

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

Updated November 21, 2016

- 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. The student will submit the following items for review:
  - Current CV
  - Publishable paper(s) related to occupational science
  - Updated personal statement, which describes the student's understanding of occupational science, how this blends with the student's scholarly interests, and current plans for cognate courses, mentorship, and dissertation topic (2 pages maximum).

As part of the screening exam, plans for program completion are reviewed, which gives the student and the faculty the chance to consider whether continuation in 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 the Associate Dean and Dean. 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)

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7) Qualifying Exam Committee

The Qualifying Exam Committee oversees the Qualifying Exam and is composed of five faculty members determined in consultation between the student and his/her Chair. 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 OS/OT Division. The fifth and final member can be faculty from within the Division (for a total of four Division faculty) or represent the student's cognate area from outside the division.

8) Appointment of Committee

An Appointment of Qualifying Exam Committee form must be submitted, identifying members of the Qualifying Exam Committee that oversees the qualifying exam. The form should be submitted to Maddy Zamany at least one semester prior to taking the qualifying exam. Information regarding the role of the outside committee member can be reviewed at [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 the Committee Chair and/or 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 Graduate School's website.

10) Qualifying Exam

The Qualifying Exam is required for all PhD students and consists of both a written and oral section as follows:

*"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."*

At least fourteen days prior to taking the Qualifying Exam, the student must submit to the Chair an overview of the dissertation proposal. At a minimum, this overview must include a background of the study, primary goals and aims, and a description of the study design. The overview should be a minimum of three pages in length; however, a full dissertation proposal may be required as directed by the Chair.

When scheduling the Qualifying Exam, the student must schedule the written section first. The written portion of the exam consists of responses to five questions. Questions will be solicited from the student and each member of the exam committee. In consultation with the committee, the Chair will select and assign each of the five questions to a committee member. The format for executing the written portion of the exam is at the discretion of the Chair and the Exam Committee; however, to ensure parity across students, the structure must fall within the following guidelines:

- Student should be given a minimum of 2 days and a maximum of one week (7 days) to craft a response to each question
- The total time for the written exam process should last no longer than 5 weeks
- Questions may be provided individually or grouped together for response by the student
- Written responses should be concise, well-referenced, and demonstrate appropriate depth of knowledge in no more than 10 single-spaced pages per question

Each committee member has two weeks to grade his/her assigned question and inform the Chair of the "Pass/Fail" grade for that question. Receiving a passing grade on at least 4 out of 5 questions is required for eligibility to take the oral exam. However, the student may be asked to retake any failed questions using the same format as originally required before being allowed to move on to the oral exam. Prior to the oral exam, each committee member is expected to read responses to all questions and may ask questions about this material during the oral exam.

The oral section should be scheduled within a 2- to 6-week window following notification of passing of the written portion (i.e., at least four out of five questions). A 2-hour limit is set for the oral section, which is based on the questions from the written exam, as well as additional questions from the committee related to the student's cognate area and dissertation plans. The oral exam is not open to the public. Students must reserve a room for their oral exam and inform Maddy Zamany of their exam date so she can facilitate completion of the required forms. 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.

The qualifying exam should be taken no later than during the second semester after the completion of all required coursework. If not enrolled in other credits during the semester they are taking the exam, students must register for GRSC 800 (Studies for the Qualifying Exam). 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.

#### 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 three members and no more than five. Some or all members of the Guidance Committee can serve on the Dissertation Committee, though it is not a requirement. At least two members must be Tenured or Tenure-Track faculty, two members must be from the home program, and one of the home program faculty must be Tenured. 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) Dissertation Proposal

A dissertation proposal must be developed in consultation with the Dissertation Committee Chair and should consist of at least 30 double-spaced pages. At a minimum, the proposal must include a rationale for the dissertation, a concise and incisive synthesis of literature, a methods section, any preliminary data gathered, and publication plans for work that emanates from the dissertation. When appropriate, the proposal should be written in the form of a grant application, with addenda/appendices that address any of the requirements listed above that would not otherwise be included in the grant application.

The student is required to obtain approval of their dissertation proposal from the Dissertation Committee through a proposal meeting. If the student submits a full proposal prior to the qualifying exam, the proposal meeting may occur immediately following the successful passing of the oral qualifying exam. If the proposal is developed following passing of the qualifying exam, the proposal draft should be submitted to the committee a minimum of 4 weeks prior to the separate proposal meeting. The student should check with each committee member to determine whether the proposal is to be submitted electronically, as a hard copy, or both. [http://www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/current\\_thesis\\_dissert\\_04.html](http://www.usc.edu/schools/GraduateSchool/current_thesis_dissert_04.html)

### 13) Dissertation Models

In addition to the traditional dissertation model, doctoral students have the option of following an article-based dissertation model. Decision of the dissertation model should be made in consultation with the Chair. If selected, the article-based dissertation model should include a minimum of five chapters: an introduction, three journal-ready articles, and a discussion/conclusion.

- The **introduction** should include an overview of the current state of knowledge and provide a clear statement of purpose for the articles that follow.
- The need for a separate **methods** chapter is negotiated with the chair. This chapter may be necessary should the scope of the methods sections in each article be inadequate to explain overarching or highly specific methods used to complete the dissertation research.
- The **three articles** that comprise the dissertation results should be independently written by the candidate in journal-ready format (including the abstract). The committee should review each article and agree that it meets the necessary quality requirements for independent final dissertation work prior to the committee contributing any edits. Discussion of authorship for eventual publication of these articles should begin at the time of dissertation proposal.
- The **discussion/conclusion** chapter should synthesize the findings of the three articles and provide a thorough discussion of how the findings relate to, advance, or inform current evidence. This chapter should suggest future directions for advancing knowledge and/or practice in the content area.

The articles presented in an article-based dissertation may be from a set of related studies, or several distinct findings from one study. If including a set of related studies, the overarching themes linking the studies must be clearly delineated in the Introduction chapter of the dissertation. At least two of the three articles should be based on research data collected and/or analyzed by the student. If the third article is conceptual, theoretical, or a meta-analysis/systematic review, it should be clearly related to the original research conducted in the other two articles. In addition, its content should not overlap significantly with the introduction or conclusion chapters of the dissertation.

The timing for submitting articles from the dissertation for publication is negotiated with the Chair and committee members and may occur prior to completion of the full dissertation. However, if articles are submitted prior to final approval of the full dissertation, the chapter for the dissertation must be approved by the committee as quality independent work prior to any editing by committee members for publication purposes.

### 14) 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.

### 15) 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 Zamanly prior to the add/drop registration deadline for that semester. Up to four

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semesters may be taken without Graduate School's approval. A new request must be submitted each spring or fall term.

### 16) 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.

### 17) 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.

### 18) 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), OT 648 (4), OT 649 (4), OT 661 (2), and OT 660 (4 for a total of 8 units).
- Cognate courses are a minimum total of 26 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 OT 660, dissertation, or cognate.

Students with an earned masters and/or doctoral degree at the time of admission may apply for Advanced Standing during their first semester in the program. Students with Advanced Standing are only required to complete 10 units of cognate courses, reducing the total units required for the degree from 60 units to 40 units. All students must complete the required core courses, minimum number of cognates, pass a qualifying exam, and successfully complete an independent dissertation. Students wishing to be considered for Advanced Standing status should inform their Chair as soon as possible and no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> week of their first semester in the program. Advanced standing requests will be reviewed by the PhD faculty committee before the end of the student's first semester in the program.

### 19) 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.

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### 20) Time to Complete Coursework

Depending upon the regular or advanced standing status, PhD students are expected to complete required coursework within 2-3 years, which means an average of 9-12 units per semester. During this time the student should be formulating a research topic through ongoing discussion with Committee Chair.

### 21) 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.

### 22) Thesis Editing Deadlines

If a student submits his/her thesis on the deadline date, it will take approximately 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.

### 23) 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 PhD program.

### 24) 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.

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- 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. 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 5:00 p.m. 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.