

Section 3: Master's Degree Program Timeline: Thesis or Professional Experience Track

The typical sequence of milestones and timeline for progressing through the Master's Program in Coastal Marine and Wetland Studies is outlined below and attached in Appendix A. Students should refer to this timeline to maintain progress towards graduation on time. The timeline and milestone tracking will be maintained by the student's major professor and filed with the CMSS Graduate Programs Coordinator. The Milestone charts provide for input on potential causes of delays from maintaining the targeted progress through the program. Excessive delay in progress may jeopardize program resources, such as graduate RA's provided by School funds.

3.1 Choose Master's Program Thesis or Professional Experience Track

This choice should be made during the first semester.

3.2 Establish Major Professor for CMWS Program

The major professor will help in the selection of at least two additional faculty members to serve on the Graduate Advisory Committee. Any School of Coastal and Marine Systems Science Faculty and Affiliated Faculty is eligible to serve as major professor if he/she has expertise in an appropriate field of research. Faculty from other universities or agencies may not serve as major professor but may serve on the Graduate Advisory Committee.

It is highly beneficial to have communicated with and identified a major professor who will commit to mentor your graduate work during the admissions process. Highly qualified students may be accepted to the program without a defined major professor. It is expected that students will identify their major professor by the end of the first semester and or early in the second semester at the latest. A request to establish major professor is submitted to the Graduate Programs Coordinator for approval (see forms page: www.coastal.edu/scmss/programs).

3.2.1 Establish Major Professor for CMWS Thesis Track

A key role of the major professor is to assist in the selection and refinement of a thesis topic and to give advice in the design of the research program. The major professor will also give advice on and edit the thesis. This advisor, therefore, must have expertise in the appropriate area of research.

3.2.2 Establish Major Professor for Professional Experience Track

A key role of the major professor is to assist in the selection and establishment of an appropriate internship to accomplish the student's academic and professional goals. The major professor will give advice on and edit the professional experience proposal and final report. The major professor, therefore, must have expertise in the appropriate area of research. The School of Coastal and Marine Systems Science Graduate Student Services Coordinator may also be a very helpful resource in identifying and establishing professional internship opportunities.

3.3 Establish CMWS Graduate Advisory Committee

The Graduate Advisory Committee will assist in putting together the degree program and must approve program courses. It is important to carefully select the Graduate Advisory Committee Members. Close contact with each member should be maintained throughout the degree program. In order to assure the committee is up-to-date, it should be convened at least once each semester. There should be a close working relationship between the student, the major professor and the Graduate Advisory Committee with more frequent communication individually or as a group and as needed. The Graduate Advisory Committee membership is submitted to the Graduate Programs Coordinator for approval (see forms page: www.coastal.edu/scmss/programs).

3.3.1 CMWS Graduate Advisory Committee in Thesis Track

The Graduate Advisory Committee should be composed of faculty members who can provide access to additional expertise to aid in the design and execution of thesis research. They will also assist with the development of the research proposal and must approve the thesis proposal. The committee may offer advice and counseling on any aspect of the degree program. The committee will evaluate performance, and determine whether the student passes or fails the thesis proposal and thesis defense requirements. Each committee member will read, edit, and evaluate the thesis and must approve the final draft.

It is especially important to keep them informed of progress on research and the thesis preparation and enlist their guidance to ensure efficient progress through the program to graduation.

Any School of Coastal and Marine Systems Science Faculty or Affiliated Faculty is eligible to serve on the student's Graduate Advisory Committee if he/she has expertise in an appropriate field of research. Faculty from other universities or agencies are not required to serve on the Graduate Advisory Committee but the School recommends considering an outside expert in the field on the Committee.

3.3.2 Graduate Advisory Committee in Professional Experience Track

The Graduate Advisory Committee will also assist with identification and approval of an appropriate professional internship experience to support the student's academic and professional goals. The committee may offer advice and counseling on any aspect of the degree program. The committee will evaluate performance, and determine whether the student passes or fails the internship proposal, final report and final presentation requirements.

It is especially important to keep them informed of progress on the internship and the final report preparation and enlist their guidance to ensure efficient progress through the program to graduation.

Any School of Coastal and Marine Systems Science Faculty or Affiliated Faculty is eligible to serve on the student's Graduate Advisory Committee if he/she has expertise in an

appropriate field of research. If the internship is with an outside agency or university it is generally expected that the external professional supervising the professional internship will serve as a member of the Graduate Advisory Committee.

3.4 CMWS Proposal

3.4.1 Thesis Track Proposal

Research and the resulting thesis are the unique experiences of graduate study. The design of a realistic and well-defined research project should be considered the highest priority. A detailed proposal outline helps you achieve this goal by explaining the steps in developing a review of the pertinent literature and a written narrative of the direction the thesis will take. The proposal is used by both student and Graduate Advisory Committee for evaluating and overseeing progress of the research. Research provides an opportunity to make a contribution to science. Thesis writing is an important step to that contribution. The thesis should present research findings evaluated within the context of previously published works. It is usually a common goal of student and advisor to publish results of the thesis research. There are several possible arrangements between the student and advisor concerning authorship of a manuscript to be submitted for publication. This should be discussed with your major professor and Graduate Advisory Committee as the research progresses.

A thesis proposal prepared early in the academic program is essential to promote a firm and mutual understanding of expectations for educational and research activities. The proposal should be completed by the beginning of the second semester and the end of the first academic year at the latest. It will be retained as a part of the student's CMWS graduate file. The proposal will consist of the cover sheet, literature review and research proposal. There must be a clearly identified section in the proposal that describes the relationship between the proposed research and the material covered in the core classes (CMWS 601, 602 and 603). Students are required to present their proposals in the seminar class. Once approved by the Graduate Advisory Committee the cover page will be signed by the Committee and filed with the CMSS Graduate Programs Coordinator.

The proposal is a research proposal or plan, and as such may be modified as the research progresses. Significant changes in the proposed research plan should be approved by the Graduate Advisory Committee and filed with the CMSS Graduate Programs Coordinator.

The School of Coastal and Marine Systems Science is committed to leverage its resources to help ensure student success. Students may work with their major professors and Graduate Advisory Committees to submit an itemized budget for potential basic support (supplies, conference travel etc.) The budget should include prioritized, real projected expenses (including the use of boats) not covered by research grants and other support for the student's thesis research. The budget is endorsed by the Graduate Advisory Committee and submitted simultaneously with the thesis proposal. The Graduate Programs Coordinator will review the budget requests and available funds in consultation with the Graduate Programs Committee and identify the student and their major professor of what if any of the School resources may be committed to from the budgets request. The major

professor is responsible for the administering of the budget and ensuring all expenditures and enabling paperwork are properly submitted to the School and University financial processes.

3.4.2 Professional Experience Track Proposal

Although course work is important, professional application of the discipline is a critical component of the professional. The design of a realistic and well-defined internship project should be considered the highest priority. A detailed proposal outline helps you achieve this goal by explaining the steps in developing a review of the pertinent literature and a written narrative of the direction the internship will take. The proposal is used by both student and Graduate Advisory Committee for evaluating and overseeing progress of the internship. Professional internships provide an opportunity to practice the discipline within state or federal agencies, universities, NGO's or private sector in line with the students' professional ambitions and goals.

An internship proposal prepared early in the academic program is essential to promote a firm and mutual understanding of expectations for educational and professional activities. The proposal should be completed by the beginning of the second semester and the end of the first academic year at the latest. An Internship Proposal must be completed and approved by the student's Graduate Advisory Committee and the CMSS Graduate Programs Coordinator before the internship is started. It will be retained as a part of the student's CMWS graduate file. The proposal will consist of the cover sheet, literature review and internship proposal. There must be a clearly identified section in the proposal that describes the relationship between the proposed internship and the material covered in the core classes (CMWS 601, 602 and 603). Students are required to present their proposals in the seminar class. Once approved by the Graduate Advisory Committee the cover page will be signed by the Committee and filed with the CMSS Graduate Programs Coordinator.

The proposal is an internship proposal or plan, and as such may be modified as the project progresses. Significant changes in the proposed internship plan should be approved by the Graduate Advisory Committee and filed with the CMSS Graduate Programs Coordinator.

The School of Coastal and Marine Systems Science is committed to leverage its resources to help ensure student success. Students may work with their major professors and Graduate Advisory Committees to submit an itemized budget for potential basic support (supplies, conference travel etc.) The budget should include prioritized, real projected expenses (including the use of boats) not covered by research grants, internship programs and other support for the student's internship work. The budget is endorsed by the Graduate Advisory Committee and submitted simultaneously with the proposal. The Graduate Programs Coordinator will review the budget requests and available funds in consultation with the Graduate Programs Committee and identify the student and their major professor of what if any of the School resources may be committed to from the budgets request. The major professor is responsible for the administering of the budget and ensuring all expenditures and enabling paperwork are properly submitted to the School and University financial processes.

3.5 Admission to Candidacy for CMWS Degree

See section 2.4

3.6 Completion of CMWS Course Requirements (see 2.2)

3.6.1 Thesis Track

Completion of coursework for the Thesis Option requires a total of six credits of CMWS 700 (Thesis Research). This course may be taken as variable credit (1-6 credits per semester) as best fits the student's degree plan. Close consultation with the student's major professor is encouraged in planning enrollment in these credits.

3.6.2 Professional Studies Track

Completion of coursework for the Professional Experience requires six credits of CMWS 701 (Internship). This course must be completed during the semester in which the internship is undertaken. This is not a variable credit course.

Prior to beginning the internship students must complete and file an internship learning contract (see Appendix A).

3.7 Submittal of Master's Thesis or Professional Experience Final Report

3.7.1 Thesis Track

The results of the student's research are submitted as a formal thesis (<http://www.etdadmin.com/cgi-bin/school?siteId=464>). Detailed presentations of methods and data should be in appendices and should be sufficient to allow future students to duplicate the work or to make comparisons between your data and newly gathered information. In general, the thesis should be in the format of an article ready for submission to an appropriate science journal.

The student should contact the CMSS Graduate Programs Coordinator early in the thesis writing process to find out if there are any changes in thesis guidelines, and any relevant deadlines. The thesis does not fulfill the degree requirement until the Director of the Graduate School has signed it. The thesis title and date of approval must be filed in the Graduate School before the degree requirement is officially met.

3.7.2 Professional Experience Internship Report

The results of the student's internship work are submitted as a formal report. CMWS Master's Internship Guidelines are available from the CMSS Graduate Student Services Coordinator. If applicable, your report should be in the format of an article ready for submission to an appropriate science journal or technical report for the organization you worked with.

The student should contact the CMSS Graduate Coordinator early in the report writing process to find out if there are any changes in internship report guidelines, and any relevant deadlines. The report does not fulfill the degree requirement until the Director of the Graduate School has signed it. The report title and date of approval must be filed in the Graduate School before the degree requirement is officially met.

3.8 Thesis Defense or Professional Experience Presentation

3.8.1 Thesis Defense

Approximately two months before the desired date for the thesis seminar and defense, the student should submit a thesis draft (including figures and tables) to his/her major professor. The major professor shall read and edit the draft and return it for revisions. After these revisions are made to the draft, it is submitted to other members of the student's Graduate Advisory Committee and the CMSS Graduate Programs Coordinator. Each committee member should study and edit the thesis before the defense. The CMSS Graduate Programs Coordinator reviews the thesis for formatting, and upon approval, the student may schedule the presentation and defense. The defense of the thesis shall be conducted at a date and time mutually agreed upon by the student and examining committee. Normally, the defense of thesis immediately follows the public presentation. At the conclusion of the defense, copies of the thesis containing each member's suggestions for changes are returned to the student. After committee deliberation on the quality of responses to questions, oral performance, and condition of thesis, the student shall be notified of whether he/she passed or failed. If the defense is passed, the student must prepare a final copy of the thesis based on the written and oral comments provided by the committee. Should he/she fail the defense, the committee will schedule a second defense allowing for further study or revision. Typically a period of three months is provided for the revision.

3.8.2 Professional Experience Presentation

Approximately two months before the desired date for the professional experience seminar and defense, the student should submit a report draft to his/her major professor. The major professor shall read and edit the draft and return it for revisions. After these revisions are made to the draft, it is submitted to other members of the committee and the CMSS Graduate Programs Coordinator. Each committee member should study and edit the report before the defense. The final draft report is submitted to The CMSS Graduate Coordinator who reviews the report for formatting, and upon approval, the student may schedule the presentation and defense. The defense of the internship shall be conducted at a date and time mutually agreed upon by the student and examining committee. Normally, the defense of internship immediately follows the public presentation. At the conclusion of the defense, copies of the report containing each member's suggestions for changes are returned to the student. After committee deliberation on the quality of responses to questions, oral performance, and condition of report, the student shall be notified of whether he/she passed or failed. If the defense is passed, the student must prepare a final copy of the report based on the written and oral comments provided by the committee. Should he/she fail the defense, the committee will schedule a second defense allowing for further study or revision. Typically a period of three months is provided for the revision.

3.9 Submittal of Documentation

In addition to a final version of the thesis or final report, students or their advisors must submit a defense report form and a program assessment form. As with all necessary forms, these are available at (www.coastal.edu/scmss/programs). Students should double check the Degree Program Timeline and Completion Checklist.