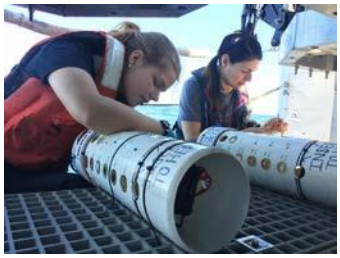
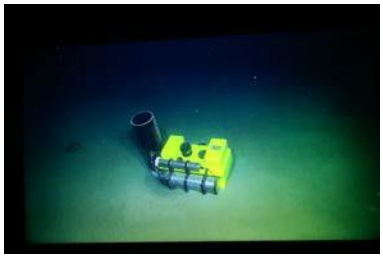
Division of Coastal Sciences (COA)

School of Ocean Science and Engineering (SOSE)
College of Arts & Sciences (CAS)
The University of Southern Mississippi (USM)

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

2024-2025 Academic Year

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

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Purpose and Scope of this Document

The Coastal Sciences Graduate Student Handbook contains the policies and guidelines for doctoral and masters level graduate students in the Division of Coastal Sciences (COA) in the School of Ocean Science and Engineering (SOSE). These guidelines augment those stipulated in The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) Graduate Bulletin. It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with all policies and deadlines in these documents. The student is subject to the versions of the USM Graduate Bulletin and COA Graduate Student Handbook associated with the semester of their admission.

SOSE, GCRL & USM Information

Overview

The School of Ocean Science and Engineering (SOSE) harnesses elements from key areas of The University of Southern Mississippi including the Division of Coastal Sciences at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL) in Ocean Springs, the Division of Marine Science (DMS) at the John C. Stennis Space Center in Hancock County, and the University's fleet of five research vessels to create a regionally, nationally, and internationally recognized leader in marine science.

GCRL is a marine/coastal research and education enterprise and with all of SOSE is part of The University of Southern Mississippi's College of Arts and Sciences. GCRL has a workforce of 200 faculty, researchers, graduate students, and support staff. Research at GCRL is multidisciplinary and applications-oriented with a focus on sustainable coastal and marine resources, development of new marine technologies, and the education of future scientists and citizens. Education opportunities span graduate degree programs in coastal sciences, undergraduate field courses in marine biology and hands-on discovery programs for precollege students and teachers.

Research and education activities at GCRL are conducted through the Division of Coastal Sciences and often in collaboration with research centers including the Center for Fisheries Research and Development, the Marine Education Center, and the Thad Cochran Marine Aquaculture Center. Details about SOSE and each GCRL department/center can be found on their webpages:

School of Ocean Science and Engineering
Division of Coastal Sciences
Center for Fisheries Research and Development
Marine Education Center
Thad Cochran Marine Aquaculture Center

Contacts

Emergency

Any Emergency: 911
Ambulance Service: 800.677.1124
Hospital: 228.818.1111
Ocean Springs Police: 228.875.2211
Ocean Springs Fire Department: 228.875.1017
USM Police Dispatch (make sure to tell them you are at GCRL)**:** 601.266.4986

Non-Emergency

GCRL Directory
USM Directory
USM Police Dispatch (make sure to tell them you are at GCRL)**:** 601.266.4986

Campus Security Authority

A Campus Security Authority (CSA) is any individual or organization specified in an institution's statement of campus security policy as an individual or organization to which students and employees should report criminal activity.

Campus Security Authorities include the following:

- A campus police department or campus security department of the university
- Any individual who has responsibility for campus security but who is not a member of the campus police department or the campus security department
- Any individual specified in the university's statement of campus security policy as an individual to which students and employees should report criminal offenses.
- Any individual of the university who has significant responsibility for student and campus activities

Campus Security Authority (CSA) Incident Report

Under Federal Law (The Clery Act), the University is required to report annual statistics for crime and safety on campus. If you have an emergency situation, please call 911. Persons designated as Campus Security Authorities (CSAs) are required to report certain illegal conduct. If you have an incident or behavior to that you want to report, please contact one of the COA CSAs: **Dr. Robert Leaf** (Office: Halstead, Oceanography 119; 228-872-4296), or **Jordyn Fletcher** (Office: Field Studies Building at Halstead, Room 119; 228.818.8887; jordyn.fletcher@usm.edu).

Environmental Health & Safety

The GCRL is committed to maintaining safe and productive laboratory, classroom, and storage facilities. Any environmental health and/or safety concerns should be reported to the Environmental, Health & Safety Officer, Binnaz Bailey (228.818.8029; binnaz.bailey@usm.edu). The Academic Coordinator will email all new students the GCRL lab safety rules agreement at the time of orientation. Please sign and return to the Academic Coordinator.

Facilities

The GCRL is comprised of two sites. The Halstead site includes GCRL administrative offices, many COA faculty and students, the Student Work Space area (Oceanography 1-161), Center for Fisheries Research and Development, Gunter Library, and the GCRL Museum. The Cedar Point site includes many COA faculty and students, a Student Work Space area (Office Building, Code: hit #'s 2 & 4 simultaneously, then hit #3), Marine Environmental Research Laboratory, Toxicology building, Thad Cochran Marine Aquaculture Center, Marine Education Center, and the GCRL Physical Plant. Campus maps can be found in Appendix A.

Internet Access

You can access the USM/GCRL wireless network by logging in to the wireless network called "Eduroam". You will be required to log in using your username (format: w#@usm.edu, with # representing your multi-digit USM ID number; Ex: w123456@usm.edu) and password (the same as for your SOAR account). You can also use the Eduroam Configuration Assistant Tool to connect to the network. Eduroam is used on all USM campuses.

If you experience connection problems, contact the USM i-Tech Help Desk for assistance at 601.266.HELP.

iTech

iTech services are available through the main helpdesk in Hattiesburg (601.266.4357). If you have technology-related issues, you must log a support ticket through the Self Service Portal. Issues will be resolved through Hattiesburg or by the GCRL iTech representative.

Libraries

Gunter Library at GCRL

Days/Hours Open:

- Monday-Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm, closed during the lunch hour, 12:00pm to 1:00pm
- Closed for USM holidays
- Gunter Library is open nights and Sundays during the GCRL Summer Field Program sessions.

The Gunter library is located in the Caylor Building at the Halstead site. The Gunter Library provides technical information and research support for School of Ocean Science and Engineering students, faculty, researchers, and other library users. The collections available include over 7,000 print books on site, 1300 scientific journal titles, 31,000+ reprints, expedition reports, dissertations and theses, and reference works. Subject areas include all coastal and marine related topics including biology, geology, chemistry, conservation, ecology, botany, oceanography, ocean engineering, and toxicology. Search for Gunter Library's holdings via "Seymour Info" at http://lib.usm.edu/.

There are subject guides for finding books, accessing online journals and databases and internet resources linked here:

http://libguides.lib.usm.edu/coastal_sciences
http://libguides.lib.usm.edu/marine_science

Gunter Library has a copier/scanner, computers, b/w and color printers, laminator, paper cutter, paper shredder, binding machine, and other office equipment for student use. Gunter Library has two study carrels, two large tables, and soft seating for individual study and small group shared learning.

Submit your library requests for materials (books and articles "interlibrary loan" or book and journal purchases) to guntergcrl@usm.edu Every effort will be made to provide you with interlibrary loan/document delivery free of charge. If a fee is required for any materials, you will be contacted for your approval before the request is submitted. The lender sets loan periods for materials borrowed from non-USM libraries.

You may schedule a research consultation by filling out the form at https://lib.usm.edu/services/forms/consultation_gunter.html. Walk-in research help is available by visiting Gunter Library during regular open hours. A research librarian is on-site to help you.

Informal Learning
The GCRL Science Café is a free and informal program held monthly on the last Tuesday at the GCRL Dining Hall 6 pm -7 pm during the Fall and Spring academic semesters. Graduate students are welcome to attend, to present their research, and to volunteer. Refreshments are provided. http://gcrl.usm.edu/events/science.cafe.php

Library Workshops
Throughout the academic year Gunter Library offers workshops in conjunction with University Libraries that focus on building a toolbox of skills for graduate students. Some of these include citation management programs, speaking and presentation tips and techniques, and data management.

Other USM Libraries

Days/Hours Open: https://lib.usm.edu/gulfcoast/

As a USM student, you have access to all University Libraries on-line and print resources. Access to these collections is via http://lib.usm.edu/ You may request materials from other USM libraries to be delivered to Gunter Library via the on-line catalog. Please allow for a minimum of a week for deliveries from Hattiesburg (Cook Library) and Long Beach (Gulf Coast Library). Access to the online resources from off-campus sites may require your logging into the library system using your SOAR W# and password. The courier makes deliveries to GCRL on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Loan periods are 6 months for graduate students, but materials are subject recall at any time.

The Gulf Coast Library is located at the Gulf Park Campus, 730 East Beach Blvd., Long Beach, MS. Adjacent to the Gulf Coast Library is a 24/7 Computer Lab. You will need a current USM ID card to use the Computer Lab at Gulf Park.

http://libguides.lib.usm.edu/welcome_gulf_coast_library
http://lib.usm.edu/gulfcoast/gulfcoast_hours.html

Cook Library, located on the Hattiesburg campus, contains the principal collections of books, periodicals, microforms, government documents, and other materials which directly support the research and instructional programs of The University of Southern Mississippi at all levels. You will need your USM ID card to borrow books from Cook Library.

http://libguides.lib.usm.edu/welcome_cook_library

Other Libraries

At Stennis Space Center (SSC), Maury Oceanographic Library librarians will assist USM students in locating library materials, provide library instruction, and will conduct simple literature searches. Southern Miss students may access the Maury Oceanographic Library for study and quiet collaborative work. If your home campus is not at SSC, you may need special permission to enter the facility—contact the Maury Oceanographic Library for assistance at 228-668-4597. https://www.public.navy.mil/fltfor/cnmoc/Pages/m2.aspx

Helpful Tools for Researchers

Aquila Digital Community

The Aquila Digital Community is an open access digital repository containing all of the scholarly works created by the University of Southern Mississippi faculty, staff, and students. Aquila is named for the constellation of the eagle. It hosts digital journals and newsletters published by the University, as well as information and resources from events hosted by the University. All submissions to Aquila have open access availability and are indexed, making them highly discoverable through internet search engines, such as Google, thereby extending the University's scholarly output to a wider audience. *Gulf and Caribbean Research*, the journal published by GCRL since 1961, is accessible via Aquila. https://aquila.usm.edu/

Citation Analysis

This guide is for those who need information on how to use library resources for citation analysis. This includes information about journal acceptance rates, impact factors, journal ranking, and how to find who has cited an article.
http://libguides.lib.usm.edu/citation_analysis

Citation Help

A citation manager is software developed to help record, store, and manipulate bibliographic information (references). Some of the most popular managers are Mendeley

and Zotero.

http://libguides.lib.usm.edu/citation_help

Research Data Management
This guide provides an overview of research data management best practices and resources: http://libguides.lib.usm.edu/research_data_management/

Mental Health Services

Student Counseling Services are available at the GCRL. All USM students physically located in the state of Mississippi are eligible for counseling sessions at no cost. Mr. Alvin Baker, Mental Wellness Counselor at Gulf Park, is available for Zoom appointments four days a week and available for in-person appointments at Gulf Park as needed. To make an appointment, please contact Mr. Alvin Baker using the contact information listed below.

Alvin M. Baker, Jr., LCSW
Mental Wellness Counselor
Email: alvin.baker@usm.edu
Phone: 228.214.3300

CARES (Campus Action Referral and Evaluation System)

USM CARES is a team of campus professionals who respond to reports of concern regarding the academic progress and well-being of students. By using the CARES portal, you enable the CARES team to proactively respond to concerns about any disruption, safe and productive living and learning community. Concerns that should be reported through CARES include, but are not limited to, situations of self-harm*, family difficulties, stress management, mental health concerns, academic performance problems, addictions, Code of Conduct violations, Title IX issues, Clery Act related issues and/or issues of academic integrity (e.g. plagiarism).

* **For immediate concerns related to persons making threats to harm themselves or others, concerns that pose a significant threat to the University and/or its community, or for other emergency issues, please immediately contact the University Police Department at 601.266.4986 or 9-1-1. Matters requiring immediate action are referred to the Critical Incident Response Team.**

Parking Permits

Virtual parking permits are required on the GCRL sites for anyone that will have a vehicle. To apply for a student virtual parking permit, visit the USM Department of Parking Management. Once you have completed your online registration for parking, you will receive an email with your virtual parking permit number. Permit information and costs can be found online. If you have any questions or problems registering, please contact the Department of Parking Management 601.266.4943 or 601.266.5447.

SOAR Account

SOAR is Southern Miss's online student record system. You must use your SOAR account to register for classes, pay your bills, and access other information related to your degree plan. Below is how to use SOAR:

- Access SOAR.
- Once you are admitted to our program, you will receive an email from the USM Graduate School with your USM student ID number and a temporary password. When you log on to SOAR for the first time, click on "CampusID password management" and follow the directions to change your password to something that you will easily remember for future logins. If you experience problems with your user ID or password, contact the i-Tech Help Desk for assistance at 601.266.HELP.
- Once logged in to your SOAR account, use the *Student Self Service* (or *Self Service, Student Center*) menu to navigate your information.

For help navigating SOAR, you can access tutorials provided by the USM Office of the Registrar.

Division Policies

COA Contact Information

SOSE Interim Director & COA Associate Professor

Dr. Robert Leaf
Office: Oceanography Building 119 (Halstead)
Office Phone: 228.872.4296
Email: robert.leaf@usm.edu
Role: administration of the Division of Coastal Sciences

Academic Coordinator

Jordyn Fletcher
Office: Field Studies Building, 119 (Halstead)
Phone: 228.818.8887
Email: jordyn.fletcher@usm.edu
Role: academic policies and procedures, academic forms, degree requirements

Financial Coordinator

Office:
Phone:
Email:
Role: graduate assistantships, tuition waivers, student financial accounts

Administrative Specialist

Jennifer Strength
Office: Oceanography Building, 1-155 (Halstead)
Office Phone: 228.818.8015
Email: j.strength@usm.edu
Role: travel, reimbursements, room reservations, COA truck usage

COA Faculty Directory
GCRL Directory

Admission to Program

Admission to the graduate program is handled through the USM Graduate School. The application deadline for Fall admission is **May 15**. The application deadline for Spring admission is **October 15**. The COA program generally accepts applicants for regular admission with the following GPA:

- for the M.S. degree it is a GPA of at least 3.0 on all undergraduate coursework.
- for the Ph.D. degree it is a GPA of at least 3.5 on all graduate coursework (if entering with a master's degree), or a GPA of at least 3.5 on all undergraduate coursework (if entering with a bachelor's degree).

These GPA criteria are higher than the minimum admissions standards for regular admission guidelines as set forth by the USM Graduate School. Applicants with a GPA

below the standards above have potential to receive conditional admission. Students granted conditional admission to the Division of Coastal Sciences are not eligible for any graduate assistantship positions regardless of the source of funding. Refer to the USM Graduate Bulletin and Quality of Work section in this document.

Graduate Assistantships (GAs)

COA Policy on Student Assistantships

A variety of mechanisms are in place to provide financial support to COA graduate students. These mechanisms are collectively termed Graduate Assistantships (GAs):

- Project Research Assistantship (RA)
  Funding is provided by the Major Professor or Research Director through an extramurally funded research program. Students on such an assistantship must work 20 hours per week on research program related duties. The type of work and workload for project RAs is assigned by the Major Professor (or program PI). The majority of financial support for graduate students in COA comes as project RAs.

- COA Graduate Fellowship
  Graduate Fellowships in Coastal Sciences may be offered by the Division of Coastal Sciences to exceptional incoming students. Students will have the option to apply for these fellowships during the application process, and the candidates will be evaluated by committee. Awardees will be subject to annual review for continuation of funding. Recipients of this award will work under the guidance of their Major Professor and committee but will have flexibility in determining the scope of work, as it will not be connected to a specific externally funded project. For information on this award, contact the Associate Director.

- COA Teaching Assistantship (TA)
  Currently not available through COA for Spring/Fall, but a limited number may be available during Summer terms as part of the Summer Field Program. Occasionally, opportunities will arise to serve as a TA for another department for a semester, interested students should contact the Associate Director to learn more.

All GAs receive a tuition waiver equal to 100% of the assessed in-state and out-of-state (if needed) tuition fees. Tuition waivers do not cover fees (e.g., course fees, student activity fees, international programming fees, capital improvement fees, etc.). Recipients of any GA must be enrolled full-time for the tuition waiver to be disbursed. For fall and spring semesters, GAs must enroll in 9-13 credit hours a semester. For summer semesters, GAs must enroll between 1-3 credit hours. Tuition waivers are applied to student accounts in SOAR before the start of each semester. If you find you have a balance after this date, please contact the COA Financial Coordinator.

The assistantship stipend levels are currently as follows:

- $1,900/month beginning M.S. students; $1,950/month for M.S. students after advancing to candidacy
- $1,950/month beginning Ph.D. students; $2,000/month for Ph.D. students after advancing to candidacy

Students advance to candidacy by completing all coursework with at least a 3.0 GPA, completing an approved thesis prospectus, and successfully passing the comprehensive examination. Once candidacy is achieved, the GA is eligible for a $50/month stipend rate increase (dependent on funding availability). Students and/or Major Professors should notify the COA Financial Coordinator when this milestone has been met in order to implement the stipend increase. The stipend increase will be processed as soon as the Financial Coordinator is notified—the increase is not retroactive.

Recipients of student assistantships are considered USM employees and are subject to the expectations of attendance of the staff and faculty of USM. Allotted holidays are those of the staff and faculty of USM. All other personal time away from USM must be discussed with the Major Professor. GAs are also required to read and understand the USM employee handbook and comply with USM policies. Failure to comply with USM employment policies or unsatisfactory performance in the role of GA may result in loss of the assistantship.

COA Policy on Student Fellowships

Students on externally funded fellowships may receive a higher wage than that determined for assistantships. The amount of such awards is determined by the funding source. This exception applies only to externally funded fellowship and awards, and not grant funded assistantships. This exception is made to encourage students to compete for local, state, national and international fellowships and scholarships that will enhance their research and career potential.

Additional financial support for student research and travel to meetings is available through several competitive awards and scholarships offered to students in COA. Interested students should review the "Scholarship Opportunities" section at https://www.usm.edu/graduate-programs/coastal-sciences.php

Maternity Leave Options for Graduate Assistants (GAs)

The following information identifies ways a pregnant Graduate Assistant can access work release during and after pregnancy as needed:

1. Request a leave of absence for a full semester. The leave of absence form (see below) must be completed and signed by appropriate approvers, and documentation from a healthcare provider may be required. The student will be reinstated in the graduate assistant (GA) position when she returns. The student will not receive a stipend or tuition waiver while on leave. There is no time penalty for the leave period, i.e. the clock stops for the approved leave period, so there is no negative impact on the time limit to degree completion.

2. Request to work from home. The request must be made in writing and approved by the Graduate School, and documentation from a healthcare provider may be required. There will be no break in stipend or tuition waiver, and the student must produce a deliverable (i.e., proof that work was done). A release to perform such work is required from the healthcare provider.
3. Request a leave of absence for part of a semester with no work required. The Leave of Absence form must be completed and signed by appropriate approvers, and documentation from a healthcare provider may be required. The student will not be paid for missed time, and the tuition waiver will be prorated.

International Students should contact the International Student and Scholar Services office (intl@usm.edu or 601.266.4841) to determine eligibility and for additional information.

Classroom accommodations due to pregnancy can be requested by contacting Mr. Scott Dossett in the USM Office for Disability Accommodation at 601.266.5024.

Graduate Faculty

The Graduate Faculty implements graduate education in COA. Only members of the Graduate Faculty may:

- teach graduate courses.
- serve as member of Graduate Advisory Committees.
- serve as Major Professor.

There are various categories of Graduate Faculty. **Regular** Graduate Faculty are tenured or tenure track members of the university faculty and **Associate** Graduate Faculty are not. General requirements for all Graduate Faculty include an earned terminal degree and demonstrated performance in teaching and research. Graduate Faculty membership and status is determined on an individual basis. Requests for Graduate Faculty status are made by the Associate Director to the university's Graduate Council.

Regular Graduate Faculty are divided into three levels:

- Level 1 members may teach graduate courses and sit on M.S. Advisory Committees.
- Level 2 members may serve as the Major Professor for M.S. students and sit on Ph.D. committees.
- Level 3 members may serve as the Major Professor for Ph.D. students.

Associate Graduate Faculty status is typically held by individuals either outside the university or in non-tenure track positions who add value to graduate Advisory Committees. Associate Graduate Faculty may not serve as Major Professors. Likewise, Emeritus/Emerita Professors may not serve as Major Professors, but they may sit on graduate committees pending approval by the Associate Director. Students may check with the COA Administrative Specialist for a list of COA faculty and their graduate faculty status.

Major Professor

Disclaimer: The primary title for this role is Major Professor, but Faculty Advisor, Faculty Mentor, Committee Chair, and other titles may be used interchangeably. Major Professor is used consistently throughout this document, but be aware that other titles are often used for this position distinction.

Graduate education in COA is implemented through the relationship between the student and a Major Professor, thus the choice of Major Professor is critical to the success of the graduate student. Students planning on enrolling in COA should familiarize themselves with faculty members and then arrange a visit to discuss research interests and ideas, possible course work schedule, and financial support. After acceptance into COA, the Major Professor is the student's primary mentor and is responsible for advising the student and chairing the Advisory Committee.

The Major Professor:

- Provides the student office and research space.
- Assists the student in selecting the Advisory Committee.
- Assists in the development in the student's program of study and degree progress.
- Works with student to formulate a research prospectus.
- Obtains the resources necessary for the chosen research project.

For students admitted to COA without a Major Professor, the Associate Director will serve as interim Major Professor for a period of up to 12 months after which time the student must have an official Major Professor to be able to continue in the graduate program.

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee:

- guides development and implementation of the student's graduate program.
- approves the thesis or dissertation research prospectus and the thesis or dissertation
- administers the appropriate written and oral examinations.

It is the duty of the Advisory Committee to oversee the academic development of the student. To ensure that the student has educational experiences commensurate with the degree sought, the Advisory Committee may require a student to complete specific courses and meet specific competencies. The Associate Director is an ex officio non-voting member of all Advisory Committees.

Students must email the COA Academic Coordinator to set up an official Advisory Committee. This must be done in the first semester and before any major milestones are attempted. All members of the proposed Advisory Committee must have Regular or Associate Faculty Status. It can take several months to receive final approval for a new Associate Graduate Faculty status request.

Grievance Procedure

Students may encounter problems in areas such as academics, student life and financial support. If a student feels a need to pursue grievance, the graduate student should first consult his/her Major Professor. However, if the student is uncomfortable or dissatisfied using this route, the student should meet with the Associate Director who will counsel the student on a confidential basis and will assist in selecting an appropriate grievance procedure. Students may also refer to the Division of Student Affairs for more details on grievances and appeals.

Leave of Absence

Under certain circumstances (chronic illness, family crisis, extreme hardship, military deployment, etc.) a student may request a leave of absence from his/her/their graduate program. A leave of absence will be granted for one semester; the student may petition for one additional semester as circumstances warrant. The maximum leave allowable is one academic year. Requests for a leave of absence should be submitted using the Leave of Absence Request Form to the Associate Director. The Associate Director will forward the Leave of Absence Form to the Graduate School indicating the department's recommendation regarding leave. Upon final review by the Dean of the Graduate School, the student and Associate Director will be notified of the final decision. A student wishing to return from leave must apply for readmission, but the application fee will be waived. Normally, requests should be submitted at least one semester before the leave of absence.

Outside Employment

Graduate assistantships are designed to allow students to pursue their studies and research full-time. If a student engages in outside employment it is likely to interfere with their good progress. Therefore, it is required that students discuss outside employment with their Major Professor prior to accepting any outside position. In the case of a COA Research Assistantship, both Major Professor and the Associate Director will need to give approval. The nature and extent of the external employment may be considered in granting permission. Renewal of external employment must be requested and approved annually. If, while engaging in external employment, the student is unable to maintain good academic standing or fulfill the required duties of the assistantship the graduate assistant contract may be terminated. Failure to comply with this policy will result in loss of the assistantship. The university policy on GA external employment can be found here: https://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/gradaute-school-attachments/ga_external_employment_request_september_2020.pdf.

Research Mind-Set

Graduate study in COA is research intensive and seeks to provide students the opportunity to specialize in a chosen field of study through active research. It is important that new graduate students make the transition from an undergraduate mind-set where degree requirements are fulfilled by completing a defined number of classes or credit hours to a graduate mind-set where degree requirements are fulfilled by completing and

defending a research thesis.

Student Awards and Scholarship Opportunities

There are a variety of awards and scholarships available for active COA students. These opportunities are available through the USM Foundation and the COA Awards Committee. More details on award and scholarship opportunities can be found on the COA webpage. All applications are due February 15th.

Student Requests for Travel Funding

Requests for funding to present at conferences or workshops will be based on the student's record of engagement with the Division, including but not limited to: academic performance, attendance at seminars and Division functions, and assistance with Divisional requests from the Associate Director. Assistance will also be based on availability of funds.

Travel Paperwork

Students are ***required*** to work with the COA Administrative Specialist to complete all USM travel paperwork. Please contact Jennifer Strength (J.Strength@usm.edu; 228.818.8015) as soon as travel plans are known to begin the paperwork process. Visit the USM Travel Office website for instructions and additional information. A travel checklist with instructions can be found in the appendix.

Academic Policies

Annual Progress Report

At the end of *each calendar year*, students will provide an annual report on research progress via the COA Graduate Student Progress Form to the Major Professor and meet with members of the COA Graduate Student Progress Committee. The meeting provides an opportunity for the student to discuss his/her/their degree progress with the committee. The committee will guide the student based on information received, and the Major Professor will file a copy of the annual report along with the COA Graduate Student Progress Committee recommendations in the student's departmental file. If a student's Major Professor is a member of the Graduate Student Progress Committee, they may request the Major Professor not be included in discussions to provide opportunity for open dialogue on degree progress.

Application for Degree

Students should submit a signed, completed Application for Graduate Degree (including other required materials) to the COA Academic Coordinator and Graduate School degree auditor by the specified deadline **the semester before the planned graduation semester**. A late fee will be assessed if the deadline is missed. The Graduate School degree auditor will check the application and notify the student and the Major Professor if any problems are evident. See the Graduate School website for more information.

A student who applies for degree but finds that he/she cannot finish as anticipated must submit a new Application for Degree. This is called a deferment. There is no fee associated with the *first* deferment. Any subsequent deferments must be accompanied by a fee payment. Students should notify the Graduate School Communication and Documents Specialist of a deferment.

Changing from M.S. to Ph.D., or Ph.D. to M.S.

M.S. track students may be reclassified as Ph.D. track students. Demonstrated excellence is required in coursework and a passing grade in the comprehensive examinations before a master's-track student can be officially reassigned to the doctoral program. The student must submit a memorandum to their Major Professor declaring their intention. The student's Major Professor should write a memorandum to the Associate Director supporting such a change. If the student is early in their master's-track degree plan, they may be required to reapply and submit a full application to the COA Ph.D. program through the USM Graduate School Admissions portal.

In contrast, if a Ph.D. student fails the qualifying exams on the second attempt, the student will be considered for a MS. The student's Major Professor will write a memorandum to the Associate Director indicating such a change, and the Associate Director will notify the Graduate School.

Class Registration

It is the student's responsibility to consult with his or her Major Professor, select courses, and register in a timely manner through SOAR. Failure to do so may result in late registration fees that are the student's responsibility. In general, students should enroll for summer and fall classes in early April. Students should enroll for spring classes in early October. If you are a GA, you must be enrolled in the appropriate number of hours (9-13 hours in Fall and Spring; 1-3 hours in Summer) for your tuition waiver to be applied.

Special Topics, Special Problems, and Research courses are typically listed with a 600-level and 700-level section (e.g., COA 690/790). When enrolling in one of these courses, M.S. students should enroll in the 600-level course and Ph.D. students should enroll in the 700-level course with their faculty advisor.

First-time registration assistance is available from the COA Academic Coordinator. New students should familiarize themselves with USM's SOAR soon after acceptance. You should change your contact information to your (new) local address and phone number. This ensures all university correspondence will arrive as soon as possible. *All university correspondence will be through the university email account issued by USM.*

For continuing students, early registration must be accomplished using SOAR. For instructions on how to register for classes using SOAR, refer to SOAR tutorials. Refer to the current academic calendar for important student-related deadlines and dates.

The COA class schedule is available on the COA webpage and can also be accessed through SOAR. A list of required books is provided in SOAR at the time of registration. Textbooks may be purchased from the University's Barnes and Noble online bookstore.

You are permitted, with the approval of your Major Professor, to take courses offered at the USM main campus in Hattiesburg or the Division of Marine Science teaching site at Stennis Space Center. Stennis is a federal facility and all students will be required to show identification prior to entry; foreign nationals will be required to have an escort while on Stennis grounds and may require additional security clearance that needs to be obtained prior to the beginning of semester. IVN (videoconferencing) may be available for classes not offered at the GCRL location. If you are interested in this option, contact the Academic Coordinator for more information.

Completion of Required University Training Courses

The below training courses are required to be completed by all graduate students in the beginning of the **first semester** of enrollment. Some of these courses are through USM's Research and Scholarly Integrity Assurance Program (IAP). In addition to the required University courses offered through CITI and the Plagiarism Tutorial (USM Libraries), there may be additional compliance training that is required by the University. Notifications for additional training requirements will be provided through the USM email mailouts.

1. Research and Scholarly Integrity Assurance Program (CITI)
2. Animal Subjects Research Course (CITI)
3. Plagiarism Tutorial
4. Compliance Training

Following completion of the CITI modules, the student should submit a copy of the Completion Report to the COA Academic Coordinator who will record the completion and forward the report to the Graduate School degree auditor.

The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) must approve research projects that use vertebrate animals in any way. Procedures for Institutional Animal Care and Use review are currently available here. Research that involves human subjects in any way must be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Procedures for Human Subjects Review are available here. Students will work in collaboration with their Major Professor to obtain these approvals.

Plagiarism Tutorial

This tutorial will help you avoid plagiarism by providing examples that explain how to properly include in one's own scholarly work information from other sources. It is not enough to mention a source in a bibliography; you must cite an outside source within your text in a specific way in order for the use not to be considered plagiarism. COA students are required to take this tutorial during their first semester and send screenshot of completion to Academic Coordinator, **Jordyn Fletcher** (jordyn.fletcher@usm.edu): http://www.lib.usm.edu/plagiarism_tutorial/

Continuous Enrollment

Students must be enrolled continuously (each fall and spring semester) after completing required coursework and passing the comprehensive examination through the completion of the degree program. Students must enroll as stipulated below:

- Students must enroll for a minimum of one (1) hour each fall and spring semester to maintain continuous enrollment.

  Students must enroll for one hour of thesis (698) or dissertation (898) during the semester they expect to take the comprehensive exam or defend and complete the thesis or dissertation. The final version of the document, approved by both the student's Advisory Committee and the Graduate School, must be submitted to the Graduate School no later than the specified deadline. If a student fails to meet the deadline for submission, he/she must register for one (1) hour of thesis (698) or dissertation (898) until graduation.
- Failure to enroll for at least one (1) hour during the fall and spring semesters will result in discontinuation from the university. A student who has been discontinued and seeks readmission must apply for readmission, pay an application fee, and remit payment for one hour of tuition, at the current tuition rate, for each fall and spring semester not enrolled.

Students must enroll for one (1) hour in each summer semester if they are using university services, e.g., library and/or technology services.

Please note that the hours required for continuous enrollment are different than the hours required to maintain a graduate assistantship.

Course Revalidation

A student who has successfully petitioned for an extension of time limit for graduation due to extraordinary circumstances that slowed degree progress must revalidate all graduate courses taken at USM outside the time limit for the degree before the student can graduate. The revalidation plan must be developed by the Major Professor and approved by the Associate Director and Dean of the Graduate School. A $50 fee for each course to be revalidated must be paid before the revalidation is attempted, up to a maximum of $400 in revalidation fees. Over-age extension and transfer courses cannot be revalidated. The Major Professor must submit a Revalidation Request Form for approval to proceed with the course(s) revalidation. Once the courses have been revalidated, the Major Professor must submit a Revalidation Verification Form.

Academic Forms

Use the links below to access progress to degree and graduation forms. Some forms should be completed by students, while others require completion by the Major Professor. Please refer to the lists below to determine who should submit a particular form. All forms are located on the Graduate School website. Always ensure you are using the most recent forms available and they are submitted by the deadlines enforced by the Graduate School.

All forms must be typed (except for signatures). Handwritten forms are not accepted by the Graduate School. Complete forms must be sent electronically to the COA Academic Coordinator for approval and submission to the Graduate School. Electronic signatures are preferred on all forms.

Course Revalidation

A student who has successfully petitioned for an extension of time limit for graduation due to extraordinary circumstances that slowed degree progress must revalidate all graduate courses taken at USM outside the time limit for the degree before the student can graduate. The revalidation plan must be developed by the Major Professor and approved by the Associate Director and Dean of the Graduate School. A $50 fee for each course to be revalidated must be paid before the revalidation is attempted, up to a maximum of $400 in revalidation fees. Over-age extension and transfer courses cannot be revalidated. The Major Professor must submit a Revalidation Request Form for approval to proceed with the course(s) revalidation. Once the courses have been revalidated, the Major Professor must submit a Revalidation Verification Form.

Academic Forms

Use the links below to access progress to degree and graduation forms. Some forms should be completed by students, while others require completion by the Major Professor. Please refer to the lists below to determine who should submit a particular form. All forms are located on the Graduate School website. Always ensure you are using the most recent forms available and they are submitted by the deadlines enforced by the Graduate School.

All forms must be typed (except for signatures). Handwritten forms are not accepted by the Graduate School. Complete forms must be sent electronically to the COA Academic Coordinator for approval and submission to the Graduate School. Electronic signatures are preferred on all forms.

Student Completion Forms

Application for Graduation
Commencement Form (doctoral students only) Course Retake Form
Embargo Agreement
Graduation Deferment Form
Committee Request Form (email Academic Coordinator to finalize)
Leave of Absence Form
Survey of Earned Doctorates (doctoral students only)

Faculty Completion Forms

NOTE: These forms are password protected and for faculty use only.
Change of Status Form (to change from Conditional to Regular Admission status)
Course Substitution

Dismissal Form
Thesis, Dissertation, or Doctoral Project Proposal (in SOAR)
Results of Comprehensive Exam (in SOAR)
Results of Oral Defense
Approval of Thesis, Dissertation, or Doctoral Project
Revalidation Request Form
Revalidation Verification Form
Transfer Credit Approval Form

Quality of Work

Conditional Status

Students granted conditional admission to the Division of Coastal Sciences are not eligible for any graduate assistantship positions regardless of the source of funding.

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 600 level, not including research hours and not to include Special Problems. The 9 hour requirement must be met no later than the end of the first semester of the student's program for full time students; for part time students it must be met no later than the end of the second semester (Semester here is defined as Fall/Spring academic semester). 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 3.0 overall grade point average on all coursework. Only USM courses will be applied toward the 9 hours required. Lower-level coursework (599 or lower) 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. Failure to achieve these requirements will result in dismissal from the graduate program.

To obtain *Regular Status* a **Ph.D.** 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 Special Problems. The 9 hour requirement must be met no later than the end of the first semester of the student's

program for full time students; for part time students it must be met no later than the end of the second semester (Semester here is defined as Fall/Spring academic semester). 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. Failure to achieve these requirements will result in dismissal from the graduate program.

To request reclassification as a regular graduate student, the student's Major Professor must write a memorandum and complete a change of status form, through the Associate Director, to the Graduate School requesting such a change.

Regular status

A minimum 3.0 GPA in coursework is required for graduation. If the student's cumulative GPA falls below 3.0, the student has 1 (one) probationary semester in which to elevate the cumulative GPA to 3.0 by taking coursework, not including research hours. Failure to elevate the cumulative GPA to 3.0 is grounds for termination from the graduate program.

Minimum GPA and Course Grade Requirements

A minimum 3.0 GPA in coursework is required for graduation. Only courses with earned letter grades of C or better will be accepted for credit towards the degree, and no more than two (2) grades of "C+" or "C" across six (6) credit hours is allowable in any coursework attempted.

No grade of "C-" or lower is allowable in any coursework attempted. In this case, the student is automatically put on probation until the course is retaken. A course retaken to return a student to good academic standing must be retaken the next semester the course is offered. In the case of Special Topics or Special Problems courses, the student is required to retake the course covering the same material and earn a better grade. A student may retake one course to improve his/her grade point average. The original grade in the course will remain on the transcript but will not be used in the calculation of the GPA once the repeat has been recorded. A course retake form must be submitted to the Graduate School during the semester the course is retaken.

Failure to demonstrate satisfactory progress towards completion of degree requirements as determined by the Advisory Committee and Associate Director will result in the assistantship being revoked and may ultimately entail termination of the graduate program. Dismissal from the graduate program will be initiated as a recommendation from the student's Advisory Committee to the Associate Director. The Associate Director will act on this recommendation and forward the dismissal request to the Graduate School.

Probation

A student will be placed on academic probation for the next regular semester of enrollment (fall or spring) for the following reasons:

- The cumulative grade point average (GPA) or program GPA falls below 3.0.
- A grade of "C-" or lower is awarded.
- A seventh hour of C+ or below is awarded.
- A U is earned in thesis or dissertation research.

The Major Professor and/or Associate Director will inform the student in writing that he/she will be placed on probation for one semester or as directed by the program (if full time) or up to two semesters (if part time). The letter will include a set of expectations for the student's return to good academic standing. Once the terms of the probationary period have been met, the department will inform the Graduate School and the student in writing. Failure to return to good academic standing by the end of the probationary period will result in dismissal from the program.

During the probationary semester(s), a student will not be allowed to engage in progress toward degree activities which include defending a thesis, dissertation, or capstone project, and participating in qualifying or comprehensive examinations. A student may not graduate until he/she returns to good academic standing.

Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines

All students are expected to show satisfactory research progress while enrolled in COA 698/898 thesis/dissertation. Each semester of enrollment, the Major Professor must develop a set of expectations for research progress in writing, discuss these expectations with the student no later than the first week of the semester, and collect the signature of the student acknowledging that he/she understand the expectations. The Major Professor will assess student progress throughout the semester or minimally at the end of the semester to determine whether the work was satisfactory. Failure to meet the minimal expectations of satisfactory performance articulated in the research expectations document will result in the student being awarded an Unsatisfactory (U) grade and being placed on probation.

The student can return to good academic standing if satisfactory research progress is made during the probationary semester resulting in a Satisfactory (S) grade. One Unsatisfactory grade can be removed from the transcript by petition for a grade change by the Major Professor if the student earns two consecutive S grades. A second U grade in these courses at any point in the degree program will result in dismissal from the program. More specifics on the grading system for Thesis and Dissertation courses can be found in the USM Graduate Bulletin.

Guidelines for formatting the thesis/dissertation can be found on the Graduate School Website. Students should contact the Communications & Documents Specialist at the Graduate School if questions arise.

Transfer Credit Policy

As many as six (6) semester hours or nine (9) quarter hours of graduate credit from other accredited institutions may be transferred to a student's program based on review and approval of the Major Professor, Advisory Committee, Associate Director, and Graduate School Dean. The coursework to be transferred must have been taken within the time allowed for the particular graduate degree program. Such coursework must carry a letter or numeric grade of "B" or better and cannot be a pass/fail or satisfactory/unsatisfactory course. Incomplete "I" grades are not transferable. The coursework may not have counted toward another degree. Final evaluation and acceptance of transfer credit will not be made until the student has been in academic residence for one semester (doctoral only). Transfer grades will not calculate in the USM GPA. Transfer credit is not automatic and will be awarded only after evaluation of the content of the courses requested to be transferred. Students will supply syllabi, course descriptions, and other requested materials for review. A total sum of no more than twelve (12) credit hours of combined transfer coursework and non-degree coursework may be applied toward a graduate degree.

Degree Requirements

M.S. Degree

Suggested Timeline

Full-time students are expected to complete a Master of Science degree in two years or less. For part-time students, there may be up to an additional two years to complete the program (Semester here is defined as Fall/Spring academic semester).

Action	Date Completed
Completion of University courses	1st Semester
Formation of Advisory Committee	1st Semester
M.S. Thesis Prospectus approved	2nd Semester
Comprehensive exam	3rd Semester
Thesis Defense	End of 4th Semester

Failure to demonstrate satisfactory progress towards completion of degree requirements may result in the assistantship being revoked and may ultimately result in termination of the graduate program.

Formation of Advisory Committee

The M.S. Advisory Committee must have a minimum of three members (including the Major Professor). A majority of the committee must be from the COA faculty; research faculty count toward the COA faculty majority, but emeritus faculty do not. Each committee member must have at least Level 1 Associate or Leve1 1 Regular Graduate Faculty status. The chair of the committee (Major Professor) must be a member of the COA faculty and have Level 2 Regular Graduate Faculty status. Additional appropriate,

non-voting members may be added to the committee with the approval of the Associate Director. An additional COA faculty member may be appointed by the Associate Director to attend the oral comprehensive examination and one to attend the thesis defense to observe the proceedings. The committee evaluates the prospectus, provides guidance on courses the student should take, administers the comprehensive exam, and evaluates the written and oral defense of the thesis. Successful completion of the prospectus, comprehensive exam and thesis defense requires the approval of a majority of the committee members.

A Graduate Committee Request Form must be submitted to the Graduate School with the assistance of the Academic Coordinator early in the student's degree program, prior to defense of proposal or the comprehensive exam, whichever comes first. All proposed committee members must have active Regular or Associate Graduate Faculty status. The student or the Major Professor should email the names of the committee members to the Academic Coordinator to initiate the form.

Degree Progress Report (DPR) – **for students admitted Fall 2017 to present**

Effective for all Fall 2017 newly admitted graduate students, the Graduate School will utilize Degree Progress Reports (DPRs) to monitor progress to degree. Students and faculty should utilize the DPR to track progress to degree and assist in course scheduling. DPRs can be accessed through SOAR. Use this tutorial for instructions on how to access this information in SOAR.

Degree Plan

A minimum of 30 graduate credit hours beyond the Baccalaureate is required for the M.S. in Coastal Sciences. The Graduate Bulletin should be consulted for the breakdown of specific hours required per course type (Electives, Research, Thesis, etc.) for a COA degree.

The following is a guideline to credit hour requirements for M.S. students. The Graduate Bulletin should be consulted for specific details related to any COA degree plan.

Course Type	**Hours Required**
COA 691 (Research)	6
COA 698 (Thesis)	6
Electives (Determined by Major Professor & Advisory Committee)	18
Total Hours Required	**30**

Note: COA 691- Research, COA 697- Independent Study, and COA 698- Thesis do not count toward credit hours of electives for the M.S. degree. A minimum of 18 credit hours must be earned at the 500 level or greater

Thesis Prospectus Approval

Students are required to prepare a concise, yet detailed, written thesis prospectus. An approved prospectus is a research plan detailing the scope of work and associated deliverables that fulfills the thesis requirements of the M.S. degree. This written document must be presented to the Advisory Committee at least two weeks prior to the student making an oral presentation on the prospectus.

Any subsequent revisions to the research prospectus must then be approved by the Advisory Committee within one (1) semester of the presentation, and only after approval can the thesis research project be considered acceptable for earning the 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.

Comprehensive Examination

After completing all coursework (typically in the third semester or at another time acceptable to the Advisory Committee) a written and/or oral comprehensive examination will be conducted by the Advisory Committee. The format of the exam will be determined by the Major Professor and Advisory Committee. The examination is passed by a majority vote of the Advisory Committee members and may be taken twice only. Failure to pass the M.S. comprehensive exam on the second attempt is grounds for termination from the program. The Major Professor must submit the results of the M.S. comprehensive exam via SOAR on the Results of Comprehensive & Qualifying Exams form immediately after completion of the exam.

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

Students must enroll for a minimum of one hour during the semester they expect to take the comprehensive exam.

Thesis

Instructions for writing your thesis and completing the submission process can be found here: https://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/internalportal/instructions-and-videos.php

Thesis Defense

After courses are completed and the comprehensive examinations passed, the M.S. candidate becomes qualified to defend the thesis in their next semester. At least two (2) weeks prior to the defense the student will present an acceptable copy of the thesis to all members of the Advisory Committee.

The thesis defense includes (1) a public seminar followed by (2) an Advisory Committee oral examination. Student defenses must be publicly advertised at least two weeks prior to the defense date. It is the responsibility of the student and their Major Professor to determine the defense date and the responsibility of the student to reserve a venue. A majority vote of the Advisory Committee determines the outcome of the defense. The outcome must be reported to the COA Academic Coordinator and the Graduate School via the Results of Oral Defense form as soon as possible after the meeting. It is the responsibility of the students to adhere to the deadlines set by the Graduate School.

Students must enroll for a minimum of one hour of thesis (COA 698) during the semester they defend and complete the Master's thesis. The final version of the document, approved by both the Graduate Advisory Committee and the Communications & Documents Specialist in the Graduate School, must be submitted to the Graduate School no later than the specified deadline. If a student fails to meet the deadline for submission, he/she must register for one hour of thesis (COA 698) through the semester of graduation. Students must also email their Faculty Advisor and the Academic Coordinator an electronic copy of their completed thesis.

Time Limit

A Master's degree must be completed within five (5) academic years from the semester of initial enrollment in a Master's program. Five years is the maximum time allowed for graduate coursework toward a Master's degree for both full time and part time students. A student must meet the requirements and adhere to the policies described in the USM Graduate Bulletin that is current the first semester of enrollment through the fifth (5^{th}) year in the program.

If a student's degree progress is slowed due to an extreme hardship, he/she may petition the Associate Director via the Major Professor for a limited extension which will then be reviewed by the Dean of the Graduate School. If an extension is granted, the student will become subject to the USM Graduate Bulletin that is current the semester the extension is granted and will be responsible for meeting any new requirements of the degree and/or departmental or university policies. Course revalidation will be required.

Continuance of assistantship support depends on satisfactory progress towards completion of a degree (as well as availability of funds). Therefore, full-time M.S. students will not be eligible for further support after their third year. Under extenuating circumstances, a student may, with the support of the student's Major Professor and Advisory Committee, petition to be allowed to receive additional support beyond these limits. Such a request requires the approval of the Associate Director and a majority vote of the COA faculty in support of the request.

Ph.D. Degree

Suggested Timeline

Full-time students are expected to complete a Ph.D. from a master's degree in four years or less, and a Ph.D. from a bachelor's degree in six years or less. For part-time students, there may be up to an additional two to three years to complete the program. Part-time students especially should be aware of the university time limits discussed later in this section (Semester here is defined as Fall/Spring academic semester).

Action	Date Completed
Completion of University courses	1st Semester
Formation of Advisory Committee	2nd Semester
Ph.D. Prospectus approved	4th Semester
Formal coursework completed	3rd Year
Comprehensive exam	3rd Year
Dissertation Defense	End of 4th Year

Failure to demonstrate satisfactory progress towards completion of degree requirements may result in the assistantship being revoked and may ultimately result in termination of the graduate program.

Formation of Advisory Committee

The Ph.D. Advisory Committee must have a minimum of four members (including the Major Professor). A majority of the committee must be from the COA faculty; research faculty count toward the COA faculty majority, but emeritus faculty do not. Each committee member must have at least Level 2 Associate or Leve1 2 Regular Graduate Faculty Status. The chair of the Committee (Major Professor) must be a member of the COA faculty and have Level 3 Regular Graduate status. Only one committee member can be from outside the university. Additional appropriate, non-voting members may be added to the committee with the approval of the Associate Director. An additional COA faculty member may be appointed by the Associate Director to attend the oral comprehensive examination and one to attend the dissertation defense to observe the proceedings. The committee evaluates the prospectus, provides guidance on courses the student should take, administers the qualifying and comprehensive exams, and evaluates the written and oral defense of the dissertation. Successful completion of the prospectus, comprehensive exam, and dissertation defense requires the approval of a majority of the committee members.

A Graduate Committee Request Form must be submitted to the Graduate School with the assistance of the Academic Coordinator early in the student's degree program, prior to defense of proposal or the comprehensive exam, whichever comes first. All proposed committee members must have active Regular or Associate Graduate Faculty status. The student or the Major Professor should email the names of the committee members to the Academic Coordinator to initiate the form.

Degree Progress Report (DPR) – **for students admitted Fall 2017 to present**

Effective for all Fall 2017 newly admitted graduate students and continuing forward, the Graduate School will utilize Degree Progress Reports (DPRs) to monitor progress to degree. The DPRs will replace Plan of Study (POS) forms and graduate degree auditors in the Graduate School will not accept POS forms from these students. Any coursework taken by any student (including Fall 2017 admits) prior to 01/01/2015 will not be populated on the DPR.

Students and faculty should utilize the DPR to track progress to degree and assist in course scheduling. DPRs can be accessed through SOAR. Use this tutorial for instructions on how to access this information in SOAR.

Degree Plan

A minimum of 84 graduate credit hours beyond the Baccalaureate degree or a minimum of 54 graduate credit hours beyond the M.S. degree is required for the Ph.D. in Coastal Sciences. The Graduate Bulletin should be consulted for the breakdown of specific hours required per course type (Electives, Research, Dissertation, etc.) for a COA degree.

Below is a guideline to credit hour requirements for Ph.D. students. The Graduate Bulletin should be consulted for specific details related to any COA degree plan.

Note: COA 791- Research, COA 797- Independent Study, and COA 898- Dissertation do not count toward credit hours of electives or Research Tools for the Ph.D. degree.

Requirements for students entering with the B.S. degree

Course Type	**Hours Required**
COA 791 (Research)	28
COA 898 (Dissertation)	12
Research Tools	15
Electives (Determined by Major Professor & Advisory Committee)	29
Total Hours Required	**84**

Requirements for students entering with the M.S. degree

Course Type	Hours Required
COA 791 (Research)	16
COA 898 (Dissertation)	12
Research Tools	15
Electives (Determined by Major Professor & Advisory Committee)	11
Total Hours Required	**54**

Research Tools

The Ph.D. program requires the student and Advisory Committee include a minimum of 15 credit hours of research tools appropriate for the student's goals. The research tools credit hours count toward the total coursework requirement of 54 or 84 credit hours. Courses qualifying as research tools are those in which a student learns a technical skill that is useful and relevant to their scientific research. Examples include courses in which statistical analysis, computer programming, field or laboratory instrumentation, field or laboratory techniques are learned. The specific research tools courses are approved by the Advisory Committee and the Associate Director. Evaluation of competency in research tools will be assessed through the student's grades in relevant coursework and by the Advisory Committee during the qualifying and comprehensive exams as well as the final dissertation defense.

Dissertation Prospectus Approval

Students are required to prepare a concise, yet detailed, written dissertation prospectus. An approved prospectus is a research plan detailing the scope of work and associated deliverables that fulfills the dissertation requirements of the Ph.D. degree. This written document must be presented to the Advisory Committee at least two weeks prior to the student making an oral presentation on the prospectus.

Any subsequent revisions to the research prospectus must then be approved by the Advisory Committee within one (1) semester of the presentation and only after approval can the dissertation research project be considered acceptable for earning the degree. Modification 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.

Comprehensive Examination

After completing all required coursework (typically in the fourth semester 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 written examination by the Advisory Committee. The examination will be passed by a majority vote of the Advisory Committee members and may be taken twice only. If a student fails the Ph.D. comprehensive exam on a second attempt, then the student will be considered for an M.S. degree only. The Major Professor must submit the results of the Ph.D. comprehensive exam via SOAR on the Results of Comprehensive & Qualifying Exams form immediately after completion of the exam.

Students advance to candidacy for the Ph.D. in Coastal Sciences by completing all coursework with at least a 3.0 GPA, completing an approved dissertation prospectus, and successfully passing the qualifying and comprehensive examinations.

Students must enroll for a minimum of one hour during the semester they expect to take the comprehensive exam. Doctoral candidates should complete the comprehensive examination **at least** one (1) semester prior to the defense of the dissertation.

Dissertation

The Ph.D. dissertation research is an independent and original investigation that results in a significant contribution to science. The Ph.D. dissertation must be the result of original investigation. The dissertation research project is developed by the student under the direction of the Major Professor.

Instructions for writing your dissertation and completing the submission process can be found here: https://www.usm.edu/graduate-school/internalportal/instructions-and-videos.php

Dissertation Defense

After courses are completed, the comprehensive examinations passed, and the research tools requirement fulfilled, the Ph.D. candidate becomes qualified to defend the dissertation in their next semester. At least two (2) weeks prior to the defense the student will present an acceptable copy of the dissertation to all members of the Advisory Committee.

The dissertation defense includes (1) a public seminar followed by (2) an Advisory Committee oral examination. Student defenses must be publicly advertised at least two weeks prior to the defense date. It is the responsibility of the student and their Major Professor to determine the defense date and the responsibility of the student to reserve a venue. A majority vote of the Advisory Committee determines the outcome of the defense. The outcome must be reported to the COA Academic Coordinator and the Graduate School via the Results of Oral Defense form as soon as possible after the meeting. It is the responsibility of the students to adhere to the timelines set by the Graduate School.

Students must enroll for a minimum of one hour of dissertation (COA 898) during the semester they defend and complete the dissertation. The final version of the document, approved by both the graduate committee and the Communications & Documents Specialist (in the Graduate School), must be submitted to the Graduate School no later than the specified deadline. If a student fails to meet the deadline for submission, he/she must register for one hour of dissertation (COA 898) through the semester of graduation. Students must also email their Faculty Advisor and the Academic Coordinator an electronic copy of their completed dissertation.

Residency

To be considered a student in good standing, the Division and University require that a period of on-site residency be maintained. 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 on a campus of The University of Southern Mississippi. Options for satisfying the residency requirement are: (a) two consecutive academic semesters (Fall and Spring) of 12 credit hours each, (b) 2 consecutive summer terms of 12 credit hours each, or (c) 3 consecutive full-time semester of 9 credit hours each.

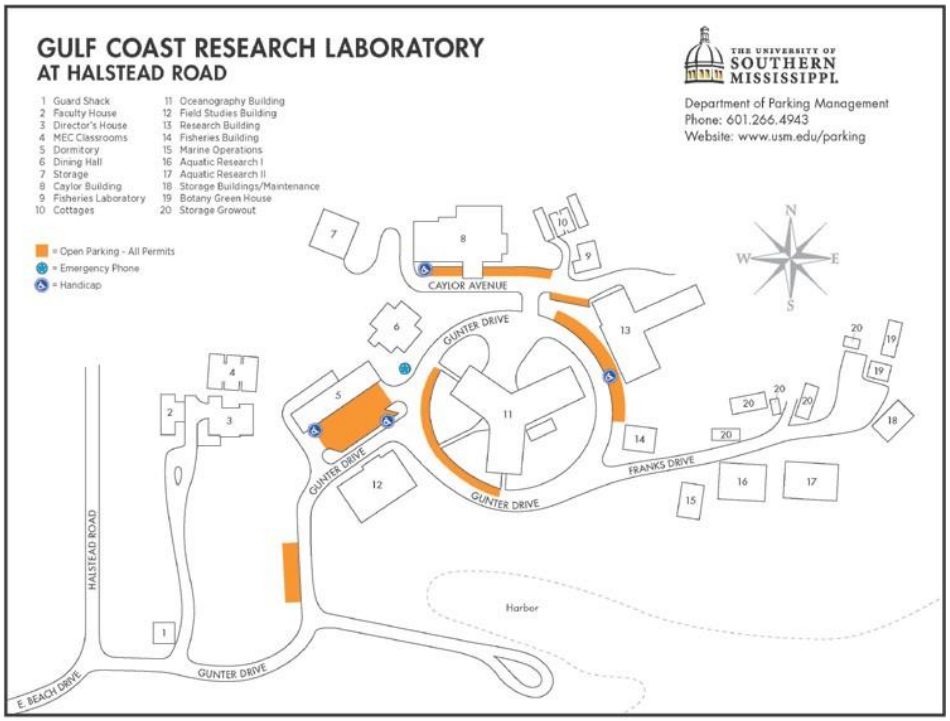
Time Limit

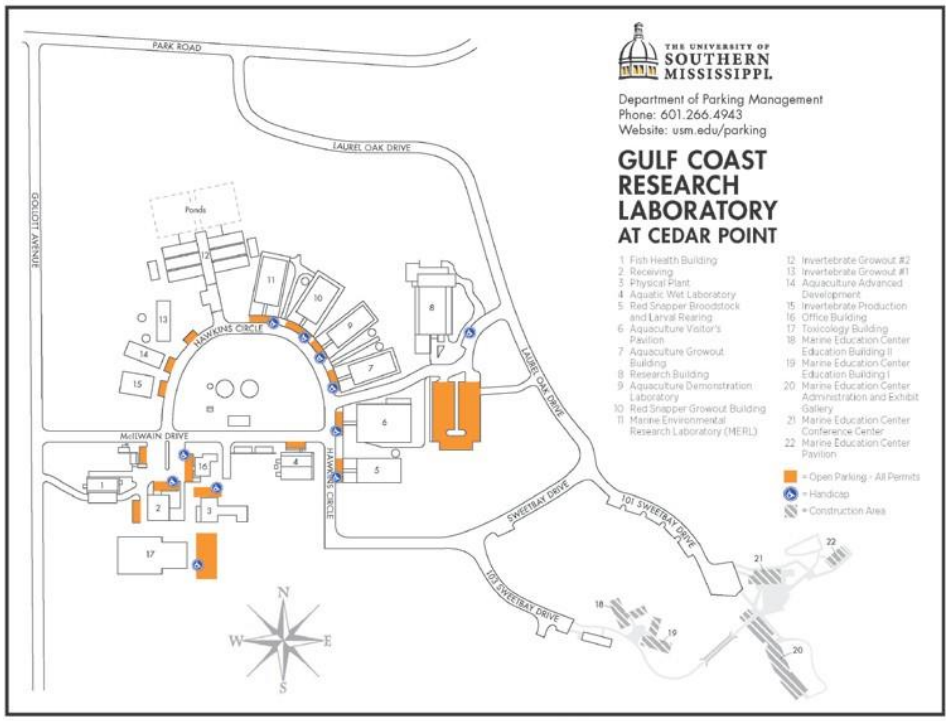
A doctorate must be completed within eight (8) calendar years from the date of initial enrollment in a doctoral program. Eight (8) years is the maximum time allowed for graduate credits toward a doctoral degree for both full time and part time students. A student must meet the requirements and adhere to the policies described in the USM Graduate Bulletin that is current the first semester of enrollment through the eighth (8^{th}) year in the program.

If a student's degree progress is slowed due to an extreme hardship, he/she may petition the Associate Director via the Major Professor for a limited extension which will then be reviewed by the Dean of the Graduate School. If an extension is granted, the student becomes subject to the USM Graduate Bulletin that is current the semester the extension is granted, including responsibility for any changes in the requirements of the degree and/or departmental or university policies. Course revalidation will be required.

Continuance of assistantship support depends on good progress towards completion of a degree (and availability of funds). Therefore, full-time Ph.D. students will not be eligible for GA support after the sixth year. Under extenuating circumstances, a student may, with the support of the student's Major Professor and Advisory Committee, petition to be allowed to receive support beyond these limits. Such a request requires the approval of the Associate Director and a majority vote of the COA faculty in support of the request.

Appendix A: Campus Maps





For future map updates, visit map.usm.edu.

Appendix B: Travel Authorization Checklist

USM Travel Authorization Checklist

Employee: _____ **Department:** _____
Dates of Travel: _____ **Destination:** _____

The following can be used as an interdepartmental guideline to complete your PTT and Travel Voucher. This is NOT to be used as a substitute for either the PTT or Travel Voucher.

1.	**Pre-Travel:** PTT completed in its entirety PTT approved by *correct* Budget Authorities Conference literature submitted Include hotel block room rates with PTT (if applicable)	
2.	**Meals:** Per Diem only allowed with overnight travel Tips do not exceed 20% of the total Meals provided by the conference are not to be claimed Meal rate breakdown of: Breakfast - 20% Lunch - 30% Dinner- 50% being used	
3.	**Lodging:** Itemized, original hotel receipt shows zero balance due The traveler was charged the State of MS hotel room rate or less. (found on USM Travel website)** Shared hotel rooms are clearly noted in comments section of the PTT Hotel dates and locations coincide with PTT	**For **In-State** travel, please use the government room rates found at http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104877 and provide 2 quotes if the rate is higher than the government rate (per state agency regulations).
4.	**Transportation:** Two (2) *separate* cost comparisons included with the ticket purchase Comparison dates obtained the date tickets are purchased Economy flights being purchased (waiver required, if not) Drive vs. Fly is submitted when traveling via personal vehicle outside of neighboring states	
5.	**Conference / Event / Seminar Material** Registration pricing and cost confirmation included.	~Conference literature, hotel information, and all supporting documentation need to be submitted one time with the PTT
6.	**Return from Travel:** Travel voucher approved by Budget Authorities All original receipts included for reimbursement Submit to Travel via PDF (preferred) or interdepartmental mail	Allow 3 full weeks for reimbursements