20 hrs per week in addition to their studies. The type of work for COA TAs and RAs is assigned by COA Chair or the Chair's designee. The type of work and work load for project RAs is assigned by the Major Professor (or program PI). Most work/study financial support for graduate students in the Department of Coastal Sciences comes as project RAs. Students are encouraged to apply for fellowships from external sources and should check with their Major Professor for such opportunities.

Recipients of any assistantships must enroll for at least 12 credit hours a semester if funded during the fall and spring terms and 9 credit hours if funded for the summer term.

The assistantship monthly wage depends on status, MS student – \$1600, MS candidate or a new PhD student – \$1650 per month; and PhD candidates – \$1700. Tuition is waived for students on assistantships. Typically, COA assistantships are paid for 9 months (Academic Year) whereas project RAs are paid for 12 months (Calendar Year).

#### **Degree Requirements**

University degree requirements can be found in the Graduate Bulletin at <http://www.usm.edu/registrar/catalogs2006/graduate/>

#### **MS Degree**

MS Advisory Committee

By the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> semester the MS Advisory Committee must be formed and the committee appointment forms submitted to the Graduate Studies Office. Each committee member must have Associate or Regular Graduate Faculty status. The chair of the committee (Major Professor) must have Level 2 regular Graduate Faculty status.

The MS Advisory Committee must have a minimum of three members (including the Major Professor). A majority of the committee must be from the COA faculty. One additional faculty member will be appointed by the COA Chair to attend the oral comprehensive examination and one to attend the thesis defense to observe the proceedings. Additional appropriate, non-voting members may be added to the committee with the approval of the COA Chair.

#### MS Plan of Study

By the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> semester in the COA graduate program the student must file a Coastal Sciences MS Plan of Study (POS) <http://www.usm.edu/graduatestudies/planofstudy.php> with the Office of Graduate Studies. The POS projects the coursework taken during the student's MS degree program. The POS must be formulated in consultation with the Major Professor and the Advisory Committee, and approved by the Advisory Committee and the COA Chair.

A minimum of 30 graduate credit hrs beyond the Baccalaureate is required for the MS in Coastal Sciences. A minimum of 18 credit hrs must be earned at the 600 level or greater.

#### MS Candidacy

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

#### MS Thesis

The MS thesis research is designed to give the student experiences in the scientific process. The MS thesis must be the result of original investigation. The thesis research project is developed by the student under the direction of the Major Professor. Publishing in the peer-reviewed literature is the final step in the scientific process. Therefore the thesis should result in least one peer-reviewed publication. It is strongly recommended that a draft manuscript be ready for review by the Advisory Committee at the time of the thesis defense.

Guidelines for preparation of the thesis may be obtained from the Graduate Reader at: <http://www.usm.edu/graduatestudies/>

#### *MS Thesis Prospectus*

A thesis research prospectus must be in preparation and should be completed by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester in the program. The research prospectus must be approved by the Advisory Committee and only after approval can the thesis research project be considered acceptable for earning the degree. An approved prospectus is a research plan detailing the scope of work and associated deliverables that fulfills the thesis requirement of the MS

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. The appropriate forms can be found at the end of this document.

#### *Vertebrate Animals and Human Subjects in Research*

As part of the prospectus development process, the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) must approve research projects using vertebrate animals in any way. Procedures for Institutional Animal Care and Use review are available at <http://www.usm.edu/iacuc/>. Research that involves Human Subjects in any way must be approved by the Institutional Review Board. Procedures for Human Subjects Review can be found at <http://www.usm.edu/irb/>.

#### MS Residency

There is no residency requirement for the MS degree

#### MS Continuous Enrollment

MS students must register for, at least 1 credit hr if they are using any university resource, at least 3 credit hrs of 698 during the semester/term they defend the thesis, and at least 1 credit hr of 697 during the semester of graduation, if graduation occurs after the semester of thesis defense.

#### MS Examinations

##### *MS comprehensive examination*

After completing all courses in the POS (or at another time acceptable to the Advisory Committee) a written and/or oral comprehensive examination will be conducted by the Advisory Committee. The examination is passed by a majority vote of the Advisory Committee members and may be taken twice only. Results of the MS comprehensive exam must be submitted to the graduate degree auditor. The appropriate forms can be found at the end of this document.

##### *Thesis defense*

After the POS is completed, the comprehensive examination passed, and the thesis accepted by the Advisory Committee, a final oral examination on the thesis (thesis defense) will be conducted by the student's Advisory Committee. The Major Professor informs the COA Chair of the date and time of the thesis defense at least 10 days before the defense.

The thesis defense includes (1) a public seminar followed by (2) an Advisory Committee examination. A majority vote of the Advisory Committee after the Advisory Committee examination determines the outcome of the defense. The outcome must be reported to the Dean of CoST as soon as possible after the meeting. The appropriate forms can be found at the end of this document.

#### Application for Degree and Audit

Students should submit to the graduate degree auditor a signed, completed application for

degree by the specified deadline the semester before they wish to graduate. The graduate degree auditor will check the application and notify the student and his or her adviser of any problems. (See thesis-dissertation deadline schedule in the *Bulletin*.) See <http://www.usm.edu/graduatestudies> for specific directions. Students who do not graduate the semester for which they applied should contact the graduate degree auditor.

#### MS Time Limit

The time limit on credits earned that can be accepted toward fulfilling the requirements for an MS degree is 6 years from date of initial enrollment in a graduate program. A typical time for completion of an MS is 2 or 3 years. If extenuating circumstances prevent meeting the time limits, additional time may be allowed. The Office of Graduate Studies, under extenuating circumstances and special petition, may approve revalidation of over-age credit hours if the original credit was earned at The University of Southern Mississippi and if the Major Professor, Advisory Committee and the COA Chair, approves the revalidation. The revalidation is secured by the student's successfully passing a special examination on the course. However, any student who fails to complete the Master's degree program within the eight-year time period becomes subject to any changes in degree requirements made at any date eight years prior to graduation. The fee charged for the special revalidation examination is \$30 per course. The fee is to be paid before the revalidation examination is taken.

#### MS Program Deadlines

Deadlines for MS degree graduation may be obtained from the office of Graduate Studies at <http://www.usm.edu/graduatestudies/>.

### **PhD Degree**

#### PhD Advisory Committee

By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester the PhD Advisory Committee must be formed and the committee appointment forms submitted to the Graduate Studies Office. Each committee member must have Associate (with earned PhD) or Level 2 Regular Graduate Faculty Status. The chair of the Committee (Major Professor) must have Level 3 regular graduate status.

The PhD Advisory Committee must have a minimum of four members (including the Major Professor); a majority of the committee must be from the COA faculty. Only 1 committee member can be from outside the university. An additional COA faculty member will be appointed by the COA Chair to attend the oral comprehensive examination and one to attend the dissertation defense to observe the proceedings. Additional appropriate, non-voting members may be added to the committee with the approval of the COA Chair.

#### PhD Plan of Study

By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester in the program, the student must file a POS with the Office of Graduate Studies. The POS projects the coursework taken during the student's PhD program. The POS must be formulated in consultation with the Major Professor and the Advisory Committee, and approved by the Advisory Committee and the COA Chair.

A minimum of 84 graduate credit hrs beyond the Baccalaureate degree or a minimum of 54 graduate credit hrs beyond the MS degree is required for the PhD in Coastal Sciences.

#### *PhD Research Tools*

The PhD program requires the student and Advisory Committee to include on the POS a set of research tools appropriate for the student's goals. Research tools do not exceed 15 credit hrs. The research tools credit hrs count toward the total coursework requirement of 84 or 54 credit hrs. (see POS Sheet at <http://www.usm.edu/graduatestudies/planofstudy.php>).

The specific research tools courses are approved by the Advisory Committee and the COA Chair. The research tools must be listed on the POS and then submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies for final approval.

#### PhD Candidacy

Students advance to candidacy for the PhD degree by completing the POS with at least a 3.0 GPA, completing an approved dissertation prospectus, and successfully passing the comprehensive examinations.

#### PhD Dissertation

The PhD research is an independent and original investigation that results in a significant contribution to science. Guidelines for preparation of the dissertation may be obtained from the Graduate Reader at: <http://www.usm.edu/graduatestudies/>. The dissertation research should result in 2 or more peer-reviewed publications. It is strongly recommended that students write manuscripts for publication as they complete portions of their dissertation research. These manuscripts must be reviewed by the Advisory Committee prior to submission.

#### *PhD Dissertation Prospectus*

A dissertation research prospectus must be in preparation and should be completed no later than the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> semester in residency.

The research prospectus must be approved by the Advisory Committee and only after approval can the dissertation research project be considered acceptable for earning the degree. An approved prospectus is a research plan detailing the scope of work and associated deliverables that fulfills the dissertation requirement of the PhD 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. The appropriate forms can be found at the end of this document.

#### *Vertebrate Animals and Human Subjects in Research*

As part of the dissertation prospectus development process the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) must approve research projects that uses Vertebrate Animals in any way. Procedures for Institutional Animal Care and Use review are currently available at <http://www.usm.edu/iacuc/>. Research that involves Human Subjects

in any way must be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Procedures for Human Subjects Review are at <http://www.usm.edu/irb/hs-review.html>

### PhD Residency

Residency is structured as a full-time experience and provides doctoral students with significant time for extensive involvement with faculty, professional colleagues, and peers as well as concentrated study and course work. Options for satisfying the residency requirement are: (a) two consecutive terms of 12 credit hrs each, (b) 2 consecutive summer terms of 12 credit hrs each with continuous enrollment during intervening terms, or (c) 3 consecutive full-time terms of 9 credit hrs each.

### PhD Continuous Enrollment

PhD students must register for 3 credit hrs during the semester in which they take their comprehensive examinations. After completion of the comprehensive examinations, continuous enrollment in at least 1 credit hr must be maintained during each fall and spring semester until successful defense of the dissertation. Failure to enroll continuously entails reapplication for admission. Upon readmission a fee equal to 2 credit hrs of tuition for each semester of non continuous enrollment is assessed.

Students must register for 3 credit hrs of 898 during the semester or term of the dissertation defense. All required coursework must be completed before the semester of the dissertation defense. If the Graduate Reader does not approve the dissertation prior to the deadlines established in a given semester or term, then the student must register for 1 credit hr of 797 or 898 during the semester or term of graduation.

### PhD Examinations

#### *PhD qualifying examination*

By the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester of study, the Major Professor and the Advisory Committee will interview the student to assess the student's academic background and to develop the student's POS. Results of the PhD qualifying exam must be submitted to the Graduate Degree Auditor. The appropriate forms can be found at the end of this document.

#### *PhD comprehensive examination*

After completing all courses in the POS (or at another time acceptable to the Advisory Committee) a written and oral comprehensive examination will be conducted by the Advisory Committee. In most cases the written examination is taken and, pending the outcome of that examination, an oral examination is taken within 30 days of the decision of the Advisory Committee. The examination will be passed by a majority vote of the Advisory Committee members and may be taken twice only. Results of the PhD comprehensive exam must be submitted to the Graduate Degree Auditor. The appropriate forms can be found at the end of this document.

#### *Dissertation defense*

After the POS is completed, the comprehensive examinations passed, the research tools requirement fulfilled, and the dissertation has been accepted by the Advisory Committee, a final oral examination on the dissertation (dissertation defense) is conducted by the student's Advisory Committee. The Major Professor will inform the COA Chair and the

Dean of CoST the date and time of the dissertation defense at least 10 days before the defense.

The dissertation defense includes (1) a public seminar followed by the Advisory Committee examination. A majority vote of the Advisory Committee determines the outcome of the defense and the outcome must be reported to the Dean of CoST as soon as possible after the meeting. The appropriate forms can be found at the end of this document.

PhD Time Limit

The student must complete the doctoral degree within eight (8) calendar years from the date of initial enrollment in a doctoral program. A typical time for completion of a PhD is 4 to 6 years. Six years is the maximum age allowed for course work and the final comprehensive exam, other than dissertation and research hours toward a graduate degree. If extenuating circumstances prevent meeting the time limits, additional time may be allowed. The Office of Graduate Studies, under extenuating circumstances and special petition, may approve revalidation of over-age credit hours if the original credit was earned at The University of Southern Mississippi and if the Major Professor, Advisory Committee, the COA Chair, department chair approves the revalidation. The revalidation is secured by the student's successfully passing a special examination on the course. However, any student who fails to complete the doctoral degree program within the eight-year time period becomes subject to any changes in degree requirements made at any date eight years prior to graduation. The fee charged for the special revalidation examination is \$30 per course. The fee is to be paid before the revalidation examination is taken.

PhD Program Deadlines

Deadlines for PhD degree graduation are obtained from the Office of Graduate Studies at: <http://www.usm.edu/graduatestudies/>.

<b>Table of Required Forms</b>		
Form	Obtainable from	Use
USM Graduate Committee Request	<a href="http://www.usm.edu/graduatestudies/">http://www.usm.edu/graduatestudies/</a>	To request composition of Advisory Committee, including Major Professor
Plan of Study	<a href="http://www.usm.edu/graduatestudies/planofstudy.php/">http://www.usm.edu/graduatestudies/planofstudy.php/</a> for PhD or MS	Blueprint for requirements documenting progress toward degree
Graduate Research Prospectus	COA Graduate Student Coordinator	Reporting approval of the Prospectus
Results of Comprehensive and/or Qualifying Exams	COA Graduate Student Coordinator	Reporting results of the qualifying or comprehensive examination
Results of Oral Defense of Thesis	COA Graduate Student Coordinator	Reporting the results of the Oral Defense of Thesis
Results of Oral Defense of Dissertation	COA Graduate Student Coordinator	Reporting the results of the Oral Defense of Dissertation

Application for Degree Coversheet	<a href="http://www.usm.edu/graduatestudies/app_degree.php">http://www.usm.edu/graduatestudies/app_degree.php</a>	To apply for graduation
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