

## **Summary of OS PhD Program Requirements for Faculty and Students**

Updated Sept 9, 2015

- 1) Students are responsible for fulfilling all program requirements including those outlined in the USC Catalogue, the Graduate School's website, the USC Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy website, this document and the Division'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 Mentor and Chair  
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

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 review process, students must pass a screening exam during the first year and before 24 units have been completed. As part of the screening exam, plans for program completion are reviewed, which gives the student and the faculty 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 Maddy Zamany. Students fill out their personal information and obtain signatures from their Chair and committee members. Maddy 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](http://www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/current_guidelines_forms_03.html)
- 7) Qualifying Exam Committee  
The Qualifying Exam 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

An appointment of QE Committee form must be submitted, identifying members of the Qualifying Exam Committee that oversees the qualifying exam. The form should be submitted at least one semester 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](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 is required for all PhD students and consists of both a written and oral section.

*"The examination qualifying a student for candidacy for the PhD degree is comprehensive in nature, partly written and partly oral, designed, at least in part, to test the student's fitness to undertake independent research." Furthermore, "The fact that a student has done well on the written examination is not to be construed to mean that the oral examination is to be a pro forma exercise. The oral examination is a serious and integral part of the qualifying procedure and is administered on campus."*

When scheduling the Qualifying Exam, the student must schedule the written section first. The oral section must be scheduled within a two to six week window following the written portion. Each member of the exam committee is required to submit one question. Each committee member has two weeks to grade his/her submitted question and inform the Chair of the committee of the "Pass/Fail" grade. Each member of the committee is also expected to read the answers to all other questions and may ask questions about this material during the oral section.

The passing of the written section (4 out of 5 questions) is required for eligibility to take the oral exam. However the student may be asked to retake the failed question before being allowed to move on to the oral section. A two hour limit is set for the oral, and it is based on the questions from the written exam. The oral exam is not open to the public; however the oral defense of the dissertation itself is open to the public.

The qualifying exam should be taken no later than during the fifth semester after the completion of all coursework. Students must register for GRSC 800 (Studies for the Qualifying Exam) if not otherwise enrolled during the semester they are taking the QE. GRSC 800 is a zero unit course and may only be taken concurrently with two other units maximum. Enrollment is limited to two consecutive semesters of preparation for the qualifying examination for Occupational Science students.

Students must submit a Qualifying Exam Committee form to Maddy Zamany at least one semester prior to taking the Qualifying Exam. Students must reserve a room for their exam and inform Maddy of their exam date so that she can facilitate completion of the required forms.

At least fourteen days prior to taking the Qualifying Exam, the student must complete and submit the following:

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

Maddy will give the Report on the Qualifying Exam form to the Chair of the committee several days before the exam. The Chair is responsible for returning the completed form to Maddy 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 identifying the Dissertation Committee. The Dissertation Committee must have at least 3 members and no more than 5. Some or all members of the Guidance Committee can serve on the Dissertation Committee, though it is not a requirement. The form can be downloaded from the Graduate School's website at [http://www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/current\\_guidelines\\_forms\\_03.html](http://www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/current_guidelines_forms_03.html)

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 student completes, defends, makes any post-defense revisions, and submits the dissertation to the Thesis Editor. Registration during summer is not required if you are continuing to take courses in the fall.

13) Leave of Absence

If a student needs to take a semester off, the student must submit in writing to her/his mentor and copy Maddy Zamany prior to the add/drop registration deadline for that semester. Up to four semesters may be taken without Graduate School's approval. A new request must be submitted each spring or fall term.

14) Readmission

If a student fails to register for a fall or spring semester and is not on a leave of absence, the student must apply for readmission to the Division, subject to review by the Graduate School. Maddy Zamany 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. All students in the Occupational Science program are expected to maintain full time status.

16) Required Units

For complete course descriptions, please refer to the USC online Catalogue:

The PhD program consists of 60 units including the following:

- Required core courses are OT 640 (4), OT 641 (4), and 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 (13 units) 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 the committee chair. The Chair must complete a "substitution form" and submit to Maddy Zamany so that she can apply the credits to the student's degree. Contact Maddy to obtain a Substitution Form.

18) Time to Complete Coursework

PhD students are expected to complete the 52 units of coursework in 6 semesters (3 years), which means an average of 9-12 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 Master's 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, the student is again notified by email and has three days to make any final changes.

21) Advisement.

Students will meet regularly with their Chair for mentoring and advisement. Students or their Chairs may contact the PhD Program Director if they wish to discuss their programs.

22) Guidelines for Submission of Dissertation (taken from

[http://www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/current\\_thesis\\_dissert\\_02.html](http://www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/current_thesis_dissert_02.html))

**Step 1**

Before the defense:

- Download the Appointment/Change of Committee form.
  - A. Complete this form well in advance of your defense date, as it requires the signature of the school dean.
  - B. Scan a copy of the signed form and save in PDF format for your records.

**Step 2**

- A. Create a profile in Thesis Center, the Graduate School's thesis and dissertation online processing website.



- B. Enter the date of your defense in the field provided. If your program does not require an oral defense, check the "My program does not require a defense" box.

**Step 3**

Defend your dissertation or thesis and make any changes to your manuscript that your committee requires. Monitor the progress of the electronic *Approval to Submit* form through your Thesis Center profile.

**Step 4**

- A. Take the [Survey of Earned Doctorates \(SED\)](#). Only the first section is required. Save the emailed completion receipt as a PDF.
- B. By the [Documentation Deadline](#) in the given term, upload the completed *Appointment/Change of Committee* form and *Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED)* certificate to your Thesis Center "Document Checklist" page.
- C. Confirm that all committee members have registered their decisions on the electronic *Approval to Submit* form in the Thesis Center system by the Documentation Deadline.

*Once the expected term of degree conferral has commenced, the Thesis Coordinator will verify the checklist items and send an email confirmation that the manuscript may be uploaded. Normally, this takes 2-3 business days. At this time, the manuscript processing fee will be applied to the student's account in OASIS.*

Academic Year 2014 and later

*The fee is \$115 for doctoral students. Please note that submissions made past the deadline will not be processed until the beginning of the subsequent semester.*

**Step 5**

Upload the manuscript to your Thesis Center profile in the form of a single PDF file before the [Upload Deadline](#). The upload deadline pertains to the initial upload of the manuscript.

*The Thesis Coordinator will review the manuscript for format and presentation and send a notification email should any changes be required. Normally this takes place within three weeks during peak submission times and sooner during off-peak times.*

**Step 6**

Make any requested formatting revisions and upload the revised manuscript to the Thesis Center profile a second time.

*An email confirmation will be sent after manuscript formatting has been approved, after which the USC Digital Library will send an email requiring the student to confirm manuscript publishing information. At this point, students will be able to upload any necessary supplemental media files to accompany the PDF thesis or dissertation manuscript.*

**Step 7**

Confirm thesis or dissertation publishing information with the USC Digital Library. This is the final step required for degree conferral.

*The degree will normally be officially posted within a month.*

Early Submission Option. Students are exempted from the requirement to register in 794 in a given semester if they submit the necessary documentation, have a complete *Approval to Submit* form, and upload the manuscript to the Graduate School by 5:00pm PST on the add/drop deadline in that semester. It is recommended that students submit the necessary documents and have a complete *Approval to Submit* form at least a week before the add/drop deadline in order to allow time to upload the manuscript.