Graduate Program Application Guide

NETWORK WITH POTENTIAL FACULTY ADVISOR(S)

It is a requirement of our program that all PhD and MS Plan I applicants contact faculty advisor(s) before applying. Start with reviewing department, adjunct, and affiliate faculty webpages and links to faculty labs and publications. Contact graduate students associated with that particular lab to gain additional insight. When reaching out to faculty advisor(s), include a brief description of your research interests, background, and include a copy of your CV. Please note, it is okay to send a follow-up email after 1-2 weeks, since it is easy for emails to get lost in faculty inboxes. Ultimately, you want to ensure that this match would be a good fit for both of you!

Core faculty: https://oceansci.ucsc.edu/faculty/index.php
Affiliate/Adjunct faculty: https://oceansci.ucsc.edu/faculty/affiliated.html

APPLY FOR FELLOWSHIPS

We encourage all applicants to apply for fellowships. You can apply prior to being admitted. Obtaining a fellowship will give you a competitive edge. For a list of potential fellowships visit https://graddiv.ucsc.edu/financial援助/fellowships.html

COMPLETE REMAINING PREREQUISITES

- Biology (2), chemistry (2), physics (2), calculus (2), statistics or biostatistics (1), and earth sciences or geological principles (1)

Students who have not satisfied all of the prerequisite requirements for biology, chemistry, geology, or physics upon entering the Ocean Sciences Graduate Program may substitute one quarter or semester prerequisite class with the appropriate core course providing they have obtained a passing letter grade (B or higher) in that class; however, they can only make this substitution in one subject area and it cannot be in the students primary subject area of research. If the statistics prerequisite is not met then an upper level undergraduate course at UCSC can be taken upon admission into the PhD and MS Plan 1 programs. No exceptions can be made for calculus. MS Plan 2 candidates are highly encouraged to complete all prerequisites before admission.

APPLICATION MATERIALS

- Aim for a 3.0 or above undergraduate GPA. If you fail to attain this you can explain why in your personal statement.
- Three letters of recommendation ideally from graduate ocean sciences faculty or faculty in closely related fields - chemistry, biology, physics, etc.) who have extensive experience working with you in the classroom or lab. Ensure you choose people who can speak to your character and ability in a professional manner.
- GRE scores are not required.
- Related research experience. Do not reproduce your resume! For helpful tips visit NSF Previous Research Experience (Essay) Unofficial Guide
- Statement of purpose: Start early, write multiple drafts, edit and proofread. Make this stand out separate from your other application materials. Tell your story, compel your reader, and demonstrate your strengths as a potential graduate student.

HOW YOU WILL BE EVALUATED

We consider your application in its entirety, including the relevant socioeconomic, gender, and racial background information. Even if you have a weakness in your application like a low GPA or lack of research experience, you can still be a competitive candidate if you explain yourself clearly in your statement of purpose.

Important elements:
- Faculty advisor/applicant communication
- STEM GPA
- Writing skills
- Research experience and publications
- Letters of recommendation
- External funding (fellowships, scholarships, research grants, etc.)

STRENGTHEN YOUR APPLICATION RIGHT NOW

Have a weakness in your application? Take a graduate ocean sciences course, volunteer in a lab and attend weekly lab meetings, get involved in research and try to be included on papers and presentations, and/or find an internship.

GAP YEAR?

It is common for students to have a gap year or take multiple years to gain work experience. Stay active in the field. Attend colloquia, conferences, and build relationships with faculty and graduate students that will serve you in the future.