

Marine & Coastal Environmental Science



Graduate Student Handbook

2021-2022

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Introduction

The 2021-2022 Marine and Coastal Environmental Science (MCES) Graduate Student Handbook, Texas A&M University at Galveston (TAMUG), was developed for current and future Master's in Marine Resource Management (MARM) and Marine and Coastal Management and Science (MCMS) doctoral students and associated faculty. This handbook contains a brief description of MARM and MCMS program procedures including admissions, program deadlines, advisory committee and degree plans, common course offerings, and Research/Professional Track requirements for the MARM program. The Graduate Student Handbook is a supplementary document aimed at providing specific and useful content for MARM and MCMS degree programs. In addition to these handbooks, all graduate students should also review the following publications:

1. Texas A&M University Graduate and Professional School: <https://grad.tamu.edu/>
2. Texas A&M Graduate Catalog: <https://catalog.tamu.edu/graduate/galveston/>
3. Texas A&M University Student Rules Handbook: <http://student-rules.tamu.edu>
4. Texas A&M University Graduate and Professional School Thesis and Dissertation Services: <https://grad.tamu.edu/New-Current-Students/Thesis-and-Dissertation-Services#>
5. Texas A&M University at Galveston Graduate Student Handbook: <https://www.tamug.edu/grad/images/GraduateHandbook21-22.pdf>

Program Organization

The Department of Marine and Coastal Environmental Science (MCES) houses two graduate degree programs: the Master's in Marine Resource Management (MARM) and the Ph.D. in Marine and Coastal Management and Science (MCMS). Both programs are overseen by the MCES Graduate Programs Core Committee. The MCES Graduate Programs Core Committee is made up of six MCES faculty members; each graduate program is chaired by one of these faculty members. The committee is tasked with the overall management of the degree programs including curriculum, admissions, and related policy and procedural decisions. The MCES Graduate Programs also have a Staff Graduate Advisor housed in the TAMUG Research and Graduate Studies Office. The Staff Graduate Advisor is responsible for student recruitment, record-keeping, advising, and registration. See Appendix A for current MCES Graduate Programs Core Committee composition and Staff Graduate Advisor contact information. ***Please note that students will not be admitted to the Ph.D. program without a faculty member having agreed to serve as major professor/committee chair.***

Program Objectives

The MCES graduate programs have five primary learning objectives: 1) knowledge of laws, regulations, and/or policies governing the coastal and/or marine systems; 2) an understanding

of the interactions between the physical and human environment; 3) ability to apply methods and approaches appropriate for the problem/question being addressed; 4) ability to integrate and analyze disparate data sources to reach valid conclusions; and 5) skills to effectively communicate, via written and oral delivery, research results and/or synthesis. Taken together, these are the skills and knowledge base that the MCES graduate programs aim to impart to all students. These also serve as learning outcomes for program assessment.

Student Advisory Committees

Each MCES graduate student must assemble a student advisory committee (SAC) by the end of their first long (Fall/Spring) semester for the MARM program, and the end of the third long (Fall/Spring) semester for the MCMS program. If a SAC is not formed by these deadlines, the student will be placed on warning and must meet with the Staff Graduate Advisor or Program Coordinator to discuss their progress toward meeting this deadline. If the SAC is not formed by the end of the second (MARM) or fourth (MCMS) semester, the student will be blocked from registering for courses until the SAC is formed.

Students should contact each prospective committee member, have an interview with him/her and ask him/her to be a member of their committee. The student should review the proposed degree plan with the prospective member. The committee member's electronic approval of the degree plan indicates his/her willingness to participate in guiding and directing the student's entire academic program. Individual committee members may be replaced by petition for valid reasons. Both degree plans and petitions are submitted on-line at the Graduate and Professional School website.

A minimum of 3 committee members is required for each SAC in the MARM program; the MCMS program requires 4 (see Table 1). The chair of the SAC must be a graduate faculty member with full membership in the MCES Department¹, and at least one faculty member must have their primary graduate faculty appointment in a department outside of MCES. Additional members of the SAC may come from other academic departments, provided they have a graduate committee faculty appointment. A list of graduate faculty can be found in the TAMUG Annual Course Catalog: <https://catalog.tamu.edu/graduate/galveston/marine-and-coastal-environmental-science/#faculty>.

¹Tenure track faculty that do not have a primary appointment in the MCES department who wish to Chair or Co-chair a MCMS or MARM student advisory committee may do so upon 1) unanimous consent of the MCMS Program committee and 2) graduate faculty status approval in the MCES Department.

Table 1. Student Advisory Committee (SAC) Requirements

DEGREE	COMMITTEE MEMBERS	AFFILIATION
MARM (Master's)	Minimum of three	Chair must be MCES graduate faculty; one member with graduate faculty appointment outside MCES
MCMS (Ph.D.)	Minimum of four	Chair must be MCES graduate faculty; one member with graduate faculty appointment outside MCES

Master's in Marine Resource Management

The Master's of Marine Resources Management (MARM) degree gives students a knowledge of interactions across the natural, built, and social environments. Students learn skills applicable to coastal and marine policy and management. Coursework includes environmental law and policy, coastal zone and environmental management, and geospatial and statistical analysis.

Admissions

The following outlines the requirements and process for admission into the MARM Program for prospective students. Students seeking admission to the MARM program must apply through GraduateCAS, located at <https://texasam2021.liasoncas.com/>. The following items are required for a successful application:

1. A GraduateCAS application.
2. An application fee of \$89 for U.S. applicants or \$114 for international applicants.
3. A personal statement or narrative explaining your interest and reasons why you are applying to the MARM program. Personal statements must be submitted through the GraduateCAS application.
4. A professional resume/curriculum vitae, which must be uploaded to the Graduate CAS application.
5. Three letters of recommendation. Recommendations from previous academic experience are preferred, but recommendations from professional sources will also suffice. Letters of recommendation should be submitted electronically through the Graduate CAS application.
6. Official transcripts of all previous academic work, including transcripts from foreign institutions (please allow extra time for review of transcripts from foreign institutions).
7. For international applicants whose native language is not English, proof of English proficiency (TOEFL or IELTS) is required. TOEFL must be taken within the last two years.

It is the applicant's responsibility to submit a completed application by the deadline. Admission decisions are based on a holistic consideration of all application materials. MARM students are admitted in both Fall and Spring semesters. ~~When possible,~~ a Fall start date is recommended. **Spring applications must be completed and submitted by October 1st. Fall applications must be completed and submitted by May 1st.** GRE requirements have been waived for the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 semesters.

Program Curriculum

The 36-hour MARM Program curriculum is offered through two tracks: 1) Research Track; and 2) Professional Track. Students seeking the Research Track must submit a separate Letter of Intent (see Appendix B), signed by their SAC chair, by the end of their first long (Fall/Spring) semester. Students who do not submit the Letter of Intent will default into the Professional Track. Course offerings are shown in Table 2. ‘Core’ courses are those courses that students are highly encouraged to take; note that there are no required courses in the MARM Program. Core courses may be replaced with courses recommended and approved by the student’s SAC.

Table 2. MARM Course Offerings

			PROFESSIONAL TRACK	RESEARCH TRACK
Course No.	Course Title	Semester	Hours	Hours
CORE COURSES			24 core	22 core
MARS 603	<i>Quantitative Methods</i>	F	3	3
MARS 625†	<i>GIS Based Modeling for Coastal Resources</i>	F/Sp	3	3
MARS 635	<i>Environmental Impact Statements and NRDA</i>	Sp	3	3
MARS 660	<i>Environmental Alternative Dispute Resolution</i>	F	3	3
MARS 675	<i>Environmental Management Strategies for Scientists</i>	Sp	3	3
MARS 680	<i>Integrative Analyses in Marine Resources</i>	F/Sp	2	----
MARS 681	<i>MARM Introduction Seminar</i>	F/Sp	1	1
MARS 689*	<i>Coastal Ecosystem Management and Planning</i>	F	3	3
PLAN 642	<i>Planning for Coastal Sustainability</i>	Sp	3	3
FREE ELECTIVE COURSE EXAMPLES			12 elective	14 elective
MARS 626†	<i>Advanced GIS</i>	Sp	3	3
MARS 652	<i>Sustainable Management of Coastal Margins</i>	F	3	3
MARS 655	<i>Wetlands Management</i>	Sp	4	4
MARS 676	<i>Environmental Policy</i>	F	3	3
MARS 684	<i>Professional Internship</i>	F/Sp/Su	1-6	----
MARS 685	<i>Directed Studies</i>	F/Sp/Su	1-6	1-6
MARS 689	<i>Special Topics in Marine Sciences</i>	F/Sp/Su	1-6	1-6
MARS 689*	<i>Coastal Land Use Law</i>	F	3	3
MARS 691	<i>Research</i>	F/Sp/Su	----	1-12
MARS 693	<i>Professional Studies</i>	F/Sp/Su	1-3	----
MARA 604	<i>Marine Natural Resource Economics</i>	Sp	3	3
ESSM 652†	<i>Advanced GIS</i>	Sp (web)	3	3
GEOG 665†	<i>GIS Modeling</i>	F	3	3
TOTAL			36	36
<i>F-Fall; Sp-Spring; Su-Summer; *Special topics course designation will change; † Required course for GIS certificate</i>				

Research Track

The Research Track is designed to allow the student to demonstrate research capabilities through developing an independent and thorough investigation of a particular problem of interest. This track also prepares the student for further graduate studies. The 36-hour Research Track curriculum is structured with 22 hours of core courses (MARS 680 is not taken by Research Track students) and 14 hours of optional elective courses. Additional flexibility to replace core courses targeted to their area of research is available to Research Track students upon recommendation and approval by their SAC.

No credit hours of MARS 684 (Professional Internship) or MARS 693 (Professional Studies) may be used for the Research Track. A maximum of 12 credit hours of MARS 691 (Research) and/or MARS 685 (Directed Studies) may be used toward the Research Track. Students who are 3+2 may use MARS 485 hours as well. Any combination of MARS 485, 685 and 691 courses may not exceed 12 credit hours.

An acceptable thesis is required for students who select the Research Track option. The finished work must reflect a comprehensive understanding of the pertinent literature and express in clear English, the problem(s) for study, the method, significance and results of the student's original research. After successful defense (final exam) and approval by the student's advisory committee and the head of the student's major department, students must submit their thesis to the Thesis Office. Students should consult the Graduate and Professional School (<https://grad.tamu.edu/>) for required forms, calendars and deadlines.

Professional Track

The Professional Track curriculum is structured with 24 hours of core courses and 12 hours of optional elective courses. Of the 36 hours (minimum) of curriculum, 24 are core courses. The core courses include a 1 hour seminar to be taken in the student's first year, 3 hours of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), 5 hours of statistical methods and analysis, 3 hours of environmental policy, 6 hours of management, and 6 hours of planning. Included in the 5 hours of statistical methods and analysis is MARS 680, Integrative Analysis, which serves as the Professional Track capstone course and should be taken in the student's last year, preferably the last semester, of study.

The student in the Professional Track option will choose electives for the remaining 12 credit hours. Flexibility to replace core courses with courses targeted to their area of research is available to Professional Track students upon recommendation and approval by their SAC. Students pursuing the Professional Track should not enroll in MARS 691 (Research) as these credit hours may not be used toward the Professional Track.

A professional paper is required for Professional Track students to complete the MARM degree. Students are highly encouraged to use their final paper for MARS 603 (Quantitative Methods)

as the basis of their professional paper as this demonstrates competency in analytical and statistical skills related to a key issue in resource management. Students should get approval of their professional paper topic from their SAC prior to beginning work. Students should also regularly update and seek feedback from their SAC prior to their defense (final exam). Professional Track students may count up to 3 hours of MARS 693 (Professional Studies) on their degree plan as work toward their professional paper.

3+2 Program

The MARM 3+2 Program allows undergraduate students majoring in Coastal Environmental Science and Society (CESS) in the MCES Department to enter the MARM program at the beginning of their senior year. This enables students to earn the CESS undergraduate degree and the MARM graduate degree in five years.

Applicants to the MARM 3+2 Program are required to submit the same materials and are subject to the same admission criteria as other MARM applicants. Requirements for admission to the MARM 3+2 Program include: a minimum 3.25 GPA; completion of all prerequisite courses; and completion of 101 or 102 hours by the Fall semester of their fourth year.

To be considered for the MARM 3+2 Program, applicants should submit the following materials no later than June 15th: 1) MARM 3+2 application (see Appendix C); 2) transcripts; 3) GRE Scores (waived for Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 admission); 4) resume/curriculum vitae; and 5) three letters of recommendation. Students applying to the MARM 3+2 Program who wish to pursue the Research Track (thesis) must also submit a Research Track Letter of Intent (Appendix B). All materials should be submitted directly to the MARM program coordinator.

Degree Plan

The degree plan formally declares the membership of the SAC and outlines the specific courses that will be completed by the student. The student, with consultation of their SAC, will develop a degree plan no later than the end of the first long (Fall/Spring) semester. If the degree plan is not formed by the end of the first semester, then the student will be placed on warning and must meet with the Staff Graduate Advisor or MARM Program Coordinator to discuss their progress toward meeting this deadline. If the degree plan is not formed by the end of the second long semester (Fall/Spring), the student will be blocked from registering for courses until the degree plan is submitted.

Academic Standards

Students are expected to maintain a minimum GPA and make steady progress toward their degree. To remain in good standing within the program, students must maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA cumulatively and on their degree plan. If students earn a D, F, or U on any course in their degree plan, the student must retake the course and earn at least a C or remove the course from the degree plan. Students will not be able to take final exams until their GPA is improved.

MARM Program Deadlines

In addition to the deadlines provided below in Table 3, MARM students should remain aware of specific dates and deadlines required by the Texas A&M University (TAMU) Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (Grad School) in their last semester as graduation approaches. **Many of these deadlines approach earlier than expected and vary semester to semester.** Annual Grad School calendars can be found at: <https://grad.tamu.edu/>.

Table 3. Deadlines for MARM Program, Professional & Research Tracks

	PROFESSIONAL TRACK	RESEARCH TRACK
<i>Research Track Letter of Intent</i>	----	End of first semester
<i>Student Advisory Committee formed</i>	End of first semester	End of first semester
<i>Degree Plan filed</i>	End of first semester	End of first semester
<i>Thesis Proposal Form</i>	----	At least 20 working days prior to final exam date
<i>Request for permission to schedule final exam</i>	At least 10 working days before exam date	At least 10 working days before final exam date
<i>Upload approved, completed thesis and signed approval page to Thesis Office</i>	----	Varies, see TAMUG Grad School calendar

Ph.D. in Marine and Coastal Management and Science

The Ph.D. program in Marine and Coastal Management Science (MCMS) is an interdisciplinary program with a focus on the coastal and marine near-shore environments, where problems at the interface of the natural and built-environment are most pronounced. The program's emphases encompass the impacts and opportunities from the built environment and development, rigorous training in research methods and analytical procedures, and interdisciplinary approaches to research and learning.

Admissions

The following outlines the requirements and process for admission into the MCMS Ph.D. Program for prospective students. Students seeking admission to the MCMS program must apply through GraduateCAS, located at <https://texasam2021.liaisoncas.com/>. The following items are required for a successful application:

1. A GraduateCAS application.
2. An application fee of \$89 for U.S. applicants or \$114 for international applicants.
3. A personal statement or narrative explaining your interest and reasons why you are applying to the MARM program. Personal statements must be submitted through the GraduateCAS application.
4. A narrative statement describing your research interests and personal objectives. Statements must be submitted through the GraduateCAS application.
5. A professional resume, which must be uploaded to the GraduateCAS application.
6. Three letters of recommendation. Recommendations from previous academic experience are preferred, but recommendations from professional sources will also suffice. Letters of recommendation should be submitted electronically through the GraduateCAS application.
7. Official transcripts of all previous academic work, including transcripts from foreign institutions (please allow extra time for review of transcripts from foreign institutions).
8. For international applicants whose native language is not English, proof of English proficiency (TOEFL or IELTS) is required. TOEFL must be taken within the last two years.

It is the applicant's responsibility to submit a completed application by the deadline. Admission decisions are based on a holistic consideration of all application materials. **Prospective MCMS Ph.D. students will only be admitted upon the agreement of a faculty member to chair the student's advisory committee.** Communicating with MCES faculty prior to applying to the MCMS program is highly recommended. MCMS students are admitted in both Fall and Spring semesters. **When possible, a Fall start date is recommended. Spring applications must be completed and submitted by October 1st; Fall applications must be completed and submitted by May 1st.** GRE requirements have been waived for the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 semesters.

Program Curriculum

The curriculum for the MCMS Ph.D. program is interdisciplinary in nature and draws upon multiple marine and coastal-related courses that will be used to provide a context to traditionally required methodological, quantitative, and theoretical courses. As shown in Table 4, courses required of all MCMS Ph.D. students include: a course on research methods; three courses in statistics, with one aimed to provide knowledge to a specific field of statistics; a GIS (Geographic Information System) course to provide or increase spatial-analytical capabilities; an epistemology course to provide an understanding of theories of knowledge and learning; a coastal management course to provide a deeper knowledge of the interface between anthropogenic and natural environments from a policy perspective; and a series of two seminars designed for the MCMS Ph.D. students and with the aim of increasing technical, proposal, and research-related writing skills.

Table 4. Core Courses for the MCMS Ph.D. Program

Course No.	Course Title	SCH
MARS 603	<i>Quantitative Methods for Resource Management I</i>	3
MARS 604	<i>Quantitative Methods for Resource Management II</i>	3
MARS 625	<i>GIS Use in Coastal Resources</i>	3
MARS 643	<i>Epistemology</i>	3
MARS 644	<i>Research Methods</i>	3
MARS 652	<i>Sustainable Management of Coastal Margins</i>	3
MARS 681	<i>Seminar (two semesters of 1-credit hour Seminar required)</i>	2
(to be determined)	<i>Specialty methods or statistics course</i>	3
Additional core courses for students without a prior Master's degree		
MARS 635	<i>Environmental Impact Statements and NRDA</i>	3
MARS 660	<i>Environmental Conflict Resolution</i>	3
MARS 675	<i>Environmental Management Strategies</i>	3
MARS 689	<i>Coastal Ecosystem Management and Planning</i>	3
MARS 689	<i>Coastal Land Use Law</i>	3
PLAN 642	<i>Planning for Coastal Sustainability and Resiliency</i>	3

**Special topics course designation will change after Fall 2021*

Total hours required to complete the MCMS Ph.D. are 60 for students entering with an existing Master's degree, or 90 for students entering with a Bachelor's degree. Minimum required hours are distributed across three categories, as shown in Table 5: 1) core courses; 2) elective courses that support the student's research agenda and that are selected in consultation with the SAC; and 3) research hours. Flexibility to replace core courses with courses targeted to their area of research is available to students upon recommendation and approval by their SAC. A total of 28 research hours are required to complete the proposal and dissertation.

Table 5. Distribution of Hours to Complete the MCMS Ph.D. Program

Category	Entering with a Bachelor's	Entering with a Master's
<i>Core Courses</i>	41	23
<i>Electives</i>	21	9
<i>Dissertation / Research Hours</i>	28	28
TOTAL	90	60

Transfer Credits

Students transferring into the program from another graduate program will be required to meet the same admissions requirements as outlined above. Transfer students may be allowed to transfer graded coursework credits completed with a grade B or greater, up to 18 credit hours (approximately one year of coursework), from another accredited graduate program that have not been used toward another degree upon the advice and approval of the SAC and the Texas A&M University (TAMU) the Graduate and Professional School (Grad School).

Degree Plan

The degree plan formally declares the membership of the student's advisory committee and outlines the specific courses that the student will complete as part of the MCMS program. The student, with the consultation of the SAC, will develop a degree plan no later than the end of the third long (Fall/Spring) semester. If the degree plan is not formed by the end of the third semester, then the student will be placed on warning and must meet with the Staff Graduate Advisor or MCMS Program Coordinator to discuss their progress toward meeting this deadline. If the degree plan is not formed by the end of the fourth long semester (Fall/Spring), the student will be blocked from registering for courses until the degree plan is submitted.

Candidacy and Dissertation

A preliminary examination, written and oral, is required, and shall be administered in accordance with the rules outlined in the Texas A&M University Graduate Catalog: <https://catalog.tamu.edu/graduate/academic-expectations-general-degree-requirements/#degreerequirementstext>. It will be given no earlier than a date at which the student is within approximately 6 credit hours of completion of the formal course work on the degree plan, or no later than the end of the semester following completion of the formal course work on the degree plan. The written examinations must be completed and reported as satisfactory before the oral portion of the examination may be held. Upon successful completion of the preliminary examination (written and oral portions), completion of all graded coursework on the degree plan with the exception of any remaining seminars, internship or research courses, meeting residency requirements, and submission of an approved dissertation proposal, the student will be admitted to candidacy.

Students must pass the final examination/dissertation defense by deadline dates published in the TAMU Grad School calendar. No student may be given a final examination unless their GPR is 3.0 or above, they have been admitted to candidacy, and there are no grades of D, F or U for any course listed on the degree plan. Students must also maintain continuous registration, by registering either 'In Absentia' or 'In Residence', until all requirements for the MCMS Ph.D. degree have been completed.

Academic Standards

Students are expected to maintain a minimum GPA and make steady progress toward their degree. To remain in good standing within the program, students must maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA cumulatively and on their degree plan. Students will not be able to take final exams until their GPA is improved. If you earn a D, F, or U on any course in your degree plan you must retake the course and earn at least a C or remove the course from your degree plan.

Program Deadlines

In addition to the deadlines provided below in Table 6, MCMS students should remain aware of specific dates and deadlines required by the TAMU Grad School. **Many of these deadlines approach earlier than expected and may vary semester to semester.** Annual TAMU Grad School calendars can be found at: <https://grad.tamu.edu/Buttons/Calendars>.

Table 6. Deadlines for the MCMS Ph.D. Program

	DEADLINE
<i>Identification of committee chair/major professor</i>	Prior to application
<i>Student Advisory Committee formed</i>	End of third semester
<i>Degree Plan filed</i>	End of third semester
<i>Preliminary Examination</i>	Within approximately 6 credit hours of completion of the course work on the degree plan, or no later than the end of the semester following completion of the course work on the degree plan
<i>Dissertation Proposal Approval</i>	Following successful preliminary examination
<i>Request for permission to schedule final examination</i>	At least 20 working days prior to submission of the Request and Announcement of Final Examination.
<i>Upload approved, completed dissertation and signed approval page to Thesis Office</i>	Varies, see TAMU Grad School calendar

Appendix A: 2021-2022 MCES Graduate Programs Core Committee Composition

Program Coordinator, MCMS	Dr. Wesley Highfield	highfiew@tamug.edu
Program Coordinator, MARM	Dr. Ashley Ross	ashleydross@tamug.edu
Members:	Dr. Sam Brody	brodys@tamug.edu
	Dr. Meri Davlasheridze	davlashm@tamug.edu
	Dr. David Retchless	retchled@tamug.edu
	Dr. Pete Van Hengstum	vanhenp@tamug.edu
Staff Graduate Advisor	Nicole Kinslow	kinslown@tamug.edu

Appendix B: Research Track Letter of Intent

Master of Marine Resources Management (MARM) Program

MARM Research Track Letter of Intent

This letter of intent provides an authorization process for students to pursue the thesis-based Research Track as part of their course of study in the MARM program.

Submission guidelines:

- Potential 3+2 MARM students: *MARM Research Track Letter of Intent* due with application package (June 15 deadline).
- Potential MARM students in the traditional 2-year program: the *MARM Research Track Letter of Intent* may be submitted at the program application stage, or by end of first semester following admission.

Student Name: Enter Name

UIN: Enter UIN

Signature

Faculty Chair of Student Advisory Committee: Enter Faculty Chair Name

Signature

General research topic and source of research support:

Enter Text

Appendix C: MARM 3+2 Program Application

UIN: UIN
Full Name: Name
Mailing Address: Address
E-Mail Address: e-mail address
Sex: Male: Female:
U.S. Citizen: Yes: No:

Current Overall Grade Point Average: GPA (please attach transcripts)

GRE Scores: Verbal Verbal Quantitative Quant Analytical Analytical (please attach a copy of GRE scores)

In the space below, please provide a statement or essay describing your field of interest and the objectives of your educational program and professional career.

Please enter statement or essay here