

*Handbook
for
Graduate
Students*

*Department of Psychology
University of Southern California
2020*

8/14/20 update

This handbook sets forth policies and standards of the Department of Psychology and the Graduate School of the University of Southern California (USC). Graduate students are expected to be familiar with the material presented here, as well as the regulations of the Graduate School presented in more detail in the **USC Catalogue 2020-2021** and in the *Graduate Student Handbook* published by the Graduate School. **Please note that not all policies and standards of the Graduate School are covered in this handbook.** Thus, students must also be familiar with the regulations in the *USC Catalogue* and *the Graduate School's website*. Appropriate course selection and the general understanding of deadlines, filing of Graduate School forms, etc., are the student's responsibility.

Department of Psychology
University of Southern California
2020

HANDBOOK OF REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES
FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY

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REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY

A. Introduction

1. Ph.D. degree requirements can be found in the USC Catalogue for your year of admission.
2. Any potential conflict in requirements between the Graduate School guidelines and this handbook should be brought to the attention of departmental staff.
3. This handbook specifies requirements for the class that enters this academic year. Any students admitted after that date may be subject to different requirements as will be specified in updates of the handbook.

B. Residence and Time Limits

1. To degree, the equivalent of three years of graduate status at USC or elsewhere is minimally required in all Ph.D. programs by the Graduate School. Students in Clinical Science must minimally spend three years full time on campus plus one full year of internship at a departmentally approved facility.
2. At least 24 graduate units (exclusive of 794, dissertation) are required to be taken at USC.
3. All degree candidates in Psychology are expected to be full-time students. The registrar considers that six semester units constitute a minimum load for a full-time graduate student, 12 units a normal load, and 16 units a maximum load.
 - a. All first-year students are required to take at least eight semester units during each of the first three semesters because of the screening procedure described in Sections D and E. It is expected that the other half of the student's time will be spent on research, teaching assistantship, or some combination of these.
 - b. If at any time individual circumstances lead a student to consider carrying a reduced academic load (e.g. less than eight units for first three semesters) he/she is responsible for clearing in advance the deviation from regular procedure with his/her advisor or guidance committee.
4. A leave of absence may be taken under exceptional circumstances by requesting it by petition the semester before the leave is to be taken. The petition should be addressed to the head of the student's specialty area and should describe the basis for the request and, if possible, the expected time of return. It should have the endorsement (signature) of the student's faculty advisor or chair of his/her guidance committee. Approval or rejection of requests is determined by the faculty of the specialty area. If approved, the head of the

area adds his/her signature to the request. Then the student must submit the request to the Director of Graduate Studies. Approval by this official indicates that the leave is formally granted and will be recorded on the student's transcript.

A student who does not return to enrolled status at the end of an approved period of leave is no longer considered to be pursuing an advanced degree. Further, students who fail to apply for a leave of absence or for whom a leave has been denied, but who fail to remain continuously enrolled as defined by the Graduate School, will also be considered to be no longer pursuing an advanced degree. To be readmitted to graduate studies, students must officially apply for readmission as specified in the Graduate School regulations.

5. The Graduate School requires that a student complete the degree within eight years of the date from the start of graduate work at the University of Southern California. The Psychology Department expects the Ph.D. degree to be completed within five years for non-clinical students. Clinical students are expected to complete their degree within six years, including the year of internship.
 - a. Extensions beyond the eight years require submission of a petition to the department and are granted only for very compelling reasons. (This is one reason why students are asked to clear reduced academic loads with their guidance committees and to request department approval of a leave of absence.)
 - b. In the very rare case that permission is granted to extend beyond eight years, under no circumstances will the time for completion be extended beyond 10 years from the date of the beginning of graduate work.

C. Course Requirements

| Ph.D. Program Course Requirements for All Students | |
|---|--|
| 60 Units Minimum to Degree | |
| 36 Substantive Units (which include 24 Graduate PSYC Units) | |
| 8 Units in Category A | 16 Units in Category B & C (with a minimum of one course taken in each category) |
| Specialty Area Course Requirements (see Appendix I) | |
| Doctoral Dissertation Units: PSYC 794a and PSYC794b | |

1. The equivalent of 60 semester units (including 794) is the minimum university requirement for the Ph.D. degree.
2. All students must take a minimum of 36 substantive units, at least 24 of which must be in the Department of Psychology. Research, thesis or dissertation courses (590, 594, 790, 794) do not qualify as substantive units. Of the 36 substantive units:
 - a. A minimum of 8 units (two courses) must be taken in Category A (see below).
 - b. A minimum of 16 units (four courses) must be taken in Categories B and C, with at least one course from Category B and one course from Category C (see below).

COURSES THAT FULFILL DEPARTMENT-WIDE CORE REQUIREMENTS

Category A. *Statistics and Research Design*

Courses that belong to this category include:

- 500 An Overview of Quantitative Methods in Psychology
- 501 Classic and Modern Statistical Methods I
- 502 Classic and Modern Statistical Methods II
- 503 Regression and the General Linear Model
- 504 Research Design
- 520 Fundamentals of Psychological Measurement
- 524 Research Design in Developmental Psychology
- 575 Multilevel Modeling

577 Analysis of Covariance Structures
 578 Workshop in Quantitative Methods
 616 Research Techniques for Non-Experimental Social Science
 621 Seminar in Quantitative Psychology
 622 Decision Analysis and Behavioral Decision Theory
 625 Applied Machine Learning

Category B. *Biological Bases of Behavior* (physiological psychology, comparative psychology, neuropsychology, sensation and perception, psycho-pharmacology, behavior genetics) and *Cognitive-Affective Bases of Behavior* (learning, thinking, motivation, problem-solving). Courses that belong to this category include:

506 Learning and Cognition
 510 Visual Cognition
 540 Cognitive Neuroscience
 544 Psychophysiology
 545 Neuropsychology
 547 Functional Neuroanatomy
 551 Decision Neuroscience
 555 Introduction to Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging
 576 Psycholinguistics
 586 Advanced Psycholinguistics
 676 Seminar in Psycholinguistics

Category C. *Social Bases of Behavior* (social psychology, group processes, organizational and systems theory) and *Individual Differences* (personality theory, human development, abnormal psychology). Courses that belong to this category include:

512 Seminar in Social Psychology
 514 Psychopathology
 *515 Clinical Assessment
 533 Cognitive Development in Children
 538 Origins of Human Nature
 534 Social and Emotional Development in Children
 *595 Practicum in Clinical Psychology
 612 Seminar in Advanced Social Psychology
 *619 Psychological Intervention
 626 Computational Social Sciences
 660 Seminar in Clinical Psychology
 680 Seminar in Psychopathology
 *695 Advanced Practicum in Clinical Psychology

*Courses marked with an asterisk may only be taken by students in the Clinical program.

4. Students in the Quantitative Methods and Computational Psychology (QMCP) area may substitute one additional statistics/research design course for one of the four courses required from Categories B and C, provided they have at least one course from Category B and one course from Category C.
5. In addition to these department-wide core requirements, each specialty area/program within the department has other requirements. These area/program requirements are described in the appendix to this handbook.
6. Students from specialty areas other than Clinical may take no more than three clinical courses. Those taken must be from 514 and 660 unless approval is received from the clinical faculty to enroll in a course not on this list.
7. Students in the Ph.D. program having taken appropriate Ph.D. graduate courses outside of the department may petition the Director of Graduate Studies for a waiver of one or more core-course requirements.
8. Students may petition to the Director of Graduate Studies to have 599s fulfill categories A, B and C. Note, however, that 8 is the maximum number of 599 units that can be applied toward the student's degree.
9. Students from any area (except QMCP) who wish to focus on quantitative methodology may apply for a minor in quantitative methods by successful completion of any five courses on the A course list. Students may substitute one of the five courses with another (3 or 4 unit) quantitative course outside Psychology via a petition approved by the students' advisor, the QMCP Area Head, and the Director of Graduate Studies.

D. First-Year Screening Procedure

1. The Graduate School requires that a screening procedure be used with each student before more than 24 units has been taken at the university. (Students must submit petitions to request exceptions.)
2. The Department of Psychology meets this requirement in the following way. Students are screened at the end of their first year. The evaluation is based on performance in courses and on research performance.
 - a. The course evaluation is based on performance in the courses taken during the first two semesters at USC. During that time, students must have taken a minimum of 16 units (four courses), with at least three of those courses being substantive courses from the core lists given earlier.

- b. Each specialty area evaluates the research performance of its students at the end of the first year. The graduate advisor will notify area heads if students have met the 16 unit requirement and their cumulative GPA after spring grades are posted. The head of the specialty area will notify the students and program no later than August 15 of the summer following completion of the first academic year about whether they have met the first-year research requirement. The area/program research requirements are included with other area/program requirements in the appendix to this handbook.
 - c. The outcome of the first-year screening process falls into one of three categories:
 - (1) clear pass (approved to continue),
 - (2) approved to continue for a terminal M.A. degree (but not for the Ph.D.), or
 - (3) dismissal from the graduate program.
 - d. To obtain a clear pass in the first-year screening, a student must have made good progress in research (as judged by the faculty of the specialty area) and obtained a B (3.00) average and no more than one C in the courses taken during the first year. Cumulative GPA for the year is based on all courses taken. When a student does not meet the standards for a clear pass, the student will have failed the first year screening. The faculty of the student's specialty area then will make a recommendation to the faculty about whether the student should be approved to continue for a terminal M.A. degree or be dismissed from the graduate program. This recommendation must be communicated in writing to the student and to the Chair of the department no later than August 15 of the summer following completion of the first academic year. All such cases will ultimately be decided by ballot of the Psychology faculty no later than the first faculty meeting in September. A majority of the members present at the meeting is required to decide the issue.
3. In very rare cases, the faculty may decide that extenuating circumstances obviate what would otherwise be a fail. All such cases will ultimately be decided by ballot of the Psychology faculty, with a majority of the members present required to carry the exception. With such a vote, a student may be permitted to continue beyond the first year with a grade-point average below B (3.00). It should be noted, however, that the Graduate School requires that a minimum grade-point average for all graduate work attempted at the university must be 3.00 before a degree can be granted. Thus, a grade-point average that falls below a 3.00 during a given semester will be considered a strong indicator that the student is not in a position to succeed in the program. Nevertheless, in very rare extenuating circumstances, permission to register following any semester in which the GPA has dropped below this level will require petition from the student's research advisor. The Director of Graduate Studies will meet with the research advisor, the student, and the Department Chair to determine if the petition should be forwarded to the Graduate School for consideration. Students who transfer credits must achieve this minimum both on all graduate residence units and on all combined residence units and units taken elsewhere for graduate credit.

E. Second Year Research Requirement

1. The Department of Psychology has an additional screening procedure in year two involving judgment of the student's research competence. During the first two years of graduate study at USC, each student works with a faculty member on a program of research that culminates in a written report. This report must be a Master's thesis or a research report of comparable scope and quality. The student's performance in planning, conducting, and reporting the study provides the basis of a second-year screening.
 - a. The second year project must be *approved* by the evaluation committee by the last day of classes in the fourth semester in residence.
 - b. The following evaluations are used:
 - (1) Satisfactory for M.A. level and approved to proceed toward the Ph.D. Generally for this rating, the research report must meet the standard of "acceptable for publication" with reference to:
 - (a) conception and implementation of project
 - (b) quality of report
 - (2) Satisfactory for M.A. level, but not approved to continue for Ph.D.
 - (3) Unsatisfactory for M.A. level
 - c. Responsibility for this screening lies with members of the student's screening committee, most often composed of faculty from within the student's specialty area. [This is generally the area into which the student was accepted for graduate training.] The committee consists of three tenure-track members of the department who review the paper
 - d. To pass the second year screening, that is, to be permitted to proceed toward the Ph.D., the three committee members must approve the work. The department form for reporting the outcome of this screening procedure and a final, committee-approved copy of the research report must be provided to the research advisor, i.e., the chair of the screening committee, and to the Graduate Student Advisor prior to the last day of classes of the student's fourth semester.
 - e. Course credit (590) may be obtained for this research at the student's and advisor's option. However, students who want to receive an M.A. degree after completing their second year project, must register for 594ab (rather than 590).
 - f. Such a research project done at USC is required of all students, regardless of prior graduate work at another institution.
 - g. A pdf of the completed sign-off sheets and the approved research papers presented in fulfilling this requirement must be submitted to the graduate advisor by the deadline.
 - h. Faculty evaluation of the student's second-year research project will be reported at the faculty meeting held during September of the student's third year.
 - i. In the fall of their third year, students are required to present their second-year projects or another research project as part of a departmental poster session typically held after the first faculty meeting in the fall.

F. Assisting in Teaching and Research

1. In addition to formal course work, the Department of Psychology considers that experiences as a research assistant and teaching assistant can be valuable parts of graduate students' training and should be strongly encouraged for all students.
2. As a teaching assistant, students participate in various teaching functions of the department, such as preparing examinations, scoring them, assisting in registration, and actual instruction (within the limits set by the University in connection with the responsibility of instructors for their classes).
3. As a research assistant, students can gain invaluable experience in carrying out research projects, from conceptualization and research design, to implementation, analysis and write-up.

G. Warning Status and Termination

1. To be in good standing in the Ph.D. program in Psychology, a student at any level of training must maintain a 3.0 average in course work and carry no more than one IN (incomplete) on his/her record. Also, in progressing through the program, a student must meet a number of deadlines (in connection with 24-unit screening, research screening, the qualifying examinations, and completion of the dissertation). In addition, a student must act in a manner which does not violate the ethical and professional standards of the American Psychological Association.
2. A student on warning status is defined as one who is in any of the following categories:
 - a. whose GPA falls below 3.0 at any time;
 - b. who has more than one IN on her/his record at any time;
 - c. who is placed on warning status as a result of the 24-unit screening process;
 - d. who has one grade of C or worse in a course in his/her specialty area;
 - e. whose second year research report has not been submitted and judged acceptable by the end (date classes end) of the fourth semester in residence;
 - f. who has not successfully completed the Ph.D. qualifying examination by the end (date classes end) of the seventh semester in residence (some areas have earlier deadlines; check specific area requirements);
 - g. who has not completed the Ph.D. dissertation within the time specified by the Graduate School (8 years).
3. Warning Status formally begins with written notification of the student by the specialty area faculty or department administrator. Notification shall include a statement of the reason, conditions, and duration of the warning status.

4. A student may return from warning status to good standing in the following ways, with each remedy corresponding to the list in G.2, above.
 - a. the student must bring the GPA up to 3.0 within one semester;
 - b. replace the IN with at least a B (not a B-) or better within one semester;
 - c. meet the requirements of the warning status as specified by the specialty area faculty;
 - d. repeat the course, earning at least a B (not a B-) or better, within one year;
 - e. turn in the second year project and have it approved by the last of classes of the fifth semester of residence;
 - f. take and pass the qualifying examination by the last day of classes of the eighth semester in residence;
 - g. complete the dissertation within one semester;

5. Relation of the warning status to funding. Being on warning status may put your funding at risk. Also, students on warning status are generally not eligible for departmental research grants or travel awards.

6. Termination of graduate student status. A student will be dropped from the program for any of the following reasons:
 - a. failure to return from warning status to good standing as described earlier in G.4;
 - b. earning two grades of C or worse in courses in specialty area;
 - c. acting in a manner which, in the opinion of the faculty (2/3 vote) violates the ethical and professional standards of the APA and for which a warning period is either inappropriate or impossible;
 - d. failure to return from leave of absence by the date specified.

7. Petition for readmission. A student who has been dropped from the program may petition for readmission if the petition is endorsed by a specialty-area faculty member who is willing to take responsibility for chairing the student's guidance committee.

The petition will be reviewed by and voted upon by the full-time faculty of the specialty area. [Unanimous approval (with no abstentions) is needed for readmission.]

H. Funding

1. The department tries to support as many students as possible and to match students with placements on the basis of training needs. Students should not expect to be supported simply as a matter of course. For example, Graduate School fellowships require that the student maintain full-time status and good standing in the program.

2. Students in good standing will be given priority over students on warning status in providing financial support. Each specialty area faculty, as well as the director of graduate studies, decides the standing of the student in making decisions. Among other such factors are how many years the student has been in the program, whether a student

has the qualifications for serving as a teaching assistant in a particular course, and how well the student has carried out previous assignments.

3. Unless service is needed by the department, the general principle is that support is not provided beyond the fifth year.
4. Students are typically admitted on two years of fellowship. The “Early Year” Fellowship is designed to free students up to complete their early graduate research projects, particularly the second year project. Although it is typically used during the first or second year at USC, it can be taken any time during Years 1-3 in the program.
5. The “Advanced Research” Fellowship is designed to free up students to fully engage in *dissertation-related activities*. For this reason, students are strongly encouraged to take the Advanced Research Fellowship during Year 4 of the program or beyond, but only when they (1) have completed the Qualifying Exam, and (2) are engaged in full-time research. Thus, if students are completing non-research externships or internships that exceed 10 hours per week, they are discouraged from using their Advanced Research Fellowship during that semester. Advanced Research Fellowships are rarely approved beyond Year 7 of the program and must be petitioned with Dornsife/Graduate School.

I. Course Registration for Qualifying Exam

Once students have sufficient units for graduation, they are encouraged to enroll in GRSC 800 while preparing for their quals. One unit constitutes full time enrollment. GRSC 800 may be taken for 3 semesters if necessary.

J. Guidance Committee

1. After completing the second year project, students and their advisors should discuss future research directions for the student. Together they should be thinking about the input the student will need from other faculty to guide them in these research directions. This should lead to the formation of the student’s guidance committee which will help the student in formulating their qualifying examination and dissertation proposal. Forming the guidance committee requires obtaining a form (see the Graduate School website: <http://graduateschool.usc.edu/>), obtaining signatures from all those who agree to be on the committee, and turning in the signed form to the Graduate Advisor. The Graduate Advisor then submits the signed form to the Graduate School for approval. The guidance committee should be approved about a year before the student takes the qualifying examination, but *no later than the last day of classes of the 6th semester*.

2. The committee must have at least four faculty members from within the department and one member from outside the department.
 - a. At least two members of the committee must be from the specialty area that accepted the student into the graduate program. This usually includes the chair of the student's guidance committee.
 - b. There must be at least one Psychology Department representative from an area other than the student's specialty area.
 - c. The fourth member can be filled by faculty members with the following affiliations: faculty from the student's area, faculty from another area in psychology, faculty members with a joint appointment in psychology (see Appendix III), faculty from other USC departments, or faculty from other universities. These members can also be persons with Research, Teaching, Practice, and Clinical (RTPC) faculty appointments, approved by the chair of the committee, who make sense for the student's study. If the fourth member is RTPC or from outside the Psychology Department, the student's advisor must give approval.
 - d. The fifth member of the committee is considered the "outside" member. This individual must be a tenure-track full-time member of the faculty of USC, hold the rank of Assistant Professor or above, and be from a Ph.D. granting department other than psychology. This member can have a joint appointment in Psychology so long as they are classified as "external" on the joint appointment list (see Appendix III).
 - e. At least three committee members must be tenure-track faculty with a primary appointment in the Psychology Department (see the core faculty list on the departmental website).
 - f. Research, Teaching, Practice, and Clinical (RTPC) faculty of exceptional standing may serve as chairs of guidance committees in the Psychology Department, upon the written request of the department chair and approval of the school dean. To serve as chair, the RTPC member must have a primary appointment in the Psychology Department and must have a documented record of exceptional expertise and superior achievement in a field relevant to the student's project.

3. The Qualifying Exam process looks somewhat different across areas. At minimum, however, the exam has a separate written and oral section, which are completed sequentially. *The written portion must be passed first and then the orals can be scheduled.* The written and oral exams should not be completed simultaneously. See K. below for the content of each portion of the exam.

4. Two forms must be submitted concerning qualifying exams.
 - a. Students must submit their Appointment of Committee (AoC) form to the Graduate Advisor by the last day of classes of the sixth semester. The Graduate Advisor will then obtain the Chair and Dornsife Dean's signatures for approval. This form establishes the guidance committee. The AoC form is available on the department's

website (Appendix III) or at the Graduate School website:

<http://graduateschool.usc.edu/>.

- b. After passing the written portion of the exam (or Part I), students have 60 days to complete the oral portion of the exam (or Part II).
 - c. For changes in the membership of a guidance committee, it is necessary to complete a Change of Committee (CoC) form and turn it in to the Graduate Advisor. This form is available at the Graduate School website or the Department's website (Appendix III).
5. If the student and guidance committee chair are not able to form a complete committee, or if a former committee member is no longer available to serve, the Chair (with the advice of the Graduate Committee) will appoint members of the faculty to serve on that committee.

K. Qualifying Examination

1. The student and faculty advisor should begin planning for the qualifying examination following the completion of the second year project. To ensure completion of the doctoral degree in five years (six years for clinical students), the entire qualifying exam must be taken no later than at the *last day of classes of the seventh semester*. (Some areas may have earlier deadlines; see specific area requirements.)
2. Prior to taking the qualifying exam, the student must have met all departmental requirements with regard to courses and screening and must have the endorsement of his/her guidance committee to take the exam (Some exceptions are possible when required courses are not regularly available).
3. The qualifying examination is designed in part to test the student's expertise and readiness to undertake independent research. It also is a learning opportunity for students to gain critical skills and produce scholarly products that contribute to students' records of accomplishment. The examination thus meets a variety of goals in students' training.
4. Specialty areas within the department have considerable latitude in structuring qualifying examinations. The material provided in the Appendix for each specialty area should be consulted to determine what specific protocols for the qualifying examination have been approved by the given area. Area heads should also be consulted.
5. The written portion (i.e., Part I) of the Qualifying Exam generally follows one of three models:
 - a. The student submits one or two papers of publishable quality that represent work conducted since the second year project (depending on area and guidance committee requirements).

- b. The student provides an analysis of literature that is pertinent to the research that is being planned for the dissertation. This may become or be the basis of the introduction to the dissertation.
 - c. The student is provided with questions formulated by his or her guidance committee, each being on a different subject. For each question, the student writes a well-referenced response over a period that might range up to five days.
6. We strongly recommend that students submit the written portion of the Qualifying Exam to committee members *by September 1st of the seventh semester.*
7. The written section of the exam is first submitted to the full Committee and evaluated on the Departmental Evaluation Form by each member. Committee members provide this feedback to students within 2 weeks of receiving the written exam. Only one failing vote is permitted in order for students to pass. The Committee Chair is responsible for summarizing these evaluations and sharing them with the student.
 - a. If students fail the written portion of their exam, they can resubmit it one time to their committee. A second failure removes students from the program.
 - b. When students pass the written section, they may move on to the oral portion of the exam. Students have 60 days to complete their oral exam meeting once they pass the written portion.
8. The oral exam portion (i.e., Part II) of the Qualifying Examination is focused on the dissertation proposal. After passing the written portion of the exam, students will submit a draft of their dissertation proposal to their committee and will meet individually with committee members in order to develop the final version of it.
 - a. The final version needs to be given to committee members 2 weeks prior to the scheduled orals. If students fail to do this, committee members can cancel the scheduled orals.
 - b. The oral exam is usually scheduled for 2 hours.
 - c. At the orals, students will present their proposed dissertation project. Committee members will evaluate the oral defense on the Departmental Evaluation Form. They will vote to pass or fail the orals, and no more than one dissenting vote enables a pass. The Committee Chair is responsible for summarizing these evaluations and presenting them to the students on the summary form.
 - d. Attendance of all guidance committee members is required at this meeting.
 - e. Students are *not* permitted to serve food to committee members during the oral portion of the Qualifying Exam.
9. A pass for the written or oral portion of the exam cannot be made contingent upon other factors, such as the completion of additional course work or supplemental literature review. However, it is possible for the student to pass the orals with changes yet to be made to the dissertation proposal.

10. If the vote of the guidance committee is a pass, it also should decide on whether to retain the current composition of the committee as discussed in L1.
11. In the event that the oral examination is failed, the guidance committee may recommend to the Graduate School that the student be permitted to take the orals again. Requests for exceptions to this time period must be approved by the department Chair. A student may not be permitted to take the oral portion of the qualifying examination more than twice.
12. Once a student passes the written section of Quals (i.e., Part I), the student and committee chair must confirm the passing date to the Graduate Advisor. The Graduate Advisor will then produce the PhD Qualifying Examination Form that the student must bring to the oral exam (i.e., Part II) for committee approval and signatures. This form must be returned to the Graduate Advisor immediately after the Oral Quals defense.
13. The retaking of a failed qualifying examination or any portion of a qualifying examination must take place *between one and six months from the date of the first examination*.

L. Admission to Candidacy

1. Admission to candidacy for a doctoral degree occurs only after a student has (a) passed departmental course and screening requirements, (b) completed at least 24 units at the University, and (c) passed both parts of the qualifying examination.
2. Admission to candidacy is by action of the Director of the Graduate School.
3. Notice of admission to candidacy is sent to the student by the Department of Psychology Chair.

M. Dissertation Committee

1. After the qualifying examination has been passed, the student must appoint a dissertation committee. At this point, the committee may be reduced to four members, with a AoC/CoC form that must be submitted to the graduate advisor by the *last day of classes of the eighth semester in residence*. The Graduate Advisor will then obtain the Chair and Dornsife Dean's signatures for approval. The minimum composition of the final committee is: two members from Psychology from the student's area, one from Psychology from outside the student's area, and one member from an outside department. For example, a Social student would need at least two committee members from our Social area, at least one committee member from one of our other areas (i.e., BCS, Clinical, Developmental, or Quantitative), and at least one committee member from outside the department. At least three members must be tenure-track faculty with a primary appointment in Psychology.

2. The committee member from outside the department must be a tenure-track full-time member of the faculty of USC, hold the rank of Assistant Professor or above, and be from a Ph.D. granting department other than psychology. This member can have a joint appointment in Psychology so long as they are classified as “external” on the joint appointment list (see Appendix III).
3. RTPC faculty of exceptional standing may also serve as chairs of dissertation committees in the Psychology Department, upon the written request of the department chair and approval of the school dean. To serve as chair, the RTPC member must have a primary appointment in the Psychology Department and must have a documented record of exceptional expertise and superior achievement in a field relevant to the student’s project.
4. The composition of this committee is reported on the AoC/CoC form and must be uploaded to the Graduate School’s Thesis Center by the student. It is the student’s responsibility to complete all required forms and to meet required deadlines.
5. Once the AoC/CoC form is uploaded, the student should make an appointment with the Graduate Advisor to run a degree check, update the STARS Report, and update the student’s target graduation date.

N. Dissertation Registration

1. A student must register for dissertation units (794) the semester after passing the qualifying examination. 794 is an “exceptional” course worth two units and gives students full-time enrollment status. Students must be registered for dissertation units every semester (excluding summer sessions) until degree requirements are completed.
2. Four units of registration in 794 (that is, 794a and 794b) comprise the minimum requirement to degree. Under most circumstances these two registrations cover a time period of two semesters. Students must petition the department for both registrations to occur in the same semester.
3. Not more than eight units of credit for 794 may be received.
4. Clinical students must register for 691 (1 non-credit unit per semester) rather than 794 while on internship.
5. Students must be registered for 691 or 794 during the semester when they actually complete their defense, unless they defend during the summer.

O. Dissertation and Defense of Dissertation

1. At the time students schedule their dissertation defense meeting, they must inform the Graduate Student Advisor. The student must go to the Graduate School Thesis Center site and set up their dissertation profile which will give committee members access to their online Approval to Submit. At least two weeks before the scheduled defense, the Graduate Student Advisor will post and distribute to all faculty and graduate students a notice of the meeting. When there is a Zoom online defense, a post will not be distributed unless requested by the student.
2. The candidate must submit a dissertation acceptable to her/his dissertation committee and to the Director of the Graduate School. The dissertation should be given to the committee at least two weeks prior to the final defense. The dissertation committee must approve the form of the dissertation as well as its content.
3. Generally the committee will require one of the following dissertation models:
 - a. The dissertation is prepared as a comprehensive treatise on the matter under investigation. It should include extended discussion of all background literature that seems pertinent to the research as well as the methods, results and discussion of the findings.
 - b. The dissertation is written in a form that would be suitable for a major publication. Pertinent background is cited and discussed as would be the case for a substantial journal article.
4. An oral defense of the dissertation is required of the candidate. It is conducted by the dissertation committee, and according to the Graduate School Handbook is open to the general university community, though only members of the dissertation committee have the authority to recommend acceptance. It is expected that the dissertation committee will meet privately to make this determination.
5. Students are *not* permitted to serve food to committee members during the oral dissertation defense.
6. Both the dissertation and the oral defense must have *unanimous approval* by the dissertation committee for satisfactory completion of the dissertation requirement. If the defense is satisfactory, the committee then signs the “Approval to Submit Defended and Final Copy of Dissertation” form. If additional work is required, the form must be signed only on full completion. Each committee member will have access to the electronic Approval to Submit set up by the student.
7. The Submission website provides a schedule of specific dates for completing the various requirements to qualify the student for the Ph.D. degree at Commencement in May or to receive the degree in August or December. For more information, go to the Graduate

School website: <http://graduateschool.usc.edu/> (click on Current Students, Thesis & Dissertation...).

8. The dissertation must be written in APA style. In other words, dissertations must be prepared according to the manuscript submission guidelines specified in the current version of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

APPENDIX I

Specialty Area Requirements

REQUIREMENTS OF BRAIN & COGNITIVE SCIENCES PROGRAM

The Brain and Cognitive Sciences area of the Psychology Department is composed of five interest subareas: cognitive science, cognitive neuroscience, behavioral neuroscience, clinical neuroscience and behavioral genetics. BCS covers such a broad range of research interests that students specialize in one or more collaborative areas depending on their interests. In addition to the Psychology Department requirements, all students in the Brain and Cognitive Sciences area are required to take Statistical Methods (Psychology 500 or 501) and either 502 or 503. Those who have a strong background in statistics (i.e., equivalent to 500/501 and 502/503) may seek permission from their advisor to take PSYC 621 (Seminar in Quantitative Psychology) instead. The Brain and Cognitive Sciences area also strongly recommends students take Functional Neuroanatomy or Neuropsychology (PSYC 547 or 545), and/or Cognitive Neuroscience (PSYC 540).

Beyond these requirements, there are no formal course requirements. Course loads are worked out individually for each student in consultation with his or her faculty advisor and committee members to match and enhance their areas of interest.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the most important aspect of training is research. Generally, a student is admitted with the sponsorship of an advisor, i.e., faculty member, whose research most closely matches the expressed interests of the student. This pairing is subject to mutual satisfaction, and may be altered by the student or the advisor. However, it is not possible for a student to advance without sponsorship by a faculty member in the Brain and Cognitive Sciences area.

Consistent with this emphasis on research, students will be evaluated regarding their research performance at the end of the first year. For this evaluation, students must produce a written report of their first year research activities. The collaborative research relation between student and advisor is designed to be flexible and facilitate the fulfillment of this requirement. This report is reviewed by the advisor and at least two other faculty members in the BCS area. A faculty member from another departmental area can be added as a reviewer as needed or desirable. This report is due July 15th and must be acceptable in order for the student to continue in the program. The area head will convey the outcome of this review to the department by August 15.

For evaluation of research progress in subsequent years, see the guidelines of the department concerning the second-year research requirement, preliminary examination, qualifying examination, and dissertation defense. A major focus is placed on tailoring success to the individual in their chosen field of interest so there may be considerable variability between students in the program. Therefore, students must communicate with their respective advisor and committee about the conduct and expectations of benchmarks for a successful graduate career. For example, this Blue Book describes several types of qualifying written exams. Early and frequent communication is encouraged.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE CLINICAL SCIENCE PROGRAM

Please refer to the Clinical Science Handbook.

<https://dornsife.usc.edu/psyc/clinical-documents-forms/>

REQUIREMENTS OF DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM

The Developmental Area requires that students:

- enroll in all required statistics and developmental courses
- are continuously enrolled in at least 8 units of graduate work for the first three years of study
- are actively involved in research
- choose a program of study in the first two years of graduate study
- enroll in the core developmental seminars Psyc 533 Cognitive Development and Psyc 534 Social Development

In addition to meeting departmental distribution requirements (8 units in Category A, and 16 units from Categories B and C – see “Course Requirements” in the Blue Book.

The required stat courses are:

- Psyc 500
- one additional course selected from 501, 502, 503 and 575 (although we recommend taking a total of three stat courses)
- In addition students should take two advanced graduate seminars in the Psychology Department.
- Other recommended courses are Psyc 504, Research Design, and/or Psyc 524, Research Design in Developmental Psychology.
- All classes should be selected in consultation with your advisor.

RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

There are first year, second year, qualifying exam and dissertation research requirements that are very similar to the requirements of the Psychology PhD program as a whole.

Students may select one of two options for the written portion of the qualifying exam:

1. Students can write two papers of publishable quality that represent work conducted since their second year project. In some cases, one paper is acceptable (e.g., a multi-experiment paper, or a paper based on longitudinal data collection). The student’s qualifying exam committee and advisor will determine in advance whether one or two papers is deemed acceptable for each student.
2. Students can write an analysis and review of the literature pertinent to the research they have planned for their dissertation. This option may provide the basis for the introduction and literature review section of their dissertation.

REQUIREMENTS OF QUANTITATIVE METHODS and COMPUTATIONAL
PSYCHOLOGY (QMCP) PROGRAM

1. Course Requirements:

Students in the Quantitative Methods and Computational Psychology (QMCP) area must take and pass a minimum of six (6) QMCP courses from the A list. Students who do not meet this requirement by the end of 5 years will be dismissed from the QMCP area. [Note: This assumes only one QMCP class per semester for 3 years. QMCP students should be taking at least one of these courses every semester until finishing their Qualifying Exam (see below). It is possible to substitute one quantitative course from another department with the approval of both the student's main advisor and the area head. If the student's faculty advisor also serves as area head, a different QMCP faculty member will be required.]

2. 2nd year project:

Same as the rest of the Department: A written document must be approved by the evaluation committee by the last day of classes of the student's 4th semester (usually Spring). If not completed by this date, the student will be placed on probation and must then have the project approved by the final faculty meeting of the 5th semester (usually Fall of the 3rd year.) Students who do not meet this requirement will be dismissed from the program.

3. Qualifying Exam (QE) Timing: The Qualifying Exam must be completed by the end of the 7th semester (usually Fall of the 4th year). If the QE is not completed, the student will be placed on probation and must complete by the end of the 8th semester (usually Spring of the 4th year.)

4. Qualifying Exam Format: The format of the QE is intended to be flexible, but the QE must be both written and oral. The format of the QE must be approved by both the guidance committee and the area head in advance of the deadlines above. [Once again, if the student's faculty advisor also serves as area head, a different QMCP faculty member will be required.] Suggestions for the written QE include any one of the following options: (1) Two quantitative papers authored by the student (multiple authors are acceptable if the student is first author) which are considered

suitable for submission for publication (or published), (2) a timed closed book/notes test (usually several hours), (3) Written responses to questions posed by the committee (usually several days). Other options may also be considered by the guidance committee. The oral exam will be reviewed by five faculty members, but must consist of at least two QMCP faculty members, and one Psychology faculty member outside of QMCP. Normally the oral exam will focus on a defense of the dissertation proposal, but may also include questions about any portion of the written exam.

REQUIREMENTS OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM

Course Requirements

The 36 substantive units required by the department (see C.2) must conform to the following requirements:

3 courses from AREA A; if available, one of these courses should be a research methods course, which is to be taken during the first or second year of study.

1 course from AREA B.

4 courses from AREA C, which must include 512 taken in the first or second year, and three 600-level content seminars in social psychology (i.e. 612, which is taught by a different professor with a different topic.) Students can count a 400-level course (with added readings/final assignment to make it suitable for graduate students) taught by one of the social faculty toward a 600-level requirement.

1 course in an area outside social psychology that is relevant to their research program and chosen with the consent of the advisor.

First Year Research Evaluation

Students are admitted with an advisor and should begin working on research their first semester. The goal of the first two semesters of research is to get a student socialized into the research process and set the stage for studies that will be part of their second-year project. Advisors will be asked to evaluate the amount and quality of research their first-year student has completed, at the area retreat at the end of the year. To do so, students and their advisors should create a working outline of the plan for the student's second year project and the steps they are taking in their first year to attain these goals. The student and the advisor will then evaluate the amount and quality of the work completed during the semester.

APPENDIX II

University Policy on Code of Ethics

For details on USC Code of Ethics policy, please visit the USC website:

<http://policies.usc.edu/>

APPENDIX III

Psychology Department Forms and Resources

Psychology Department Joint Appointment Faculty List
University Catalogue
Department Forms

<https://uscdornsife.usc.edu/secure/psyc/student-resources.cfm>

APPENDIX IV

Psychology Department Program Deadlines Summary

| 1 st Year | 2 nd Year | 3 rd Year |
|--|--|---|
| <p><u>First-Year Screening</u></p> <p>Deadline: Spring/Summer of 1st Year Screening: Specialty area will evaluate the following for each student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research performance • Completed a minimum of 16 units (4 courses, 3 must be substantive units) • Cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher • Each area may have additional requirements <p>By August 15th, the Area Head will notify students and the program whether students passed the first-year screening</p> | <p><u>Second Year Research Requirement</u></p> <p>Deadline: Last Day of Classes of 4th Semester</p> <p>Screening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Year Project in the form of a Research report or Master's Thesis: See bluebook for details • Completed at least 24 PSYC units (including both substantive/non-substantive coursework) <p>After completing second year project, discuss with faculty advisor formulating a guidance committee for Qualls.</p> | <p><u>Second Year Research Requirement II: Poster Fair</u></p> <p>Date: Typically Scheduled in September</p> <p>Third year students are required to present their second-year projects in the form of a poster and present it at the Psychology Ph.D. Program Poster Fair.</p> <p><u>Appointment of Committee Form for Qualls</u></p> <p>Deadline: Last Day of Classes of 6th semester</p> |
| 4 th Year | | 5 th Year |
| <p><u>Qualifying Exam</u></p> <p>Deadline: Last Day of Classes of 7th Semester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Bluebook for Qualls requirements • Areas may have additional requirements • After Written the portion of Qualls (i.e., Part I) is completed, students and the faculty must report the passing date to the Graduate Advisor. Then the student will receive the Graduate School Qualifying Examination Form from the Graduate Advisor, which will be signed by committee members during the Oral portion of Qualls (i.e., Part II). <p><u>Appointment of Committee Form for Dissertation</u></p> <p>Deadline: Last Day of Classes of 8th semester</p> | | <p><u>Dissertation</u></p> <p>Deadline: Review Dates on Graduate School's Thesis Center Website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must set up a profile on the Graduate School's Thesis Center portal • Make appointment with Graduate Advisor |
| Graduation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 Units min for Ph.D. • Required Department Coursework • Required Area Coursework • Completed All Milestones | |