

Summary of OS PhD Program Requirements for Faculty and Students

Updated August 16, 2010

- 1) Students are responsible for fulfilling all program requirements including those outlined in the USC Catalogue, the Graduate School's website, the OT Department's website, this document and the OT Department's Student Handbook. Detailed descriptions of all requirements can be found in the resources cited above.
- 2) Students are admitted to the PhD program as full time students only.
- 3) Students are required to maintain a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0.
- 4) Faculty Advisement. When a student is admitted to the program, he or she will be assigned a faculty mentor based on:
 - the student's research interests.
 - faculty availability and expertise.
 - the assignment of the student's research assistantship.

In collaboration with their faculty mentor, students may design an interdisciplinary research experience with another designated program.

By the end of the first year, a decision regarding the appointment of the guidance committee chair will be finalized. In most cases, the mentor will continue as the chair.

- 5) Evaluation & Performance. Performance is reviewed annually by the graduate faculty, with the student and the Chair completing an academic progress contract. As part of the annual process, students must pass a screening exam during the first year and before 24 units have been completed. Plans for program completion are reviewed. This gives the student and the division the chance to consider whether admission to the program and course plans remain appropriate. Passing the screening exam is a prerequisite to continuation in the doctoral program.
- 6) Forms. All forms, unless otherwise noted, should be submitted to Graduate Advisor Laura Sturza. Students fill out their personal information and obtain signatures from their Chair and committee members. Laura will obtain signatures from Dr. Clark and Dean Sadan. Forms can be downloaded from the Graduate School's website at http://www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/current_guidelines_forms_03.html
- 7) Guidance Committee
The Guidance Committee oversees the Qualifying Exam, and is composed of five faculty members. Three members of the committee, including at least one tenured member, must be regular faculty from the Division. At least one member must be faculty from outside the Division, and will represent the Graduate School. An outside member can have no more than a 50% financial appointment with the OT/OS Division. The fifth member can be faculty from the student's cognate area. However four members can be from inside the department.
- 8) An Appointment of Committee form must be submitted, identifying members of the guidance committee that oversees the qualifying exam. The form should be submitted at least two semesters prior to taking the qualifying exam.

Information regarding the role of the outside committee member can be reviewed http://www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/documents/StuServices/Role_of_Outside_Member.pdf

- 9) Change of Committee If a student wishes to make a change to her/his committee, it must occur 30 days before the qualifying exam. A Change of Committee form can be downloaded from the Grad School's website.
- 10) Qualifying Exam. The qualifying exam should be taken no later than during the ~~fifth~~ seventh semester, after the completion of all coursework. Students may register for GRSC 800 Studies for the Qualifying Exam. Permission to register is approved by the Graduate School. Enrollment is limited to two consecutive semesters of preparation for the qualifying examination.

Students must download and complete the Request to Take the PhD Qualifying Exam form, and submit it to Laura at least 30 days prior to the start of the Qualifying Exam. Students must reserve a room for their exam and inform Laura of their exam date so that she can facilitate completion of the required forms.

The Qualifying Exam consists of two components, both due 14 days before the Qualifying Exam:

- A publishable paper related to Occupational Science. The expectation is that the paper has been submitted for publication.
- A dissertation proposal.

Laura will give the Report on the Qualifying Exam form to the Chair several days before the exam. The Chair is responsible for returning the completed form to Laura no later than two days after the exam, per Graduate School deadlines. The student is not allowed to deliver the form and the form should not be delivered directly to the Graduate School.

- 11) Dissertation Committee. Following the Qualifying Exam, a new Appointment of Committee form must be submitted as soon as possible. Some or all members of the Guidance Committee can serve on the Dissertation Committee, though it is not a requirement.
- 12) Continuous Enrollment. Once a student is admitted to the program (no longer a limited status student, for example), the student must register for at least one course every fall and spring semester until the Approval to Submit Defended & Final Copy of Doctoral Work form have been signed and submitted to the Graduate School. Following the passing of the Qualifying Examination, registration in 794 Doctoral Dissertation is required in each term (excluding summer) until the student completes, defends, makes any post-defense revisions, and submits the dissertation to the Thesis Editor.
- 13) Leave of Absence. If a student needs to take a semester off, the student must submit the General Petition before the drop/add registration deadline. Up to four semesters may be taken but a new General Petition must be submitted each spring or fall term.

14) Readmission. If a student fails to register for a semester and is not on a leave of absence, the student must apply for readmission to the department, subject to review by the Graduate School. OT Admissions Director Sarah Kelly will assist with the process.

15) Full time/Part time status. PhD students are considered full time students if they are registered for 6 units or more of 500 level or above course work, or if they are enrolled in 794 a, b, c, d, or z (Doctoral Dissertation) or GRSC 800 (preparing for the qualifying examination), or if they are a TA. If they are a TA they need to be enrolled for the minimum units required for the TA position. Some lenders require students to be enrolled in at least half time status, which is 3 units, to maintain student deferment status.

16) Required Units

For complete course descriptions, please refer to the USC Catalogue pages 709 and 712-713. The PhD program consists of 60 units including the following:

- Required core courses are OT 640 (4), OT 641 (4), OT 660 (12) for a total of 20 units.
- Required electives are five 600-level OT courses for a total of 20 units.
- Cognate courses are a minimum total of 12 units.
- Dissertation requires 2 units per semester for at least two semesters for a minimum total of 4 units.
- Additional 4 units can include 4 further units of dissertation or cognate.

17) Waivers/Substitutions/Transfer units.

A maximum of 25 percent of the stated degree course requirements (exclusive of 794 Doctoral Dissertation) may be approved for waiver or substitution by other USC course work, directed research or transfer course work.

Substitutions and the use of transfer units must be approved by committee chair. The Chair must let Laura know the substitution or transfer has been approved so that she can apply the credits to the student's degree.

18) Time to Complete Coursework. PhD students are expected to complete the 56 units of coursework in 6 semesters (3 years), which means an average of 10-14 units per semester, depending on whether they have a master's degree. During this time the student should be formulating a research topic through ongoing discussion with a faculty member.

19) Time to Complete Program. If students have completed a Masters degree within 5 years of starting the PhD program, they have 6 years from the date of the first course applied toward the PhD degree. Otherwise, they have 8 years to complete the degree.

20) Thesis Editing Deadlines: If a student submits his/her thesis on the deadline date, it will take about three weeks for the thesis editor to edit it. Students receive email notification of the required changes, and have five days to submit corrections. If there are additional changes required, student is again notified by email and has three days to make any final changes.

21) Final paperwork. Approximately one month before defense, students begin the submission process outlined in the Sequence for Submission of Dissertation and Thesis Paperwork. http://www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/current_thesis_dissert_02.html

Final Paperwork for students includes submission of a bound copy of the dissertation to the Department Chair and Dissertation Chair, and additional paperwork outlined on the Graduate School's PhD Submission Packet web page
http://www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/current_thesis_dissert_04.html

Upon the committee's acceptance, paperwork requiring faculty signatures includes:

- Approval to Submit Defended & Final Copy of Doctoral Work.
- Verification of Completion of the Requirements for the Doctoral Degree.
- Signature Page

Final paperwork as outlined in the Submission Packet web page is approved by Laura. Student submits paperwork to the Graduate School. Student uploads dissertation manuscript and works with Thesis Editor to complete final corrected version of dissertation.

Recommended Timeline for Completion of the PhD

Recommended timeline to promote a completion process of four years when the student has an MA in OT.

- Upon entrance to the program, the student should develop a course plan, which will be revised at the beginning of the second semester and further revised as needed.
- Upon entrance into the program, the student should appoint a committee chair.
- By the beginning of the third semester, student should have completed his or her screening.
- By the beginning of the fourth semester, the PhD committee chair should be appointed
- By the end of the sixth semester, the core courses and cognates should be completed.
- By the seventh semester, the student should pass the qualifying examination.
- By the end of the seventh semester, the student should receive IRB approval and begin research for the dissertation.
- By the eighth semester, the student should pass the oral examination.
- By the end of the eighth semester, the student should submit the final dissertation.