

General information for MS and PhD students in the UGA Department of Marine Sciences

(last updated: 02/13/2025)

Welcome to the UGA Department of Marine Sciences! The information provided here is meant to provide you with guidance for your progress in our program. First, some general considerations:

Graduate Handbook: All information regarding policies for our programs is listed in the Graduate Handbook. The Handbook can be found online at: <https://www.marsci.uga.edu/marine-sciences-graduate-handbook>. If any inconsistency or discrepancy is found here, the Graduate handbook will supersede this document. In addition, the Graduate School maintains a Policies and Procedures website (see <https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/policies-procedures/>) which contains information on student requirements for graduation.

Mental health resources: UGA offers a variety of counseling and psychiatric services for students. Please visit UGA CAPS (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/caps/welcome>) for additional information.

Milestones: Our program is designed to be flexible. However, students who are successful generally follow the advice/timeline given below (see Appendices A and B for a table with a detailed schedule). The schedules described below are examples only. Some students move more quickly or more slowly at different stages, and we try to remain as flexible as possible to provide you with the best educational experience. If you have any questions, be sure to ask.

- 1) Suggested timeline for PhD students (see Appendix A). Specific details of your individual program should be determined in consultation with your Academic Advisor:
 - a. First year: Emphasis in the first year is generally placed on coursework. In addition to core courses and MARS 7380, all students are required to take MARS8130 - Seminar in Hydrobiology (for 3 semesters in the first 2 years in the program), the introductory MARS 8900 – Methods in Oceanography (see Handbook for details), and the GradFIRST seminar (GRSC 7001). You should begin a research project with your Academic Advisor and form your Faculty Advisory Committee ([Establishing your committee](#)). During your second semester you should submit your choices for your Faculty Mentor (see below) and hold your first meeting with him/her once assigned.
 - b. Second year: You will continue to take courses. You should continue meeting regularly with your Academic Advisor. If you have not done so yet, you should have your first committee meeting and begin writing your PhD dissertation prospectus ([Prospectus](#)

[guidelines](#)). You should also meet with your Faculty Mentor at least once a semester until you graduate.

- c. Third year: The third year is generally devoted to your research. You should finalize your prospectus if you have not done so yet. You should also take your written and oral comprehensive exams this year. You will continue to meet with your committee on a regular basis (every 6-12 months, or more frequently as needed).
 - d. Fourth year: At this point you should have made substantial progress in your dissertation research. Progress could include publications (especially first-author publications) and oral or poster presentations at scientific conferences. Maintain close contact with all members of your committee through annual or biannual meetings. Written drafts of some chapters of your dissertation should be in progress.
 - e. Fifth year: By the end of your fifth year you should be nearing graduation and be working on the final draft of your dissertation.
 - f. All forms needed are available on the Graduate School website at <https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/forms>.
- 2) Suggested timeline for MS students (see Appendix B). Specific details of your individual program should be determined in consultation with your Academic Advisor:
- a. First year: Emphasis in the first year is generally placed on coursework. In addition to core courses and MARS 7380, all students are required to take MARS8130 - Seminar in Hydrobiology (for 3 semesters in the first 2 years in the program), the introductory MARS 8900 – Methods in Oceanography (see Handbook for details), and the GradFIRST seminar (GRSC 7001). You should begin a research project with your Academic Advisor and form your Faculty Advisory Committee ([Establishing your committee](#)). During your second semester you should also submit your choices for your Faculty Mentor (see below) and hold your first meeting with him/her once assigned.
 - b. Second year: You will continue to take courses. You should continue meeting regularly with your Academic Advisor. If you have not done so yet, you should have your first committee meeting and write your thesis proposal ([Prospectus guidelines](#)). Meet with your Faculty Mentor at least once a semester until you graduate. By the end of the second year, you should have made substantial progress in your thesis research. Progress can include oral or poster presentations at scientific conferences and/or publications. Maintain close contact with all members of your committee through annual or biannual meetings. Written drafts of your thesis should be at an advanced stage.
 - c. Third year (if needed): You should be nearing graduation and working on the final draft of your thesis.

- d. All forms needed are available on the Graduate School website at <https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/forms>.

- 3) Requirements for Non-Thesis MS students (see Appendix C). Specific details of your individual program should be determined in consultation with your Academic Advisor:

Requirements for the non-thesis master's program are identical to the thesis master's program described above, except that:

- a. The Internship/Project course (MARS 7100, 9 hours) replaces the Research (MARS 7000, 6 hours) and Thesis (MARS 7300, 3 hours) requirement of our thesis master's program.
- b. The project report and presentation at the end of MARS 7100 replace the thesis and oral exam of the thesis master's program. Committee members will review and assess the project report providing an evaluation of the written work. Upon satisfactory completion of the report an oral presentation will be scheduled that will be open to the University community and an evaluation of that presentation will also be carried out.
- c. A syllabus will be developed for MARS 7100 by the faculty advisor in collaboration with the external project advisor where applicable, outlining the learning objectives of the individual internship project.

Roles and Resources

Academic Advisor: Your Academic Advisor is the faculty member who will direct your research, support you, both intellectually and financially, and interact with you on a regular basis throughout graduate school. Your Advisor serves as your primary resource providing guidance while you are at UGA.

Thesis/Dissertation Committee: Your committee is comprised of your Academic Advisor as well as additional faculty members with expertise relevant to your research topic. The committee is generally formed late in your first year and should meet with you at least once a year to provide guidance and feedback on your research. Remember that this is your committee, so use them as a resource, especially when you are setting up an experiment or planning field work (it doesn't help to share your work when it's too late for them to suggest an additional variable or a control that might be useful). If you are working on a paper, it may be helpful, but not necessary, to get their feedback before submission.

Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC): The GAC monitors your progress through the program. Midway through your second semester at UGA (e.g., spring of your first year for students beginning in the fall semester), you will be asked to provide the GAC with the names of three faculty members who you would prefer to have as your Faculty Mentor. The GAC will work with you and the faculty to assign Mentors, making an effort to select a preferred mentor from the list you provided.

Faculty Mentor: During your second semester you will be assigned a Faculty Mentor by the GAC (see above). This person is separate from your Academic Advisor and committee members. The mentor serves as an additional resource to help you succeed in graduate school. The Mentor will meet with you at least once a semester (but you can meet more often, if necessary), and s/he will provide, together with the Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC), written feedback to you and to your Academic Advisor on your progress once a year. This written report should be interpreted as guidance for you and your Academic Advisor on how to optimize your progress in our program. The Mentor will base her/his advice on the recommendations provided in this document, including on the milestones listed above as well as timeline provided in Appendices A and B to track your progress in our program.

Additional support from other faculty members: Although both your Academic Advisor and the Faculty Mentor will be responsible for following your progress in our program and providing feedback, you should count every faculty member in the department as a resource for your success. You should also consider bringing concerns and questions you may have to the Graduate Coordinator and/or to the Department Head.

Graduate students:

- 1) As a graduate student, your main responsibility is to conduct research for your thesis or dissertation. These efforts (data collection, analysis, writing) should take up the majority of your time. When pursuing other research activities that build your CV and expand your skill sets (side research projects, field experience not central to your own work, elective coursework), be mindful of the cost to your progress toward graduation. Be sure to protect time to analyze data and write papers. Per university guidelines, you may be asked to work on teaching activities (if supported by a teaching assistantship) or on research projects not related to your thesis/dissertation (if supported by a research assistantship), but these will average ≤ 17.5 hours/week.
- 2) Finally, it is worth repeating that you should meet with your committee *at least* once a year starting in your second year, and it is probably best if you meet more often. You should consider this a rule. If it has been nearly a year since your last committee meeting, be proactive. Tell your Academic Advisor and committee members that you want to meet with them. Your committee provides a productive forum to advance evolving ideas and evaluate your research plan.

Appendix A: Department of Marine Sciences Graduate Program

Checklist PhD Degree (Assumes student joined department in August 2024)

Action	Estimated Deadline	Date Completed
Selection of Faculty Mentor	1 st year 02/2025	
Formation of Faculty Advisory Committee (5 members)	1 st year 08/2025	
Approval of Preliminary Program of Study (See checklist below)	1 st year 08/2025	
Approval of Final Program of Study (See checklist below)	2 nd year 08/2026	
Approval of Dissertation Prospectus (5-8 pages)	2 nd year 08/2026	
Written Comprehensive Exam	3 rd year 08/2027	
Oral Comprehensive Exam (*Grad Admin. needs two week notice of oral comp. date.)	3 rd year 08/2027	
Completion of Teaching Requirement	Any year	
Completion of Ship/Field Work Requirement	Any year	
Application for Admission to Candidacy	3 rd year 08/2027	
Apply for Graduation (Apply for graduation no later than the Friday of the second full week of classes (first full week for summer) of the semester of anticipated graduation.)	**	
Oral Defense of Dissertation (*Submit thesis to committee two weeks before defense date. *Grad Admin. needs two week notice of defense date.) ETD Form completed	**	

PROGRAM OF STUDY CHECKLIST

WITHOUT MS Degree	WITH MS DEGREE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> MARS 7380 (credits do not count toward non-research requirement) <input type="checkbox"/> MARS 8010* <input type="checkbox"/> MARS 8020* <input type="checkbox"/> MARS 8030* <input type="checkbox"/> MARS 8130 (3 semesters in the first 2 years) <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 10px auto;"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> MARS 8900 – Methods in Oceanography (does not count toward program of study) <input type="checkbox"/> GRSC 7001 (1 semester in the first year) <input type="checkbox"/> \geq 30 total credit hours <input type="checkbox"/> A total of 20 credit hours in classes 8000 or 6000 level classes– not research <input type="checkbox"/> 16 of 20 credit hours in 8000-level courses <input type="checkbox"/> \geq 3 credit hours in MARS 9000 <input type="checkbox"/> \geq 3 credit hours in MARS 9300 – registered for last semester <input type="checkbox"/> \geq C for all courses listed on PoS <input type="checkbox"/> \geq B average for all graduate courses <input type="checkbox"/> 30 consecutive credit hours (not counting summer) for residency requirement <p><small>*An average grade of “B” among these three core courses is required.</small></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> MARS 7380 (credits do not count toward non-research requirement) <input type="checkbox"/> MARS 8010* <input type="checkbox"/> MARS 8020* <input type="checkbox"/> MARS 8030* <input type="checkbox"/> MARS 8130 (3 semesters in the first 2 years) <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 10px auto;"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> MARS 8900 – Methods in Oceanography (does not count toward program of study) <input type="checkbox"/> GRSC 7001 (1 semester in the first year) <input type="checkbox"/> \geq 30 total credit hours <input type="checkbox"/> A total of 16 credit hours in classes 8000 level classes– not research <input type="checkbox"/> \geq 3 credit hours in MARS 9000 <input type="checkbox"/> \geq 3 credit hours in MARS 9300 – registered for last semester <input type="checkbox"/> \geq C for all courses listed on PoS <input type="checkbox"/> \geq B average for all graduate courses <input type="checkbox"/> 30 consecutive credit hours (not counting summer) for residency requirement <p><small>*An average grade of “B” among these three core courses is required.</small></p>

Consult the Marine Sciences graduate handbook for restrictions, including classes that do not count towards the program of study.

TA CHECKLIST

- GRSC 7770
- LLED 7768 and/or LLED 7769 (if applicable)
- TOEFL / IELTS score _____
- Fall Orientation

AWARDS

WARNINGS/PROBATION

Appendix B: Department of Marine Sciences Graduate Program Checklist MS Degree (Assumes student joined department in August 2024)

Action	Estimated Deadline	Date Completed
Selection of Faculty Mentor	1 st year 02/2025	
Formation of Faculty Advisory Committee (3 members)	1 st year 08/2025	
Approval of Program of Study (See checklist below)	1 st year 08/2025	
Approval of Thesis Proposal (3-5 pages)	2 nd year 12/2026	
Apply for Graduation (Apply for graduation no later than the Friday of the second full week of classes (first full week for summer) of the semester of anticipated graduation.)		
Oral Defense of Thesis (*Submit thesis to committee two weeks before defense date. *Grad Admin. needs two week notice of defense date.)		

Consult the Marine Sciences graduate handbook for restrictions, including classes that do not count towards the program of study.

Program of Study Checklist

- MARS 7380 (can count toward grad only courses)
- MARS 8010*
- MARS 8020*
- MARS 8030*
- MARS 8130 (3 semesters in the first 2 years) _____
- MARS 8900 – Methods in Oceanography (does not count toward program of study)
- GRSC 7001 (1 semester in the first year)
- =/> 30 total credit hours
- 21 credit hours non-research classes
- 12 of 21 credit hours in courses only open to grad students
- =/> 3 credit hours in MARS 7000
- =/> 3 credit hours in MARS 7300 – registered for last semester
- =/> C for all courses listed on PoS
- =/> B average for all graduate courses

*An average grade of “B” among these three core courses is required.

TA Checklist (if applicable)

- GRSC 7770
- LLED 7768 and/or LLED 7769 (if applicable)
- Fall Orientation

Awards

Warnings/ Probation

Appendix C: Department of Marine Sciences Graduate Program Checklist Non-Thesis MS Degree

This program is designed to be flexible, and as such specific deadlines are not offered. Specific details of your individual program should be determined in consultation with your Faculty Advisor.

Milestones include:

- Selection of Faculty advisor and external project advisor (if applicable)
- Formation of Advisory Committee
- Approval of program of study
- Submit written project report
- Final oral presentation (upon satisfactory completion of the written report)

Program of Study Checklist

- MARS 7380 (can count toward grad only courses)
 - MARS 8010*
 - MARS 8020*
 - MARS 8030*
 - MARS 8130 (3 semesters in the first 2 years)

 - _____
 - MARS 8900 – Methods in Oceanography (does not count toward program of study)
 - GRSC 7001 (1 semester in the first year)
 - =/> 30 total credit hours
 - 21 credit hours non-research classes
 - 12 of 21 credit hours in courses only open to grad students
 - = 9 credit hours in MARS 7100
 - =/> C for all courses listed on PoS
 - =/> B average for all graduate courses
- *An average grade of "B" among these three core courses is required.

TA Checklist (if applicable)

- GRSC 7770
- LLED 7768 and/or LLED 7769 (if applicable)
- Fall Orientation

Awards

Warnings/ Probation
