Section 1: General Institutional Admissions Requirements

Students apply to the Ph.D. in Marine Science: Coastal and Marine Systems Science and/or the M.S. in Coastal Marine and Wetland Studies through Coastal Carolina University's Office of Graduate Studies: www.coastal.edu/graduate/.

1.1 Annual Application Cycle

Students are encouraged to apply to the program for a planned start in the fall semester. The main application deadline for the program is January 15. The SCMSS Graduate Programs Committee will evaluate applications and notify applicants of acceptance or rejection by March 1 for matriculation starting in the following fall semester. Students may be considered for beginning graduate work on an alternate schedule, typically spring semester, at the discretion and recommendation of the SCMSS Graduate Programs Committee and Director of SCMSS.

Students proposing to enter the program on an alternate schedule or with need for any other special consideration affecting matriculation should contact the SCMSS Graduate Programs Coordinator prior to submitting an application.

All students applying to the program are encouraged to contact individual faculty members about their research interests and strongly consider visiting the school either individually or at scheduled Open Houses offered by the school. The School of Coastal and Marine Systems Science will only admit a finite number of students annually on a competitive basis. Doctoral students are required and master's students are expected to have identified a Major Professor to be admitted to the program and include a recommendation by this individual agreeing to serve as the student's research mentor with their application.

1.2 General Qualifications for Admission to the School of Coastal and Marine Systems Science Graduate Programs

All applicants to the Graduate Programs in the School of Coastal and Marine Systems Science (M.S. in Coastal Marine and Wetland Science and Ph.D. in Marine Science: Coastal and Marine Systems Science) must meet the requirements for graduate admission to both Coastal Carolina University and the School of Coastal and Marine Systems Science. This includes:

1. Successful completion of a bachelor's degree (for the M.S. program) and either a master's or bachelor's degree (for the Ph.D. program) from a regionally accredited institution in a program appropriate to support graduate work in the School of Coastal and Marine Systems Science.
2. Completion of Coastal application form.
3. A minimum GPA of 3.0 or higher (on a 4.0 scale) documented by official transcripts for all collegiate course work.

4. Final, official transcripts for bachelor's and master's degrees (if applicable) are required to be received before formally beginning the program.
5. Successful completion of at least two semesters of college level calculus, physics, and chemistry (Ph.D. program only) and advanced coursework in scientific disciplines related to the student's proposed research area.
6. Copies of official scores on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). The University expects successful applicants to have a score of no less than 150 on both the verbal and quantitative portions.
    a. International students whose native language is not English must submit scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) with a score of at least 575 (paper-based test) or 89 (internet-based test) on the TOEFL or 6.5 on the IELTS with no subscore lower than 5.0 on the IELTS or students may complete the ELS Centers level 112 English language training program.
    b. Scores on the GRE and TOEFL or IELTS must be less than three years old.
7. Three letters of recommendation outlining the applicant's past work and preparation and potential for successful completion of masters or doctoral studies.
8. Identification of a faculty research mentor.
9. Submission of a written statement of educational and career goals, how this degree will fulfill those goals and the subject area of research interest while completing this degree.
10. Submission of a resume.

1.2.1 Provisional Admission to the Master's Program

Applicants may receive provisional admission to the School of Coastal and Marine Systems Science M.S. in Coastal Marine and Wetland Studies if they do not fully meet the stated admission requirements and are entering the University for the first time or are returning to the University after an extended absence. Students on Provisional Admission are limited to 12 hours of course work.

To remove provisional status the student must, within the first two academic semesters (either fall, spring, or spring, fall):

a. Earn a B or better in two core courses;
b. Maintain a 3.0 GPA in all graduate courses taken;
c. Earn a B or better in all undergraduate prerequisites required as specified in the provisional acceptance letter.

1.3 Qualifications for Admission to the Ph.D. in Marine Science: Coastal and Marine Systems Science

Students applying for admittance to the Ph.D. in Marine Science: Coastal and Marine Systems Science are expected to meet the general qualifications to the school's graduate programs and the following as applicable.

1.3.1 Students Entering the Doctoral Program Holding a Master's Degree

Applicants entering the program with a master's degree from a regionally accredited institution may be awarded up to 30 credit hours for M.S. work completed prior to admission to this program (see required elements of the curriculum below). The SCMSS Graduate Programs Committee will review the application materials submitted by each applicant to determine what graduate course credit may be applicable to the program's coursework requirements.

1.3.2 Students Applying to the Doctoral Program from the SCMSS M.S. in Coastal Marine and Wetland Studies (CMWS)

Students applying to the doctoral program from the school's CMWS program, or already enrolled in the University's CMWS program with interests in the Ph.D. program should discuss their interests in the Ph.D. program with potential research mentors. Such students are expected to first complete their M.S. in CMWS and then be directly admitted to the Ph.D. program through the regular admissions process.

Highly qualified CMWS students may apply to the SCMSS Graduate Programs Committee to by-pass the master's degree and progress directly into the doctoral program. To do so students should:

1. Formally apply, in writing, to the SCMSS Graduate Programs Committee for consideration of the transition in status.
2. Have successfully completed the CMWS core curriculum requirements.
3. Provide a written recommendation by a SCMSS faculty research mentor outlining the student's work completed to date and potential for transition to doctoral work.
4. Provide a Curriculum Vitae (CV) highlighting professional accomplishments, documented achievements relevant to the proposed doctoral work, and outline of the student's proposed dissertation research.
5. Provide recommendations by the SCMSS Graduate Programs Coordinator and SCMSS Graduate Programs Committee supporting the transition.

Upon recommendation of the SCMSS Graduate Programs Committee and approval of the SCMSS Director, the student may transition from the M.S. to the Ph.D. program track. The student and the student's Graduate Advisory Committee will then update the student's program plan and follow the Ph.D. program track including arranging for Ph.D. SCMSS Comprehensive Examination at the earliest appropriate date.

1.3.3 Students Entering the Doctoral Program Holding a Bachelor's Degree

Highly qualified applicants entering the program from a regionally accredited bachelor's degree program may be provisionally accepted into the Ph.D. program through the general admission procedure outlined above. As part of the admission process, the student will have identified a SCMSS faculty research mentor. Students should include with their application a written recommendation by a SCMSS faculty member who agrees to serve as their research mentor.

1.3.4 Provisional Admission to the Doctoral Program with a Completed Master's Degree from an Accredited Institution in Disciplinary Areas Related to Marine Science: Coastal and Marine Systems Science

The SCMSS Graduate Programs Committee will review the student's application and determine if there are any deficiencies in prior coursework or other preparatory work for doctoral study. If deficiencies are identified, the Graduates Programs Committee may recommend the student be provisionally accepted to the program and assign specific courses or work (typically in consultation with the student's dissertation advisor) to be successfully completed in preparation for the program. Upon successful completion of any specified preparatory work and successfully passing the SCMSS Comprehensive Examination, the student may petition to be fully admitted to the program. Any graduate coursework completed applicable to the program course requirements while in provisional status will be applied to program requirements.

1.3.5 Provisional Admission to the Doctoral Program with a Completed Bachelor of Science Degree in Disciplinary Areas Related to Marine Science: Coastal and Marine Systems Science from an Accredited Institution

For students applying to the Ph.D. program holding a Bachelor of Science with deficiencies identified by the SCMSS Graduate Programs Committee that would impede progress for doctoral study, the SCMSS Graduate Programs Committee may recommend the applicant be admitted to the M.S. program and be assigned specific courses or work (typically in consultation with the student's Major Professor) to be appropriately prepared for the program. Upon successful completion of the specified preparatory work the student may petition for admission to the Ph.D. program through the process for students in the Coastal Marine and Wetland Studies program (See Section 1.3.1.). Any graduate coursework completed applicable to the program course requirements while in provisional status will be applied to program requirements.