

GUIDELINES FOR ADVISING M.S. STUDENTS

1. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The student shall meet all University requirements for graduate degrees as outlined under Academic Information in the ODU catalog. This includes at least 30 hours of graduate study, demonstration of competency in oral communications and demonstration of proficiency in technical writing. A maximum of 12 graduate credit hours may be transferred into a graduate degree program from non-degree status at Old Dominion University or from another accredited institution, except in the case of an approved inter-institutional program. The department offers both thesis and non thesis options for the M.S. Degree.

2. COURSE WORK REQUIREMENTS

A minimum of 12 hours of basic course work in the four-sub-disciplines of oceanography is required of all M.S. students. This core program consists of OEAS 604, 610, 620, and 640. A student must achieve a minimum GPA of 3.0 in each of the core courses. A student whose GPA is below 3.0 in any core class will be required to repeat the class. The remaining 18 credits are chosen from a list of approved graduate courses. At least 60 percent of all courses must be at the 600 level or above.

For the thesis option, up to six hours of research (OEAS 698) or thesis (OEAS 699), or a combination of the two totaling six hours, may be used to meet the course requirements. For the non-thesis option, upon approval of the GPD, up to three hours of research (OEAS 698) may be used to meet the course requirements (see #3 below for further details).

3. NON-THESIS OPTION

Non-thesis M.S. students may take up to 3 credits of research (OEAS 698) to satisfy the course requirements for their M.S. degree. A student wishing to pursue this option must initially get approval from the GPD and a proposed research advisor (i.e., the instructor of record for these research credits) sometime in the semester before he or she plans to enroll in OEAS 698. To register for OEAS 698 the student must also submit a brief description of the proposed research topic to the GPD before the start of the semester in which he or she plans to enroll in OEAS 698. This research plan must be approved by the proposed research advisor. It is assumed that these research projects will be carried out with minimal departmental support (i.e., research vessel time, vehicle time, funds to purchase needed supplies or equipment). Thus, this research project needs to be structured in such a way as to take advantage of existing funding, supplies and equipment in the proposed research advisor's lab. Any request for departmental support must be submitted in writing along with the research plan, and must be accompanied by justification/approval from the proposed research advisor. All requests for departmental funds must be approved by the Department Chair prior to beginning the proposed research project. The final "product" of these research credits will be determined by the student and research advisor. However, it is assumed that some sort of research report will likely be produced.

Students selecting the non-thesis option must also pass a written comprehensive examination, testing breadth of knowledge in oceanography, which is offered in the fall and spring semesters. (See item #7 for further details).

4. THESIS OPTION

Before embarking on thesis research a Thesis Advisory Committee must be formed. Further information on university guidelines for forming this committee can be found in the ODU Catalog. Graduate Form M1 must be completed and signed by all proposed committee members to form a Thesis Committee. A student who subsequently chooses to change from a thesis to non-thesis option must complete Graduate Form G2.

Before embarking on thesis research the student must also submit a thesis proposal which outlines the research to be undertaken and identifies the resources required for completion of the research. Guidelines for the preparation of the thesis proposal are available from the GPD.

Any student whose thesis research requires departmental funding must follow the procedures outlined below (item #5). No funds will be given without the proper approvals. The thesis proposal requires the approval of the GPD, the Department Chair, and the student's Thesis Advisory Committee. Graduate Form M2 must be completed to indicate this approval.

As part of the thesis requirement the student is required to present a public defense of the research. The public defense and approval of the thesis by the student's Thesis Committee meets the requirements for demonstration of competency in oral communications and demonstration of proficiency in technical writing; it also satisfies the comprehensive examination requirement.

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5. REQUEST FOR DEPARTMENTAL SUPPORT FOR THESIS RESEARCH

It is assumed that in almost all cases, the efforts of students carrying out thesis or dissertation research will be supported by contract or grant funds obtained by their advisor. In the event that such funds are not available, a student who wishes to receive departmental support for thesis/dissertation research must submit a proposal to the Department Chair and GPD for these resources (van, boats, equipment, travel and other cost) before beginning this research. The proposal should indicate how many days of van and/or boat use are required for the thesis/dissertation research, along with any other research related costs (e.g. travel, supplies, equipment) requested of the department.

The Department Chair, in consultation with the GPD, will decide on this proposal. If approved, the Senior Fiscal Technician of the department will keep track of the use of these approved department resources

6. SHIPBOARD EXPERIENCE AND FIELDWORK

Each student is required to have at least ten days of shipboard experience, fieldwork, or a combination of the two. Scheduled class field trips may not be counted towards this requirement. Graduate Form M2 and the Departmental Ship Time/Fieldwork Form must be completed to indicate that a student has satisfied this requirement.

7. WRITTEN COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

A student in the non-thesis program must pass a written comprehensive examination testing breadth of knowledge in oceanography. Before taking the exam, the student must first have completed all four core courses with a grade of "B" or better. Additional details about the format of this exam can be obtained from the GPD. The examination is given twice yearly, normally in October and March. The examination grades are fail, pass, or pass with distinction. A student who has failed the examination may repeat it once. [Graduate Form M2](#) is used to report the results of this exam.

8. RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH (RCR) TRAINING

All ODU graduate students that enrolled during or after Fall 2010 are required to complete Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Training, via the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), during their first year at ODU (see <http://www.odu.edu/ao/research/compliance/conduct.shtml>). Once a student has completed the CITI training, a certificate generated by the process is placed in the student's file.

9. THESIS PREPARATION

General regulations and procedure governing the submission of a master's thesis are given in the Guide for Preparation of Theses and Dissertations. Before beginning to write your thesis, please read this guide carefully. Writing the thesis as chapters that can be submitted for publication is encouraged.

Please note that the thesis and dissertation guide in place at the start of the semester will remain in force for the entire semester, and any changes made to the guide over the academic year (and the dates of these changes) will be listed on the cover page of the guide. Changes to the previous guide will also be noted on the cover page of the guide, or in a separate document that can be downloaded from the same site as the complete guide. For more information on thesis preparation and approval in the College of Sciences, see College of Sciences' Thesis and Dissertation Preparation.

10. THESIS DEFENSE

At least two weeks prior to the thesis defense, the student must provide the GPD Assistant with the proposed date and time of the defense, along with a brief abstract of the thesis, so that an announcement of the defense can be posted. Check with the GPD Assistant for further details. The oral thesis defense is open to the University community; all interested members are encouraged to attend the examination.

The format of a thesis defense is determined by the Thesis Committee with the approval of the GPD. The defense is chaired by the Director of the Thesis Committee. The Chair will act as moderator, ruling on questions of procedure and protocol that may arise during the defense. The chair of the defense represents the College Dean, to whom he or she makes a complete and prompt report on the defense using Graduate Form M2.

The aim of the defense is to explore with the candidate the methodological and substantive contributions of the thesis. Majority approval by the examiners constitutes successful completion of the defense of the thesis, and is so reported by the Defense Chairman to the College Dean. In case of failure, the Thesis Committee may recommend that the candidate either be dropped from the program or be allowed re-examination.

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Satisfactory performance on this examination (oral thesis defense) and adherence to all regulations outlined above complete the requirements for the degree. Graduate Form M3 (Thesis/Thesis Acceptance and Processing) and Graduate Form M4 must be submitted to the Office of the Registrar with the complete thesis upon completion of all requirements for the degree. Students should have all Thesis Committee members sign the Thesis cover page (several copies are recommended) as well as Graduate Form M3 .

All requirements for a master's degree must be completed within six calendar years from the date of initial registration in the program.

11. THESIS ACCEPTANCE AND SUBMISSION

Once all corrections recommended by the Thesis Committee are made and the entire committee has approved the thesis (see #15 above), the student and major advisor must go over the entire thesis to ensure it adheres to the format described in the Guide for Preparation of Theses and Dissertations (see #8 above). Both the student and advisor must sign off on the college's Thesis and Dissertation Checklist before submitting the thesis to the GPD for review. Please allow 3 days for this review. Once the GPD has approved the thesis, the student next submits the thesis and Graduate Form M3 to the Associate Dean in the College of Sciences for approval. All approvals must be completed by the day before commencement. However, the Associate Dean generally requires theses be submitted to his office no later than 3 weeks earlier. Check with the GPD for further details.

12. REQUEST TO GRADUATE

The student should obtain a copy of the form Application for Graduation from the Registrar's Office and complete this application. The deadline for submitting this application is listed in the class schedule each semester and usually falls near the end of the semester preceding the one during which graduation is anticipated. It is the student's responsibility to meet these deadlines and submit the necessary paperwork for graduation.

13. REMOVAL OF INCOMPLETES

At least one month prior to graduation all incomplete grades should be cleared. An Academic Record Change form is used for this, and the instructor of the course and the Department Chair need to sign this form.