

Section 5: Ph.D. in Marine Science: Coastal and Marine Systems Science Degree Program Timeline

The typical sequence of milestones and timeline for progressing through the Ph.D. in Marine Science: Coastal and Marine Systems Science is outlined below and in Appendix B. Students should refer to this timeline to maintain progress toward graduation on time. The timeline and milestone tracking will be maintained by the student's Major Professor and filed with the SCMSS Graduate Programs Coordinator. The milestone chart provides 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 assistantships.

5.1 Establish Major Professor

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

The Major Professor will help in the selection of at least four additional faculty members to serve on the Graduate Advisory Committee. 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. Any SCMSS 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 the graduate work during the admissions process. Students are normally not admitted to the Ph.D. program without a defined Major Professor who should provide a letter of support for the student's application and commitment to mentor the student's dissertation work. A student may change the Major Professor with the commitment of a new Major Professor and the SCMSS Graduate Programs Coordinator.

A request to establish the Major Professor is submitted to the SCMSS Graduate Programs Coordinator for approval.

5.2 Establish Graduate Advisory Committee

The Graduate Advisory Committee will assist in putting together the degree program and must approve program courses. The committee will also assist with the development of the research direction and must approve the dissertation 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 dissertation proposal and dissertation defense requirements. Each committee member will read, edit, and evaluate the dissertation and must approve the final draft.

It is important to carefully select the Graduate Advisory Committee members. Close contact with each member should be maintained throughout the degree program. It is especially important to keep the members informed of progress on research and the dissertation preparation and enlist their guidance to ensure efficient progress through the program to graduation. To ensure 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 as needed.

A Ph.D. student's Graduate Advisory Committee consists of at least five eligible professionals. Any SCMSS 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. At least three committee members must be from the SCMSS. The school requires one of the members to be based at a different university or agency to provide an external perspective of the work from the field. The committee membership is submitted to the graduate programs coordinator for approval.

5.3 SCMSS Comprehensive Examination

See section 4.3 and Appendix B

5.4 Dissertation Proposal - Qualifying Exam

See section 4.4 and Appendix B

5.5 Admission to Candidacy for Degree

See section 4.5 and Appendix B

5.6 Completion of Course Requirements

Upon completion of the course requirements the degree candidate should submit the SCMSS Course Requirement Tracking Sheet or equivalent documentation from Coastal's WebAdvisor to the Major Professor. The Major Professor reviews the documentation and verifies the course requirements have been met and forwards the documentation to the SCMSS Graduate Programs Coordinator.

5.7 Completion of Dissertation Research and Directed Study

See sections 4.6, 4.7, and Appendix B

5.8 Submittal of Dissertation

Each student will submit the results of his/her doctoral research as a formal dissertation and/or series of publications in compliance with Coastal Carolina University Graduate Studies and School of Coastal and Marine Systems Science policy and procedures. The results of the student's research are submitted electronically at:
www.etsadmin.com/cgi-bin/school?siteId=464.

5.9 Defense of Dissertation

See section 4.7

5.10 Submittal of Documentation

In addition to a final version of the dissertation, students or their advisors must submit a defense report form and a program assessment form. All forms are available at the SCMSS Graduate Program Forms page: www.coastal.edu/scmss/programs/msforms.html. Students should double check the Degree Program Timeline and Completion Checklist.