Graduate Student Handbook

Department of Psychology
University of Southern California
Academic Year 2025-2026

Table of Contents

A. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Graduate students are admitted to one of five specialty areas within the Psychology Department—Brain and Cognitive Science (Morteza Dehghani), Clinical Science (Darby Saxbe), Developmental (Henny Moll), Quantitative Methods and Computational Psychology (Richard John), and Social (Stephen Read). These areas are led by a designated faculty person, i.e., an AREA HEAD. Area heads for the current academic year 2025-26 are in ( )'s above. Currently, the doctoral graduate program is administered by the DEPARTMENT CHAIR (Antoine Bechara), the DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES (Stan Huey), and the ACADEMIC PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR (Jennifer Vo). These individuals above are responsible for maintaining the program quality and carrying out the graduate admissions process. They monitor students' progress in the program, their funding, and they sign off on forms, approve petitions, provide required student evaluations, etc.

When students are admitted to the doctoral program they are assigned a faculty advisor who provides consultation on curriculum planning and most academic matters. Typically, students' academic advisors are also their research advisors. Incoming students should meet with this faculty advisor <u>before</u> the fall semester begins or as early as possible to plan their classes.

In some cases, students may have more than one faculty advisor according to the lab they have joined. We explicitly endorse having more than one faculty mentor if applicable to the student's interests, research plans, and training goals.

Also, if students' interests and/or relationships with their advisors change over time, students may select a new advisor and or join a different lab. Occasionally, students may select research advisors who are out of their area or even outside of the psychology department. In this case, we require students to also maintain a faculty advisor who is in their major area. Clinical students must consult with the Clinical Area Head to ensure that their new, intended research advisor is acceptable.

Students are generally expected to complete requirements as outlined in this Handbook and as specified in the Graduate School's requirements. This handbook outlines the policies, procedures, and standards of the Department of Psychology and the Graduate School of the University of Southern California for students in the doctoral program. The mission of the USC Graduate School is to provide a distinguished educational experience at the graduate level for an outstanding and diverse student body, to support and celebrate graduate student achievements, and to lead in establishing and communicating policies, standards, and processes related to graduate education.

Doctoral 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 current **USC Catalogue 2025-2026**. **Please note 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 *students' responsibility*.

The handbook also includes policies and practices noted in the university's catalogue, collective bargaining agreement, and other sources. It does not fully address the terms of the collective bargaining agreement, which is available for your reference on the Graduate School's website.

Please sign, date, and email the last page of this handbook to the Academic Program Administrator, at jennivo@usc.edu to indicate that you have read and understand the contents of this handbook.

B. Residence and Time Limits

1. The Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology at USC is a full-time program. It is a rigorous course of study that requires original research, professional maturity, sustained intellectual focus, and academic discipline. Students are expected to devote full-time study to this degree and not undertake employment or other time-consuming commitments during the academic year, from the end of August through mid-May.

   Summers should be devoted to research. Internships, Graduate Assistantships, or USC positions can be considered if approved by the faculty mentor and OIS (for international students).

2. To complete the PhD degree, the equivalent of three years of graduate status at USC or elsewhere is minimally required 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.

3. At least 24 graduate units (exclusive of PSYC 794, dissertation) must be taken at USC.

4. All PhD candidates in Psychology are expected to be full-time students. The university registrar considers that 6 semester units constitute a minimum load for a full-time graduate student, 12 units are a normal load, and 16 units are a maximum load.

   a. All first-year students are required to take <u>at least eight semester units (equivalent to two courses)</u> during each of their first three semesters to satisfy the Graduate School's screening procedure required for ALL students. This screening procedure is described below in Sections D and E. In addition to the required coursework, it is expected that students' time will be spent on research, a teaching assistantship, or a combination of these two.

   If at any time individual circumstances lead students to consider carrying a reduced academic load (e.g., less than eight units for the first three semesters), they are responsible for clearing this deviation from the regular procedure IN ADVANCE, with their advisor or guidance committee and the DGS.

5. The Psychology Department expects the Ph.D. 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. Any time taken away from the program due to an approved leave of absence does not count against the time expected to complete the program. The Graduate School requires that students complete the Ph.D. within eight years of the date they start graduate work at USC.

   a. Extensions beyond five years for non-clinical and six years for clinical require submitting a petition to the DGS. Extensions beyond eight years are granted only for

very compelling reasons. (This is an important reason why students are asked to gain prior approval for any reduced academic loads with their guidance committees and the DGS, and/or to request department approval of a leave of absence).

b. In the very rare case that permission is granted to extend the degree completion 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 *Quantitative Methods and Computational Psychology*	16 Units in Psychology courses as determined by consultation with faculty advisor

Specialty Area Course Requirements (see Appendix I)
Doctoral Dissertation Units: PSYC 794a and PSYC794b

1. The equivalent of 60 semester units (including PSYC 794) is the minimum university requirement for the PhD degree.

2. All students must take a minimum of 36 substantive units, at least 24 of the 36 must be in the Department of Psychology. Research, thesis or dissertation courses (PSYC 590, 594, 790, 794) do not qualify as substantive units. Of the 36 substantive units:

   A minimum of 8 units (two courses) must be taken in *Quantitative Methods and Computational Psychology (QMCP) (see course list below).*

   The remaining unit requirements can be fulfilled by taking other courses in psychology (see example list below). Please be advised course offerings may change each semester and the list below is tentative. Check the online schedule of classes to be sure.

   Before signing up for ANY classes, students need to meet with their primary faculty advisor to develop a plan of study. During their meeting, they should map out which courses are the most helpful and informative for their training.

3. **Quantitative Methods and Computational Psychology** Courses:

   500 An Overview of Quantitative Methods in Psychology (F)

501 Classic and Modern Statistical Methods I (F)
502 Classic and Modern Statistical Methods II (S)
503 Regression and the General Linear Model (S)
504 Research Design (S)
606 Reinforcement Learning (F)
520 Fundamentals of Psychological Measurement (F)
524 Research Design in Developmental Psychology (I)
571 Foundations of Statistical and Data Analytic Methods in Psychology (F)
573 Bayesian Data Analysis (F)
575 Multilevel Modeling (F)
577 Analysis of Covariance Structures (S)
616 Research Techniques for Non-Experimental Social Science (I)
621 Seminar in Quantitative Psychology (S)
622 Decision Analysis and Behavioral Decision Theory (I)
625 Applied Machine Learning (F)

NO SUBSTITUTIONS are allowed for the QMCP courses listed above. While there are potentially useful elective courses provided in other departments, these outside courses are **electives and do not fulfill the quantitative requirements.**

4. Department courses that focus on the **Biological Bases of Behavio**r (physiological, comparative, neuropsychology, sensation and perception, psycho-pharmacology, behavior genetics), and cognitive-affective (thinking, motivation, problem-solving) include:

506 Learning and Cognition (I)518 Cognitive Modeling (S)
540 Cognitive Neuroscience (F)
544 Psychophysiology (I)
546 Developmental Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience (S)
545 Neuropsychology (I)
547 Functional Neuroanatomy (F)
551 Decision Neuroscience (I)
555 Introduction to Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (F)
576 Psycholinguistics (F)
586 Advanced Psycholinguistics (S)
676 Seminar in Psycholinguistics (I)

5. Department Courses that focus on the **Social Bases of Behavior** (social psychology, group processes, organizational and systems theory) and individual differences (personality theory, human development, abnormal psychology) include:

512   Seminar in Social Psychology (I)
514   Psychopathology (I)
515* Clinical Assessment (F)
519*   Professional Issues for Clinical Scientists (F)
533   Cognitive Development in Children (S)
534   Social and Emotional Development in Children (F)
595* Practicum in Clinical Psychology (F, S, SU)
612   Seminar in Advanced Social Psychology (F, S)
619* Psychological Intervention (S)
626   Text as Data (F)

660   Seminar in Clinical Psychology (F, S)
680   Seminar in Psychopathology (I)
695* Advanced Practicum in Clinical Psychology (F, S, SU)
*Courses marked with an asterisk may only be taken by students in the Clinical program.

Course offerings by semester may vary due to faculty sabbaticals
Typical Course Availability: F = Fall, S = Spring, SU = Summer, I = Irregular

6. In addition to the department-wide core requirements, each Area has other requirements and are provided in the appendices below.

7. Students from Areas other than Clinical may take no more than two clinical courses (i.e., specifically PSYC 514 and PSYC 660) unless approved by the clinical faculty.

8. Students who have taken appropriate graduate-level courses outside the department may petition the DGS for a waiver for one or more of the core-course requirements.

9. The maximum number of PSYC 599 units that can be applied toward the degree is eight.

10. Students **cannot** enroll in the MAPP or ABA courses listed in the schedule of classes, unless they are provided an exception via a department petition and prior approval by the MAPP or ABA program.

11. Students can enroll in courses outside Psychology for course credit *as long it is directly related to their research*, but will need to request approval from the Academic Program Administrator for tuition payment. Electives such as athletic courses or non-research courses will not be approved by Dornsife or the Psychology PhD Program.

12. Students from any area (except QMCP) who wish to focus on quantitative methodology may apply for a **Minor in Quantitative Methods and Computational Psychology** by successfully completing any five courses in the QMCP course list above. Students may substitute one of the five courses with another (3 or 4 unit) quantitative course taken outside Psychology for the minor with approval from the QMCP Area Head. Once all five courses are taken, students can use QMCP Minor Form (in the [Current Student Resource Webpage](#)) and submit it to the QMCP Area head and Academic Program Administrator.

13. Students in their 3rd year and up may contact the Academic Program Administrator if they have finished their 36 substantive units and need additional units of PSYC 790 (Directed Research) to reach their 60 unit requirement.

14. Immigration regulations require F-1 and J-1 student's physical attendance for classes during each fall and spring semester of their program. If the summer term is the student's first or last semester at USC, then physical attendance for classes is also required. No more than one online class (up to 3 units) per semester can be counted towards the full course of study for an F-1 or J-1 student. If you only need to be registered in one course to complete your degree program during your final term, it must be in-person.

15. If a student is simultaneously enrolled elsewhere, they may not transfer credits to USC without advance permission from the dean of the school that hosts the USC degree

program. Failure to obtain permission will invalidate coursework taken during periods of unauthorized concurrent enrollment.

16. Before taking the qualifying examination, the student must have met all of the university's and program's requirements for the PhD degree, except the dissertation. The student must have a GPA of at least 3.0 on all USC coursework available for graduate credit and the approval of their qualifying exam committee to proceed to the exam.

17. The Degree Progress Department in the Office of Academic Records and Registrar determines whether coursework taken elsewhere is available for transfer credit. The DGS and Area Heads of the student's degree program determine whether such credit is applicable toward a specific graduate degree, subject to approval by the dean of the degree-conferring unit. The PhD program will only consider transfer credit from graduate courses taken during prior enrollment in a PhD program.

D. First-Year Screening Procedure (required of all doctoral students)

1. Each area will administer the first-year screening before the student completes 24 units. Students must pass this procedure to continue in the PhD program. If students fail the screening procedure, they will be dismissed from the PhD program without a written warning. Students who fail the screening examination are entitled to appeal pursuant to the Academic Dismissal Appeal.

2. The Department of Psychology carries out the screening in the following way:

   a. The course evaluation part is based on students' performance in the classes they have taken in the first two semesters at USC. Students must have taken a minimum of 16 units (four courses) with at least three substantive courses in the psychology program.

   b. Each Area evaluates their students' research performance at the end of the first year. The research requirements are determined by each area (see each Area section below). The Academic Program Administrator notifies Area Heads if their students have not met the 16 unit requirement, have a grade of B- or lower in any course, and/or they are not meeting the minimum GPA requirements. The Area Heads notify their individual students and DGS no later than August 15 of the summer following completion of the first academic year about whether their students have met the first-year research requirement and their research performance is approved.

   c. The outcome of the first-year screening process falls into one of three categories:

      (1) clear pass (approved to continue in the program)
      (2) approved to continue for a terminal M.A. degree (but not for the Ph.D.)
      (3) dismissal from the graduate program

      To obtain a clear pass in the first-year screening, students must have made good progress in research (as judged by the faculty of their Area) and have earned a B

(3.00) GPA with no more than one C in the courses taken during the first year. Students' cumulative GPA for the year is based on all courses taken.

If students do not meet the standards for a clear pass, they will have <u>failed</u> the first-year screening. The faculty of the student's specialty Area then makes a recommendation to the department about whether the student should be approved to continue for a terminal M.A. degree or be dismissed from the program. This recommendation must be communicated in writing to the student, the Department Chair, and the DGS no later than August 15th of the summer following completion of the first academic year. All such cases will ultimately be decided by a vote of the Psychology faculty no later than the first faculty meeting in September.

In very rare cases, the department faculty may decide that extenuating circumstances obviate what would otherwise be a fail. All cases will ultimately be decided by a vote of the Psychology faculty to approve the exception. With a faculty vote, a student may be permitted to continue beyond the first year with a GPA below 3.0. It should be noted, however, that the Graduate School requires that the minimum grade-point average for all graduate work attempted at the university must be 3.0 before a degree can be granted. Thus, a GPA that falls below a 3.0 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 a petition from the student's research advisor. The DGS will meet with the research advisor, the student, and the Department Chair to determine whether the petition should be forwarded to the Graduate School for consideration. Students who transfer credits must achieve this minimum GPA both on all graduate residence units and on all combined residence units and units taken elsewhere for graduate credit.

E. Second Year Research Requirement

The Psychology Department has an additional internal screening procedure in year two that involves the judgment of students' research competence. During the first two years of graduate study at USC, each student works with faculty 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 the 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.S. level and approved to proceed toward the Ph.D. Generally this rating indicates the research report has met the standard of "acceptable for publication" with reference to:
     (a) conception and implementation of project
     (b) quality of the report
   (2) Satisfactory for M.S. level, but not approved to continue for Ph.D.
   (3) Unsatisfactory for M.S. level

c. The screening is administered by the student's committee which is typically composed of three faculty within the student's area; i.e., the area into which the student was accepted for graduate training. The committee reviews the paper and provides the evaluation.

d. To pass the second year screening and 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 the screening and a final committee-approved copy of the research report must be provided to the Chair of the student's screening committee, and to the Academic Program Administrator prior to the last day of classes of the student's fourth semester.

e. Course credit (PSYC 590) may be obtained for this research at the student's and advisor's option. However, students who wish to receive an MS degree after completing their second year project, must register for PSYC 594a & b (rather than PSYC 590).

f. A research project carried out 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 Academic Program Administrator 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 the department poster session typically held after the first faculty meeting in the fall semester.

j. ***Second year project → Master's Degree***
There is *no* master's degree requirement in our department. While all students are required to complete a second-year project, they are not required to obtain a MS degree. Students can however, submit their second year project for a MS degree.

To submit a second year project for a MS degree students should do the following:

At the end of the first year, contact the Academic Program Administrator to request the addition of a Master of Science degree (POST 1988). Students are required to take a year's worth of master's-specific credits in the form of PSYC 594a and 594b. It is common to take 594a in the spring of the second year, and 594b in the summer to maximize time to work on the thesis, but students can also take 594a in the fall and 594b over the spring, or petition to take them both in the summer. Also note that one semester before the desired degree date, students should have their master's committee members complete the "Appointment of Committee" form, which can be found on the Current Student Resource webpage.

Before submitting the final thesis to the committee, MS degree students will need to create a Graduate School Thesis Center profile, where they submit their

Appointment of Committee form and initiate automated emails to their committee members to have them sign off on the finalized version of their thesis. Check the Thesis Center for the deadlines that correspond to spring and summer degrees. The thesis advisor can be reached at thesisdc@usc.edu.

F. Assisting in Teaching and Research

1. In addition to formal course work, the Department of Psychology considers experience as research and teaching assistants to be invaluable parts of graduate student training. Both are strongly encouraged for all students.

2. As a teaching assistant (TA), students are assigned to help faculty by teaching a semester long course. This can involve teaching lab sections of a large lecture course; preparing, administering, and grading examinations; and holding office hours with students.

    a. All students who serve as first-time TAs are required to enroll in PSYC 593: Practicum in Teaching Psychology. The 2-unit class is offered each fall and usually meets on Fridays for about two hours. Students learn how to run sections and various teaching tips.

    b. Students are also required to attend the graduate school's TA orientation training offered prior to the beginning of the fall semester.

    c. The Graduate School will not allow any student to TA without these mandated trainings.

    d. Teaching assistantships are **yearly appointments**. They cannot be changed across the year by semester except for emergencies, such as health or parental leave.

3. As a research assistant, students 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, students at any level of training must maintain a 3.0 GPA in course work and carry no more than one incomplete (IN) on their record. Also, in progressing through the program, students must meet several deadlines (e.g., 24-unit first year screening, second year project, qualifying examination, and completion of the dissertation). In addition, students must behave in a manner that does not violate the ethical and professional standards of the American Psychological Association.

2. Students are considered to be on *warning status* if:

    a. their GPA falls below 3.0 at any time;
    b. they have more than one IN on their record at any time;
    c. they did not pass the 24-unit screening process;

d. they have one grade of C or worse in any course;
e. their second year project report was not submitted and judged acceptable by the last day of classes of the fourth semester in residence;
f. they did not successfully complete the Ph.D. qualifying examination by the last day of classes of the seventh semester in residence;
g. they did not complete the Ph.D. dissertation within the time specified by the Graduate School (i.e., eight years).

3. *Warning Status* formally begins with written notification to the student by the DGS or the Area Head. Written notification includes a statement of the reason, conditions, and duration of the warning status. It will also include specific benchmarks describing how the student can succeed in the program within a reasonable timeframe.

4. A student may return from *warning status* to good standing with each remedy corresponding to the list in G.2, above. The student must:

    a. 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* associated with the 24-unit screening as specified by their 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 first faculty meeting in the following semester;
    f. take and pass the qualifying examination by the last day of classes of the eighth semester in residence, or pass the re-examination within 6 months of first failed examination if offered by the committee;
    g. complete the dissertation within one semester.

5. Relation of the *warning status* to funding. Being on *warning status* may put students' funding at risk. Also, those with a *warning status* are not eligible for department research grants or travel awards.

6. Termination of graduate student status. Students will be dropped from the program for any of the following reasons:
    a. failure to return from *warning status* to good standing as described above in G.4;
    b. earning two grades of C or worse in courses in their course work;
    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 re-admission. Students who have been dropped from the program may petition for re-admission if their petition is endorsed by a faculty member within their Area who is willing to take responsibility for chairing the students' guidance committee. The petition will be reviewed by and voted upon by the full-time faculty in the students' Area. Unanimous approval, with no abstentions is needed for re-admission.

8. If a student wants to appeal dismissal, the USC Student Handbook includes information on how to appeal a dismissal. The Graduate School Dismissal Appeal provides the final consideration of a student's dismissal from a graduate program when the dean of the

relevant school has upheld the dismissal. This does not include students who have not met the conditions for continuing registration or those who have violated the Student Code of Conduct. The Graduate School will schedule the appeal once the student provides written verification of dismissal and states in writing that they want to proceed with the appeal within 30 days of the dismissal. For more information, please visit the Graduate School [website](#).

H. Program Funding

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

2. When providing financial support, students in good standing will be given priority over students on **warning status.** Individual Area faculty and the DGS determine the students' standing in the program when making decisions and also consider factors such as the number of years the student has been in the program, whether the student has the qualifications to serve 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 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 Fellowship is designed to free up students to fully engage in *dissertation-related activities and funding must be used by their fifth or sixth year of study, depending on the funding source*. Students who are funded through the Graduate School must complete their fellowship within five years. Dornsife/Psychology Department funded students must complete their fellowship within six years. For this reason, students are strongly encouraged to take the Advanced Fellowship during Year 4 or 5 of the program, 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 Fellowship during that year.

6. We also discourage the splitting of externships, internships, fellowships, and RAships by semester across an academic year. TAships are year-long assignments and cannot be split by semester, unless for emergencies (e.g., health or parental leave).

I. Course Registration for the Qualifying Examination

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

J. Guidance Committee for the PhD Qualifying exam

1. After completing the second year project, students and their advisors should discuss future research directions. Together they should be thinking about the input students will need from other faculty (both inside and outside the department) to guide them in these research directions. These meetings/conversations should lead to the formation of the students' guidance committee to help in formulating their qualifying examination and dissertation proposal.

2. The guidance committee must have five members with at least three faculty members from within the psychology department and one member from outside the department.

    a. Member one and two of the committee must be from the students' Area and usually includes the chair of the guidance committee.

    b. The third member must be one Psychology Department faculty member from an Area outside the student's area.

    c. The fourth member must have an appointment in psychology, which can be a faculty member who is from the student's area, from another area in psychology or has a joint appointment in psychology (see current department list), or from other universities.

    d. The fifth member of the committee is considered the "outside member." This individual must be a tenure-track full-time faculty member at 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 provided as they are classified as "external" on the department's joint appointment list (see updated list available from the department).

    e. If a faculty member is chosen from the joint appointment list, the member cannot switch roles from an outside member to an inside member (and vice versa) from the quals committee to the dissertation committee.

4. The Qualifying Examination process is different across areas. **At a minimum, however, the exam has two separate parts: the written and oral sections which MUST BE completed sequentially.** The Graduate School requirement states that the *written portion must be passed first and then the oral portion can be scheduled*. There must be a gap between the written and oral parts. They cannot be completed back-to-back on the same day. See K. below for the content of each portion of the examination.

5. Two forms must be submitted concerning the qualifying examination

    a. Once the guidance committee is formed, students must submit their Appointment of Committee (AoC) form to the Academic Program Administrator by the last day of

classes of the sixth semester to stay on track. This form establishes the guidance committee. The AoC form is available on the department's website (Appendix III).

b. After passing the written portion of the qualifying examination, students have 60 days to complete the oral portion of the exam. Students and their committee chair must email the Academic Program Administrator the date the student passes the written portion and provide the date the oral portion of the qualifying exam is scheduled. The Academic Program Administrator then generates the PhD Qualifying Examination Form that the student must bring to the final oral exam for committee approval and signatures. This form must be returned to the Academic Program Administrator within a week after the Oral portion of the qualifying examination.

c. For changes in the guidance committee membership, students must complete a Change of Committee (CoC) form and submit it to the Academic Program Administrator. This form is available on the Department's website (Appendix III).

6. 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 Department Chair (with the advice of the Graduate Committee), will appoint faculty members to serve on the 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 completed no later than the *last day of classes of the seventh semester*.

2. Prior to taking the qualifying examination, students must have met all department requirements with regard to courses and screening and must have the endorsement of their guidance committee.

3. The examinations must be scheduled when it is possible for all committee members, including the outside member, to participate. All qualifying exam committee members may participate remotely.

3. The qualifying examination is designed in part to test students' expertise and readiness to undertake independent research. It also is an opportunity to gain critical skills and produce scholarly products that contribute to students' records of accomplishment. The examination 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 Appendices for each Area should be consulted to determine the specific protocols for the qualifying examination that are approved by the given Area. Area heads should also be consulted. Clinical area students should defer to their clinical program handbook.

5. The written portion of the Qualifying Examination generally follows one of three models:

a. Students submit one or two papers of publishable quality that represent work conducted since the second year project (depending on the students' Area and guidance committee requirements).

b. Students provide an analysis of the literature that is pertinent to the research that is being planned for the dissertation. This analysis or review may become or be the basis of the introduction to the dissertation.

c. Students are provided with questions on different topics formulated by their guidance committee. For each question, students write well-referenced responses to the questions over a period that might range up to five days.

6. We strongly recommend that students submit the written portion of the Qualifying Examination to committee members *by September 1st of the seventh semester*.

7. The written section of the examination is first submitted to the full Committee and each committee member evaluates the written material using the Departmental Evaluation Form. Committee members provide their feedback to students within two weeks of receiving the written portion of the exam. Only one failing vote is permitted 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. After passing the written examination, students must provide their passing date and the scheduled date for the orals portion of the qualifying exam to the Academic Program Administrator.

c. After students pass the written portion of the examination they have 60 days to hold and complete their oral examination.

8. The oral exam portion of the Qualifying Examination is focused on the dissertation proposal. After passing the written portion of the exam, students should submit a draft of their dissertation proposal to their committee. It is suggested that students individually meet with ALL committee members (both inside and outside) to develop their final version.

a. The final version needs to be given to committee members two weeks prior to the scheduled orals. If students fail to meet this timeline, committee members can cancel the scheduled orals.

b. The oral exam is usually scheduled for two hours.

c. During the oral examination, students present their proposed dissertation project. Committee members evaluate the oral defense using the Departmental Evaluation Form. The members vote to pass or fail the oral examination, and no more than one dissenting vote enables a pass. The Committee Chair is responsible for summarizing the evaluations and presenting them to 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 Examination.

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 a 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, students and their advisors should decide about retaining the current composition of the committee.

11. There are three possible results of a qualifying exam:

a. Pass, and proceed to candidacy based on a favorable vote by a majority of committee members.

b. Fail, with the option to retake either specific sections of the exam or the whole exam, at the discretion of a majority of the committee. The student should not be required to repeat parts of the qualifying examination passed on the first administration. The retaking of a failed qualifying examination or any portion of a qualifying exam must occur between one and six months from the date of the first examination. If not otherwise enrolled, the student must be enrolled in GRSC 800abz *Studies for the Qualifying Examination* in the term in which any portion of the exam is repeated.

c. Fail, resulting in dismissal from the program. If a majority of the committee concludes that the written portion of the exam is so weak that the oral portion cannot compensate for it, the student does not proceed to the oral portion, and the exam is failed. The committee may provide the option of a retake, but is not required to do so. If a majority of the committee determines that a retake is not warranted, the student will be dismissed from the program.

A student may not take the comprehensive or qualifying examination more than twice and must be appropriately enrolled at USC during the semester in which any such examination is taken or retaken. A student who fails the qualifying examination a second time will be dismissed from the degree program at the end of the semester in which the second examination was taken. No exceptions are permitted.

12. A student may not change committee members after failing the qualifying examination the first time. The same faculty must reexamine the student on the same subject matter. If a faculty member is unable to serve on the committee, the dean of the degree program must be notified in writing in advance of the rescheduled exam to approve the change. The faculty replacement must be approved by the dean of the degree program, and the student must file a change of committee form well in advance of the exam.

L. Admission to Candidacy

1. Admission to candidacy for a doctoral degree occurs only after students have
   (a) passed the departmental course and screening requirements,
   (b) completed at least 24 units at USC
   (c) passed both parts of the qualifying examination.
2. Admission to candidacy is by action of the Dean of the Graduate School.

3. The DGS sends the Notice of Admission to Candidacy to the student.

4. After advancing to candidacy, students must contact their academic program administrator to initiate an online degree check that will be transmitted to the Degree Progress Department. Degree Progress counselors will prepare a Degree Audit Report (STARS Report) listing any remaining requirements. Programs must apply all appropriate courses in the Student Information System for the degree to be conferred.

M. Dissertation Committee

1. After students pass the qualifying examination, they must appoint a dissertation committee. At this point, the committee may be reduced to four members, and established with a new AoC form that must be submitted to the Academic Program Administrator by the *last day of classes of the eighth semester in residence* to stay on track. This form can be found on the Current Student Resource page. The minimum composition of the final committee is two members from Psychology from inside the student's area, one from Psychology but outside the student's area, and one member from outside the Psychology Department. The policy is similar to Quals committee selection, but students may choose to remove the fourth member.

   For example, a Social Area student would need at least two committee members from the Social area, at least one committee member from one of the other areas (i.e., BCS, Clinical, Developmental, or Quantitative), and at least one committee member from outside the Psychology Department. At least three members should be tenure-track faculty with their primary appointment in Psychology.

2. The committee member from outside the Psychology Department must be a tenure-track full-time member of the USC faculty, 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 if they are classified as "external" on the joint appointment list (see Appendix III).

3. Emeriti faculty appointed to a qualifying exam committee when they were full-time faculty at USC may continue to serve on the dissertation committee as "internal" committee members until the student has graduated. Similarly, a former USC faculty member who was appointed to the qualifying exam committee while they were a full-time faculty member may continue to serve on the dissertation committee as an internal committee member until the student graduates.

4. The composition of this committee is reported on the AoC form and must be uploaded to the Graduate School's Thesis Center (See Appendix III) by the student. Students are responsible for completing and submitting all required forms and to meet required deadlines.

5. Once the AoC/CoC form is uploaded, students should make an appointment with the Academic Program Administrator to run a degree check, update their STARS Report, and update their target graduation date.

N. Dissertation Registration

1. Students must register for dissertation units (PSYC 794) the semester after passing both parts of the qualifying examination. PSYC 794 is an "exceptional" course worth two units that provides students full-time enrollment status. Students must be registered for dissertation units every semester (excluding summer sessions) until the degree requirements are completed.

2. Four units of registration in PSYC 794 (PSYC 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. Students may not receive more than eight units of credit for PSYC794.

4. While on internship, Clinical students must register for PSYC 691 (1 non-credit unit per semester) rather than PSYC 794. This provides clinical students insurance from USC during their clinical internship.

5. Students must be registered for PSYC 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. Students must inform the Academic Program Administrator when they schedule their dissertation defense meeting. Then students must set up a dissertation profile with the Graduate School Thesis Center website and follow requirements provided. This setup will also allow students to provide committee members access to their online Approval to Submit via the Graduate School Thesis portal that must be sent the morning of the defense.

2. Candidates must submit a dissertation acceptable to their dissertation committee and to the Graduate School. The dissertation should be submitted to committee members at least two weeks prior to the final defense. The dissertation committee must approve the form of the dissertation as well as the 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 an 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 all candidates. The oral defense is conducted by the dissertation committee, and consistent with the Graduate School Handbook it is open to the general university community. However, 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.   After the dissertation defense has been completed, and the committee determines that no further edits or revisions are required of the dissertation manuscript, each member of the committee electronically certifies on the *Approval to Submit Defended and Final Copy of Doctoral Dissertation* that: (1) the defense was appropriately rigorous; (2) the student's dissertation makes an original and substantial contribution to its field of study; and (3) the defense process was fair and in keeping with USC's academic and ethical standards. This includes adherence to departmental formatting requirements. No changes can be made to the manuscript's content after the *Approval to Submit f*orm is complete. The *Approval to Submit* form is electronically available through [Thesis Center](), the Graduate School's online thesis and dissertation processing system. The dissertation committee must unanimously agree for the student to pass the defense.

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 degree in August or December. For more information, visit the Graduate School website: [http://graduateschool.usc.edu/.](http://graduateschool.usc.edu/)

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*. Dissertations are also required to be written in English. Exceptions require the approval of the Vice Provost for Academic Programs or their designee before beginning the work. The exceptions will be granted only when there is scholarly justification.

9. In fields where collaborative research has become the norm, the candidate is the sole author of the dissertation. When a paper included in a three-paper dissertation has co-authors, the dissertation candidate must specify their contributions to the research and delineate the contributions of their colleagues.

10. For the dissertation defense, some committee members may participate remotely. The committee chair and the student must be present in person, unless the relevant dean and the Vice Provost for Academic Programs provide express written permission for remote participation.

P. Leave of Absence, Sick Days, and Bereavement

1. Students in good standing and making satisfactory progress toward a degree who must interrupt studies for compelling reasons may petition for a leave for a stated period, usually one semester. A leave must be requested before the drop-add deadline and approved by the dean of the degree program, the committee chair, and the department chair. The request should include a plan for academic progress upon return. During the leave period, a student is not entitled to assistance from the faculty or use of university facilities.

   If granted, the leave is recorded on the student's transcript, and the leave period is not counted in the time allowed to complete degree requirements. A leave of absence may be allowed for one semester at a time, up to a maximum of four semesters. Students who fail to apply for a leave of absence or for whom a leave has been denied (or has expired) are subject to policies governing continuous enrollment and readmission.

   International students should consult with the Office of International Services before considering a leave of absence.

2. An academic **leave of absence** may be taken under exceptional circumstances and requires submitting a department petition the semester <u>before</u> the leave is to be taken. These are the steps:

   a. The petition should be addressed to the student's AREA HEAD and should describe the basis for the request, and when (if possible) the student expects to return.

   b. The petition should be endorsed and signed by the students' faculty advisor or chair of their guidance committee.

   c. Approval or rejection of requests is determined by the faculty of the students' area. If approved, the Area Head signs the request.

   d. Finally, the request is submitted to the DGS. Approval by the DGS indicates that the leave is formally granted by the department and the student can move forward with applying for it administratively through the academic program administrator.

   Students who do not return to enrolled status at the end of an approved period of leave are no longer considered to be pursuing an advanced degree. Further, students who fail to apply for a leave of absence or those who have been denied a leave but 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 the graduate program, students must officially apply for re-admission as specified in the Graduate School regulations.

3. PhD students are eligible for a one-semester paid **parental leave** if they:
   - Are pregnant or are the primary caregiver of their newborn child or adopted child under six years of age
   - Have completed at least one semester in the PhD program and are making good progress
   - Were admitted with a Multi-Year Funding Offer (MYFO) letter that includes a four or five-year "package" consisting of support through any combination of teaching assistantship, research assistantship, and fellowship.

- F-1 and J-1 international students must additionally qualify for a [medical reduced course load](#) (RCL) if they plan to remain in the U.S. while taking parental leave

Parental leave may be taken during the semester in which the child is born or adopted, or in the semester immediately following. A student on an approved parental leave will receive tuition, fees, and a stipend. The Graduate School provides the base stipend. Schools and programs provide the tuition, fees, and a top-off the base stipend to the level specified in the student's Multi-Year Funding Offer letter.

Students should enroll in GRSC 804 to ensure continued access to health insurance and the monthly stipend. While on parental leave, students are not eligible for federal financial aid. Students with loans should consult with the Office of Financial Aid before beginning parental leave. F-1 and J-1 international students should consult with the Office of International Services to discuss parental leave and ensure there are no unforeseen issues related to their visa status.

Students interested in taking parental leave should consult with the staff graduate advisor in their department or program. The program will submit a petition to the Graduate School and will be asked to provide a copy of the initial funding letter, a statement as the primary caregiver, and one of the following:

- Verification of pregnancy signed by a US doctor (available at USC Student Health Center), or
- Birth certificate for the infant child, or
- Statement of adoption from an adoption agency

4. **Health Leaves** are administered by [USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) (CSI) in consultation with the student's program and the Graduate School, pursuant to the university's Student Health Leave of Absence Policy. PhD students interested in taking a health leave should meet with the academic program administrator and then should meet with a CSI health leave coordinator to develop an individualized health and academic plan. These plans are developed through an interactive process involving the Health Leave Coordinator, the student, the academic unit, and the Graduate School.

   F-1 and J-1 international students are eligible to request a health leave. They must meet with an advisor in the Office of International Services (OIS) before finalizing plans for the health leave. Students can either return to their home country or, if a doctor recommends, remain in the U.S. for medical treatment. The student should request the health leave through a CSI health leave coordinator, who works with the student, their healthcare provider, and the Office of International Services (OIS) to determine the necessary steps to approve the leave request.

   A paid health leave, including tuition, fees, and at least the minimum stipend, is available for one semester. A second semester covering tuition and fees may be available if necessary. The Vice Provost for Academic Programs must review and approve additional health leaves beyond two semesters.

5. For **Sick Days and Bereavement Leave**, PhD students may use up to five days of sick leave per Academic Year due to illness or to care for a family member. Students may also have up to five days of bereavement leave per Academic Year for the loss of a family member.

Q. Continuous Enrollment, Pass/No Pass Coursework, Incompletes, Audited Courses

1. Continuous Enrollment: Students are considered to be pursuing advanced degrees only when formally enrolled. PhD students must be enrolled at USC for fall and spring semesters each year until all degree requirements have been satisfactorily completed within the time limit.

   Enrollment in graduate-level course work is necessary to meet the continuous enrollment requirement. Graduate students who fail to register are no longer considered to be enrolled in a graduate degree program. After an unauthorized absence, formal readmission is required. Students who have been granted an official leave of absence do not need to apply for readmission following the approved leave. However, students who fail to return at the conclusion of any form of leave without obtaining an approved extension violate the continuous enrollment policy.

   A doctoral candidate who has passed the qualifying examination must enroll each fall and spring semester in 794 Doctoral Dissertation until the dissertation has been approved. Students are expected to complete and defend their dissertation in less than five semesters.

   Some courses with no academic credit, including 794z, require payment of tuition.

2. Pass/No Pass Coursework: Graduate students may elect to enroll in courses on a pass/no pass basis with department or program approval. However, coursework taken on a pass/no pass basis cannot be applied toward a graduate degree. Students should consult their academic advisors before enrolling in any course on a pass/no pass basis.

3. Incompletes: An incomplete (IN) is assigned when work is not completed because of a documented illness or another emergency occurring after the 12th week of the semester (or 12th week equivalent for any course scheduled for less than 15 weeks).

   If a student receives an incomplete, the instructor will fill out the *Assignment of an Incomplete* (IN) and *Requirements for Completion* form, which will specify the work remaining to be done, the procedures for its completion, the grade in the course to date and the weight to be assigned to the work remaining to be done when computing the final grade.

   One calendar year is allowed to complete an IN. Note that if you have more than one IN at anytime, you will be on warning status. If the IN is not completed within the designated time, the course is considered "lapsed," the grade is changed to an "IX" and will be calculated into the grade point average as 0 points. Courses offered on a Credit/No Credit basis or taken on a Pass/No Pass basis for which a mark of Incomplete is assigned will be lapsed with a mark of NC or NP and will not be calculated into the grade point average.

Completing the IN within a one-year period should be the student's highest priority. A student may petition the Committee on Academic Policies and Procedures (CAPP) for an extension of time for the completion of an IN. Extensions beyond the specified time limit are rarely approved if the student has enrolled in subsequent semesters.

In all cases, a petition for an extension of time to complete an IN must have departmental approval and include a statement from the instructor explaining what is needed to complete the course and why the instructor believes the student should be given additional time for completion.

4. Audited Courses: Dornsife does not cover tuition for audited courses. However, students who wish to audit a course at USC must register for the course on Web Registration and select the Audit grade option. Audited courses will not receive credit and will not appear on the USC transcript or grade report. As noted in the USC Student Handbook, attending a course without being officially registered in it is prohibited.

R. Readmission

A PhD student who leaves the university without obtaining a formal leave of absence, or otherwise violates the continuous enrollment policy, is not automatically readmitted. A student wishing to apply for readmission to a graduate degree program must first obtain the recommendation of the department chair or DGS and submit an Application for Readmission to the dean of the degree program.

If the student's cumulative GPA is below 3.0 or if readmission is sought after more than two years of an unapproved absence, the Application for Readmission must be sent to the Graduate School for approval.

The readmission approval process must be completed by the first day of classes for the term in which the resumption of graduate studies is sought. Approvals to be readmitted are based on the academic merits of the student's request and the likelihood of academic success and completion of the degree. If readmitted, the student will be subject to all of the current University Catalogue requirements for the degree in effect at the time of readmission. Individual exceptions to the Catalogue year require the approval of the dean of the degree program. Students seeking readmission after an absence of more than 10 years may be required to reapply to the university.

A student may not be readmitted into a terminated program of study. The student must either be subject to retroactive enrollment or admission to the new program of study with the corresponding catalog requirements.

S. Accessibility Services

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is the unit at USC responsible for ensuring equal access for students with disabilities in compliance with state and federal law. The OSAS team is committed to serving the USC community through: ensuring equal access, removing disability-related obstacles, supporting civil rights, and increasing education and awareness on behalf of students with disabilities. Here is the link: https://osas.usc.edu/

T. Grievance Policies and Procedures

To resolve distressing situations and conflicts, the following policies and procedures are as follows:

1. The first recommended step is for students to consult with their faculty advisor. However, if speaking to the faculty advisor is inappropriate for a particular problem or if additional input is needed, the conflict may be brought to the attention of Confidential Support listed in #3, the Academic Program Administrator, the student's Area Head, the DGS, or the Department Chair.

2. It is expected that conflicts will first be addressed within the Department before resolution outside of the Department is sought. However, if issues are not resolved within the Department, students can consult the Office of the Ombuds. If necessary, the Graduate Division will refer students to the appropriate Dean as the final resource for resolution of grievances. Here is the link: https://ombuds.usc.edu/

3. Confidential Support and Reporting options available include:

    a. **Report to USC**

    ▪ The Office of Civil Rights Compliance (OCRC)
    A report may be made at any time (including during non-business hours) by using the telephone number, email address, or office mailing address:
    King Hall
    1025 W. 34th Street, Suite #101
    (213) 740-5086
    orcrc@usc.edu
    https://ocrc.usc.edu/

    ▪ Counseling and Mental Health
    Provides counseling and support for all students.
    (213) 740-9355 (WELL)
    https://sites.usc.edu/counselingandmentalhealth/

    ▪ Office of the Ombuds
    Available to faculty, staff, and students experiencing University-related concerns, conflicts, or challenging situations.
    (213) 821-9556 (University Park Campus)
    upcombuds@usc.edu

    ▪ Confidential Advocacy, Resources, and Education Support Center (CARE-SC) offers Survivor Support, Sexual Assault Prevention and more
    https://sites.usc.edu/clientservices/

    b. **Access Emergency Services**

    ▪ Department of Public Safety
    UPC: 213-470-4321 (24 hours emergency assistance or to report a crime)

HSC: (323) 442- 1000 (24 hours emergency assistance or to report a crime)
UPC: (213) 740-6000 (24 hour, non-emergency number)
HSC: (323) 442-1200 (24 hour, non-emergency number)

- ▪ Los Angeles Police Department
  911 (for emergencies)

U. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

The Department is committed to fostering a positive climate for diversity for graduate students in Psychology. Students with concerns about equity, diversity, or inclusion are encouraged to seek out support or guidance from their mentors, advisors, the DEI CLIMATE Officer, and anyone in Department leadership. Students also can decide to make a complaint of discrimination formally with the campus Discrimination Prevention team of the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. https://eeotix.usc.edu

V. Academic Integrity

Academic integrity depends on our collective commitment as a university community. Reporting academic integrity issues helps reinforce academic standards and preserves the value of USC degrees. If faculty suspect academic misconduct on any work that a student submits (in final or draft form), they are required to submit a report to the Office of Academic Integrity (OAI).

Information about the university's academic integrity policies is available in the USC Student Handbook and from the Office of Academic Integrity.

Because PhD students have already earned a bachelor's degree and are enrolled in advanced academic training, they are held to a higher standard of integrity in all academic work. This standard reflects the heightened ethical expectations of advanced scholarship, the student's potential role as a mentor and instructor to others, and the impact of their conduct on the broader research and academic community.

OAI is responsible for investigating and adjudicating academic integrity violations. If OAI determines, by a preponderance of the evidence, that a PhD student has committed an academic integrity violation, there is a presumption that dismissal from the academic program without conferral of the degree is the appropriate outcome. This presumption applies regardless of whether the violation occurred in coursework, research, examinations, or instructional settings.

In such cases, doctoral students are not entitled to a Review Panel under the general disciplinary process. Instead, the findings and determination of responsibility will be referred directly to the student's academic program. The program will issue a decision letter that includes outcomes and any additional information relevant to the student's academic standing. No prior written warning is required to support dismissal under this policy. The program's decision will be provided to OAI for record-keeping, and a transcript notation indicating program dismissal for academic integrity reasons will be entered.

PhD students may not appeal the findings or sanctions through the general academic integrity appeal process. Instead, their sole opportunity to challenge the finding or rebut the presumption

of dismissal is through the Academic Dismissal Appeal process described in the Student Handbook.

PhD students are expected to familiarize themselves with the full list of academic integrity standards and examples of violations outlined in the USC Student Handbook, including but not limited to plagiarism, cheating, unauthorized collaboration, falsification, misrepresentation, and misuse of instructional materials. Ignorance of policy or lack of intent is not a valid defense.

In cases where a student has registered for a course on a Pass/No Pass (P/NP) basis and an academic integrity violation has occurred, a penalty letter grade will be assigned when a grading option exists. A Pass or No Pass determination is only issued in these circumstances when a letter grade cannot be issued. A student may not withdraw from a course in which they committed or were accused of committing an academic integrity violation.

W. Details on Funding and Financial Support

PhD students at USC benefit from fellowships, assistantships, and scholarships administered by the Graduate School and various academic units.

Graduate Assistant (GA): GA is an overarching term used to describe Teaching Assistants (TA), Research Assistants (RA), and Graduate Assistant Lecturers (AL). GA appointments include tuition, fees, and a stipend at or exceeding the university's minimum rate. A 50% GA appointment requires an average of 20 hours per week, which is considered "full-time" for a graduate student, as the remaining 20 hours per week should be dedicated to coursework and scholarship leading to the degree. A 33% GA appointment requires an average of 13 hours per week, while a 25% appointment requires an average of 10 hours per week.

GA appointments are confirmed through an official offer letter generated via the university's TARA system or the Dornsife Student Database. The offer letter should be sent to the student at the beginning of the academic year or the start of a semester. These letters must use the standard Graduate School-approved template and detail the length of the appointment, the time commitment, the department's expectations, and benefits. Ideally, the offer letter should include the total stipend the student will receive, including top-offs. The student should sign the letter, which will be shared with the appropriate financial staff and archived by the department or program.

The university requires TAs, RAs, and ALs to be enrolled in a minimum of 6 units every semester or in equivalent full-time courses such as GRSC 800abz or Dissertation 794.

Fellowships: Fellowships provide financial support to PhD students pursuing their degrees. A fellowship is equivalent to a 50% appointment as a Graduate Assistant and includes tuition, fees, and a stipend at or exceeding the university's minimum rate.

PhD students with a fellowship are expected to commit 20 hours per week to their research. PhD students receiving fellowships may not undertake employment or other time-consuming commitments during the academic year from mid-August through mid-May. The Vice Provost for Academic Programs will review exceptions to this policy through the Graduate School's Petition system. Students on fellowships may not receive funding as GAs simultaneously.

External Fellowships: PhD students are encouraged to seek external fellowships and support that encourage intellectual independence and enhance a student's record. The USC Graduate School provides a variety of resources to support PhD students seeking funding, including information sessions, boot camps, and proposal review workshops. Students who receive one of several designated national awards may be eligible for stipend top-offs from the Graduate School.

PhD students applying for external fellowships that are "institutionally limited," meaning that there is a limit placed on the number of students who can apply, or whose applications require the approval of a university official, should contact the Graduate School well in advance of any deadlines.

Tuition Benefits:

- A 50% TA, RA, or AL appointment and a fellowship include tuition remission up to 12 units per semester and six units of tuition remission for the summer following the fellowship.

- A 33% TA, RA, or AL appointment includes tuition remission up to 10 units per semester of the appointment and five units of tuition remission for the summer following the assignment.

- A 25% TA, RA, or AL appointment includes tuition remission up to 8 units per semester of the appointment and four units of tuition remission for the summer following the assignment.

TAs, RAs, and ALs who wish to use tuition units for coursework outside their home program must obtain written approval from their faculty advisor, DGS, and the dean of the school. If students do not have prior authorization, they may be responsible for covering the cost of these units. The tuition allowance is non-transferable from semester to semester and will be applied to the student's account in the amount appropriate for the courses they take.

Students should contact their academic program administrator if tuition is not appropriately credited to their account.

Tuition Refund Insurance: Students should opt out of Tuition Refund Insurance when their tuition is being covered as part of an assistantship or fellowship. If a student has already accepted Tuition Refund Insurance but would like to decline it, they can do so here.

Stipend Distribution: The first stipend of the academic year will generally be available in August. To receive the stipend, students must be registered for classes well in advance of the start of the fall semester. Students are encouraged to work closely with the staff in their programs to ensure their stipend is processed appropriately.

Students switching from Graduate Assistant appointments to a fellowship or vice versa should be aware that the stipend schedules and distributions are different. However, they should still receive the university's mandatory stipend for the academic year.

Stipends are processed through Payroll. Students are highly encouraged to sign up for direct deposit through Workday. Instructions on how to sign up for direct deposit can be found here.

Students who do not sign up for direct deposit will have their stipends mailed to the current address listed in myUSC. International students must also have an up-to-date Glacier account to receive their fellowship stipend.

Stipends are not processed on the same day every month. Students on fellowship should expect the stipend early in the month, while students receiving stipends for GA appointments will receive the stipend towards the end of the month.

Stipends are not considered late until after the 26th of the month.

Summer Support: During the summer semester (mid-May through mid-August), students receiving support as Graduate Assistants (RA, TA, and ALs) with a 50% appointment and PhD students with fellowships may work additional hours beyond the 20-hour maximum, up to an average of 40 hours per week in other on-campus or off-campus roles.

Students who have received offers of full-time employment off-campus during the summer semester may not simultaneously hold positions as Graduate Assistants or PhD Fellows.

Students who wish to decline summer support from USC in favor of full-time off-campus employment or internships will be asked to confirm their decision in writing. This information will be archived in the student's Advise USC file. International students should review the Office of International Services website for information about Curricular Practical Training.

Students who serve as TAs, RAs, and ALs during the summer receive a stipend and tuition remission proportional to the appointment. The health center fee will also be provided, and the student will have access from the first day of the appointment until the end of the summer. (The spring coverage period for the USC student health insurance includes January through the end of the summer as well.)

Students who are invited to campus for any other sponsored academic purpose, such as a professional development institute, receive access to the student health center from the first day of the academic event until the end of the summer.

Mandatory Fees, Health, and Dental Insurance: Graduate Assistant appointments and fellowships include tuition, a stipend at the university's minimum rate or higher, health and dental insurance, access to the student health center, the Student Programming Fee, Norman H. Topping Student Aid Fund Fee, and the Transportation Fee.

Students who will not be in Los Angeles for the fall and/or spring semester should contact the health insurance office to see if they need to register for satellite health insurance. Students can visit the Student Health website for more information about student health insurance.

Parking and Transit Benefits: PhD students may participate in USC's Student U-Pass program. USC offers PhD students a limited number of permits for 2 or 3 days a week (partial week permits). These passes are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Permits are subject to availability at either UPC (150 campus permits total) - Shrine, Figueroa, and Grand, or HSC (50 campus permits total) - Valley and Lot 71.

Other Types of Support: Schools and programs may offer scholarships and awards in addition to the GA appointment or fellowship. Scholarships are distinct from fellowships, as they do not include tuition or fees, and the dollar amount does not need to meet the university's minimum stipend requirement. Scholarships are often merit-based and do not require students to be engaged in research or teaching-related activities. Schools and programs may also provide stipend top-offs to PhDs to supplement the university's minimum stipend or a stipend received from an external funder.

General Awards are credited to students' accounts after all other awards (such as tuition) have been processed. If this creates a credit balance, the excess funds will be automatically sent to the student's bank account, provided they have set up eRefund information in their student account and have no recent checks pending, no ACH payments in process, and no active payment plans. If students have not set up eRefund information, the credit will remain in their account to cover future charges while they remain enrolled. If students do not enroll in the following fall or spring term, once the settlement deadline passes, the university will contact them to verify their mailing address and send a physical check for any remaining balance.

PhD students may occasionally be hired as hourly Graduate Student Workers. The duties of Graduate Assistants (TA, RA, and AL) should be distinct from activities performed by hourly graduate student workers.

Collective Bargaining Agreement: Graduate students at USC are represented by the Graduate Student Workers Organizing Committee-UAW Local 872. All graduate students enrolled at USC who are employed as Teaching Assistants, Assistant Lecturers, Research Assistants, or internally-funded Fellows in STEM programs are considered part of the union. The Collective Bargaining Agreement is available on the Graduate School website.

X. GA Appointments and Responsibilities

Eligibility: To be eligible to serve as a Teaching Assistant (TA), Research Assistant (RA), or Graduate Assistant Lecturer (AL), students must:

- have been admitted to a graduate degree program with regular graduate standing
- be enrolled full-time
- be in good academic standing with a GPA of no lower than 3.0
- be verified by their home program to be making satisfactory academic progress toward the degree
- have met the university's standards for proficiency in the English language

The university requires TAs, RAs, and ALs to be enrolled in a minimum of 6 units every semester or in full-time equivalent courses such as GRSC 800abz or Dissertation 794.

Types of GA Appointments

Research Assistant
RAs are responsible for the accuracy, validity, and integrity of the research on which they are contributing. The quality of the research reflects on the student, the faculty supervisor, and the university. Deliberate falsification of research results may result in dismissal from the university. RAs must maintain the confidentiality of the faculty mentor's professional activities and research

before presentation or publication, in accordance with existing practices and policies in the area of research activity. In the publication and presentation of research produced as an RA, the student must acknowledge the contributions of the faculty supervisor and other members of the research team. RAs should assume responsibility for making proper use of the intellectual, instructional, and physical environment in which they are conducting research. The nature of some research projects may require that the RA be available during holiday periods or semester breaks. Students and their faculty supervisors should discuss expectations and time off before the appointment is accepted.

Teaching Assistant
The responsibilities of TAs are carried out under the established supervision of the departmental faculty. The duties of TAs may include the following: reading course texts and materials, assisting during lectures, leading discussion sections or lab meetings, holding office hours each week, responding to student concerns, grading course assignments and exams, leading and monitoring lab exercises, participating in regular meetings with supervising faculty and other TAs, designing and leading review sessions, serving as a liaison between the instructor and students, upholding the university's policy on academic integrity, and assisting with the management of the course details. The Center for Excellence in Teaching is a good resource for support and information.

As with faculty at USC, TAs are evaluated by their students. TAs should review evaluations at the end of each semester, after grades have been submitted. TAs are encouraged to keep a record of student feedback for their teaching portfolio.

Graduate Assistant Lecturer
ALs teach in the Freshman Writing Program, language programs in the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences, the American Language Institute (ALI), and other programs approved by the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. Assistant lecturers may serve as instructors of record.

Expected Effort

A graduate student's first responsibility is to their doctoral research and studies. For this reason, GA awards cannot exceed 20 hours per week for a 50% appointment or 10 hours per week for a 25% appointment, averaged over a semester. Students receiving a 50% GA appointment may not undertake employment or other time-consuming commitments during the academic year from mid-August through mid-May. Students receiving a 25% GA appointment during the academic year may be eligible for part-time, off-campus employment.

F-1 and J-1 International students with a 25% GA appointment may be eligible for part-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT), if they meet the CPT eligibility requirements, and if academic department signs off on the CPT request. The Vice Provost for Academic Programs reviews exceptions to this policy through the Graduate School's Petition system.
Appointment Periods

Semester	Approximate Start Date	Approximate End Date
Fall	August 16	December 31
Spring	January 1	May 15

| Summer | May 16 | August 15 |

Financial Support

All TA, RA, and AL appointments include tuition units, health insurance, access to the student health center, and a stipend. Each year, the Provost sets the base stipend for TAs, RAs, and ALs. Schools, programs, and PIs may offer appointments with higher amounts.

Tuition Remission

The tuition allowance is non-transferable from semester to semester and will be applied to the student's account in the amount appropriate for the courses s/he takes. Students should contact the program of appointment if the tuition is not credited to their account.

- A 50% TA, RA, or AL appointment includes tuition remission up to 12 units per semester of the appointment and six units of tuition remission for the summer following the assignment.
- A 33% TA, RA, or AL appointment includes tuition remission up to 10 units per semester of the appointment and five units of tuition remission for the summer following the assignment.
- A 25% TA, RA, or AL appointment includes tuition remission up to 8 units per semester of the appointment and four units of tuition remission for the summer following the assignment.

Tuition Refund Insurance

Students should opt out of Tuition Refund Insurance when their tuition is being covered as part of an assistantship or fellowship. If a student has already accepted Tuition Refund Insurance but would like to decline in, they can do so here. Students should opt out of Tuition Refund Insurance before late fees are assessed.

GA-related Warning and Dismissal

PhD students serving as a GA may be disciplined, suspended or discharged for absenteeism; lateness; failure to adhere to stated course or research deadlines; failure to aid in the preparation of course or research materials; failure to hold sections, labs, or office hours; failure to grade; failure to perform assigned lab duties; willful abandonment of teaching or research assignments; failure to comply with applicable policies. Students and their faculty supervisors should discuss expectations and time off before the appointment is accepted. Discipline will only be for just cause and each case will be taken very seriously, recognizing that the Collective Bargaining Unit also may need to be involved.

When possible, a conference meeting will be held with the student and their supervisor before a suspension or discharge. The student may request to have Union representation present at the conference meeting. The University will notify the student and the Union in writing of the issuance of discipline or any investigative leave.

Y. Tax Information

Taxable Income and Withholding

General tax information for PhD students is available on the [Student Financial Services website](). USC staff cannot provide tax advice. We strongly advise students to contact the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or consult with a tax professional for tax-related questions.

International Student Considerations

International students may wish to consult the [Office of International Services]() (OIS) website, which offers general information about tax exemptions, tax-related forms, and access to Sprintax, a tax preparation software. OIS cannot advise on tax-related issues. Students should consult with a qualified tax professional for individual assistance.

Graduate Students Supported by Fellowships

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) provides information regarding the tax treatment of fellowship awards. The IRS also provides information regarding the 1098-T form. Some education-related items that are included in your fellowship may not be taxable, for example, tuition remission. Other items, such as living expenses including room and board, transportation, and entertainment, are generally considered taxable.

While receiving a fellowship, domestic students will not receive a W-2 form. However, according to the IRS, you must report all taxable amounts, whether or not you received a Form W-2. If you have taxable income from your fellowship, you may need to make estimated tax payments. For more information, see Pub. 505, Tax Withholding and Estimated Tax, and the IRS help on estimated taxes.

International students (non-resident aliens for tax purposes) on fellowship receive their stipends through University Payroll Services. The stipend may be treated as taxable income by the IRS. Therefore, the university may be obligated to withhold income taxes. The amount of this tax withholding depends on the individual's circumstances, including their total stipend and the status of the tax treaty between their home country and the United States. Tuition remission provided to an international student on fellowship is not taxable.

Graduate Students Supported by Graduate Assistantships

The stipends provided via the University Payroll Services to domestic and international students who are serving as TA's, RA's, and AL's are treated as taxable income by the Internal Revenue Service. Therefore, the university may be obligated to report the income and withhold income taxes. The amount of this tax withholding depends on the individual circumstances of the student, including the total stipend, the instructions provided by the student on Form W-4, and, if an international student, the status of the tax treaty between their home country and the United States, as well as Form 8233. Tuition remission provided to a TA, RA, or AL is not reportable or taxable.

Students Hired as Graduate Student Workers (Hourly)

The payment that domestic and international students receive as hourly graduate student workers is treated as taxable income by the Internal Revenue Service. The amount of this tax withholding depends upon the individual circumstances of the student, including the total

amount paid per pay period, the instructions provided by the student on Form W-4, and, if an international student, the status of the tax treaty of their tax residence country and the completion of IRS Form 8233.

Z. Health Insurance and Health Center Access

The Engemann Student Health Center website provides information about the USC health insurance, on-campus medical services, student counseling services, and wellness. Students can also make appointments through the website. The Engemann Student Health Center is used primarily by students based at UPC.

The Eric Cohen Student Health Center website provides information about the USC health insurance, on-campus medical services, student counseling services, and wellness. Students can also make appointments through the website. The Eric Cohen Student Health Center is used primarily by students based at HSC.

AA. Academic Calendar

Holidays

PhD students with graduate assistantship (GA) appointments will observe the academic holiday schedule. If a student serving as a GA is unable to observe a holiday due to the obligations of their appointment, they will be provided with an alternative day off instead of the missed holiday during the same semester, with the advance agreement of their designated faculty supervisor and, as needed, the Director of Graduate Studies.

AB. Resources, Support, and Problem Resolution

Child Care Fund

A childcare subsidy of up to $1,800 is available per semester for each child under the age of six. The subsidy is considered taxable income and is subject to reporting on the appropriate forms. The student is solely responsible and liable for any tax liability resulting from the subsidy provided to the student or their dependent.

If a student has a loan, particularly Direct Loans, the Child Care grants could reduce the student's loan eligibility. Students should contact the Financial Aid Office to confirm.

International students should note the following:

- To remain eligible for this grant, students must maintain valid F-1 or J-1 status, and their dependents must maintain F-2 or J-2 status.
- This grant cannot be used as proof of funding for bringing dependents (spouse and/or children) to the U.S. under F-2 or J-2 status. Information regarding proof of funding for dependents is available on the Office of International Services website.
- J-1 students who receive this grant must request a new DS-2019 with updated funding information by submitting a Financial Update Request through the Trojan International Portal. Once processed, a new DS-2019 will be issued.

- Students in F-1 status on post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) or STEM OPT Extension, as well as J-1 students on post-completion Academic Training, are not eligible to apply for or receive this grant.

Child Care Fund Eligibility Criteria

The student must be a graduate student worker in the union bargaining unit in the semester in which the provider expense was incurred. Applicants must furnish supporting documentation as reasonably requested by USC. Eligible childcare providers include:

- A licensed childcare center
- A licensed family childcare provider
- A licensed after-school program
- A daytime summer camp program
- An in-home provider with a Social Security or Tax I.D. number. An in-home provider cannot be a spouse, relative, child under age 19, or anyone who lives in the same household as the student. Nannies and nanny shares are covered if the caregiver has a valid Social Security number or Tax ID Number.

Funds are not available for overnight camp, team registration fees, extracurricular activities, or club sports. The program's primary intent must be to provide childcare while the parent is working. Summer programs can be considered a childcare program if they meet the requirements above.

Applications are processed in the order received. Applications will not be accepted or processed when funds for the academic year have been exhausted. More information is available on the [Graduate School Website](#).

Short Term Hardship Grant

Short-term hardship grants are available to students with dependents. Grants are subject to a cap of $2,500 per graduate student worker per semester. Grants may not be used for expenses that are covered by another fund or account. The grant is taxable income and is therefore subject to taxation and reporting on the appropriate forms. The student is solely responsible and liable for any tax liability resulting from the grant.

Short Term Hardship Eligibility

The student must be a graduate student worker in the bargaining unit in the semester in which the provider expense was incurred. The student must have a dependent, and they must furnish supporting documentation as reasonably requested by USC.

Hardships may include, but are not limited to, events resulting from a sudden or unexpected illness, imminent loss of housing, loss of property due to natural disaster, or medical, dental, and vision expenditures not covered by any other source.

If the dependent is covered by a health insurance plan, unanticipated emergency or short-term out-of-pocket expenses are not covered by the insurance plan. If the dependent is not covered

by a health insurance plan, unanticipated emergency or short-term out-of-pocket medical expenses incurred by the Graduate Student Worker.

Applications are processed in the order received. Applications will not be accepted or processed when funds for the academic year have been exhausted. More information is available on the Graduate School Website.

Resources for International Students

The Office of International Services (OIS) supports F-1 and J-1 international students, helping them maintain immigration status, navigate complex immigration regulations, and succeed academically and personally. Key services include immigration advising, travel advising, and guidance on employment rules, such as on-campus work, CPT, and OPT.

With expertise in F-1 & J-1 immigration regulations, OIS advisors collaborate with government agencies and university departments to ensure students comply with their visa requirements while at USC.

For more information, please visit the OIS website at ois.usc.edu.

OIS advisors are available for one-on-one meetings daily via Zoom - no appointment is necessary:

- Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays: 1 PM-3 PM
- Tuesdays & Thursdays: 10 AM-12 PM
- J-1 advisors are available Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Thursdays

Lactation Support

PhD students have access to spaces for expressing and storing breast milk. Rooms on the UPC and HSC campus are listed here.

American Language Institute

Many international students are from countries where English is not spoken as a native language. The American Language Institute (ALI) provides classes and other resources to assist international undergraduate and graduate students in improving their English and adapting to an American university program. Before they can be cleared to begin teaching at USC, all international Teaching Assistants are required to take part in a training program run by ALI.

Center for Excellence in Teaching

The Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET) is the university's think tank for innovative teaching. As a faculty-led initiative, CET draws upon the talents of experienced faculty to promote a commitment to excellence in teaching, learning, and scholarship. CET provides training and resources to improve teaching at USC, including supporting faculty and Teaching Assistants as they devise new courses and develop enriching out-of-class activities. CET offers

seminars and lectures throughout the semester on a variety of topics and provides a training session at the beginning of each semester for Teaching Assistants.

Accessibility Training for Teaching Assistants at USC

Organized and developed by a collaboration between the Undergraduate Student Government (USG), Graduate Student Government (GSG), and USC Libraries as a resource for accessibility training for teaching assistants.

Graduate Student Government

The mission of GSG is to enhance the graduate and professional student experience by serving as the face of the student body. GSG is responsible for managing student resources efficiently, providing a voice for the student community, building a community that fosters interdisciplinary exchanges, and informing students about their rights, resources, and opportunities. Elected officers, senators who represent all schools and departments, and special interest committees tackle issues specific to graduate and professional students and provide venues for interaction beyond the academic realm. An Executive Board of 29 officers is selected every spring by the GSG senators and outgoing executive board members. The Executive Board oversees the daily operations of GSG and works closely with the Senate to promote graduate and professional student interests within the USC administration and academic departments.

More information is available from the [Graduate Student Government](#) website.

Other Support

Campus Support and Intervention (CSI)
CSI connects with members of the USC community when they need support in achieving their academic, professional, and personal goals.
(213) 740-0411
uscsupport@usc.edu

USC Kortschak Center for Learning and Creativity
KCLC offers outreach, programming, and individual coaching services to USC students and departments to promote a campus-wide understanding of learning differences and their potential to facilitate creativity and academic excellence.
(213) 740-7884
kortschakcenter@usc.edu

AC. Post-Graduation
Accessing Your Dissertation

The dissertation manuscript will be available for search and download from the [USC Digital Library](#) shortly after completing all of the steps in the Thesis Center, or after any requested restriction expires.

Official Transcripts and Diploma

The Registrar's Office oversees the distribution of university diplomas and transcripts, in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Most diplomas are mailed to the permanent address on record six to eight weeks after a degree is conferred. More information is available on their website.

APPENDIX I

Specialty Area Requirements

REQUIREMENTS OF THE BRAIN & COGNITIVE SCIENCES (BCS) PROGRAM

Course Requirements

2 stats courses chosen from: Psych 571, 573 or 575.

1 computational course chosen from: Psych 551, 606, 625, 626.

1 advanced methods course chosen from: Psych 547, 555, 626, 676.

1 core cognitive course: Psych 540

1 Psychology course outside of BCS

1 course from outside of Psychology

Exceptions for alternative courses may be granted with approval from the Area Head and advisor. A course may only be used to fulfill the requirements of one category.

Research Evaluations

Students begin research in their first semester with an assigned advisor, focusing on integrating into the research process and preparing for their second-year projects. At the end of the first year, advisors evaluate each student's research progress and collaboratively create a working outline for the second-year project. Regular evaluations of research quantity and quality are conducted throughout the student's progress. Students will receive annual evaluations at the end of each academic year based on their self-assessments, CVs, and a review by all BCS faculty.

Brown-Bag

Students are required to give one brown-bag presentation per year. In the first two years, students can either present their own work or give a journal-club style presentation of a recent paper relevant to their research. Students in year 3 and beyond are required to present their own work and results. All brown-bag student presentations are 30 minutes long, unless the student requests a different length (e.g., for practice job talks).

REQUIREMENTS OF THE CLINICAL SCIENCE PROGRAM

Please refer to the Clinical Science Handbook.

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

REQUIREMENTS OF DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM

The Developmental Area requires that students:

- enroll in at least two and ideally three statistics courses
- are continuously enrolled in at least eight 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
- enroll in the core developmental seminars PSYC 534 Social Development and PSYC 546 Developmental Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience

Statistics courses should be selected in consultation with the advisor and the area head. Students should take a minimum of two statistics courses in the Department of Psychology, selecting from PSYC 500, PSYC 501, PSYC 502, PSYC 503, PSYC 571 and PSYC 575. It is the expectation for most students to take PSYC 571 (Foundations of Statistical and Data Analytic Methods in Psychology) in the first semester of their first year. Students may substitute one statistical methodology course from outside the department with approval of their advisor and the developmental area head. However, this course must focus exclusively on statistical methods. Developmental scientists require cutting-edge knowledge of statistical methods, and we strongly encourage students to consider taking three or more statistics courses (in consultation with your advisor). Additional recommended courses to consider are PSYC 504 and PSYC 524, which are research design courses that feature a great deal of statistical method content.

RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

There are first year, second year, qualifying examination 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 must take and pass a minimum of six (6) QMCP courses. 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 QMCP 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 warning status 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 Examination (QE) Timing:

The Qualifying Exam must be completed by the last day of classes at the end of the 7th semester, usually Fall of the 4th year. If the QE is not completed, the student will be placed on warning status and must complete by the end of the 8th semester, usually Spring of the 4th year.

4. Qualifying Examination 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

<u>Course Requirements</u>

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

> 3 courses in quantitative methods and research methods; 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.
>
> 4 courses from a Social Psychology faculty member, which must include PSYC 512 taken in the first or second year, and three 600-level content seminars in social psychology (i.e., PSYC 612, which is taught by different professors covering different topics)`.Students can count a 400-level PSYC 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.
>
> 1 other course that is relevant to their research program and chosen with the consent of the advisor.

<u>First Year Research Evaluation</u>

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 Integrity and Accountability

For details on USC's Integrity and Accountability Code, please visit the USC website:

https://www.usc.edu/policies/

APPENDIX III

Psychology Department Forms and Resources

Psychology Department Joint Appointment Faculty List
University Catalogue
Department Forms

https://dornsife.usc.edu/psyc/current-student-resources/

Psychology Department Program Deadlines Summary

1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
First-Year Screening **Deadline: Spring/Summer of 1st Year Screening:** Areas evaluate students on the following: • Research performance • Completion of at least 16 units (of 4 courses, 3 must be substantive units) • Cumulative 3.0 GPA or higher • Each area may have additional requirements By August 15th, the Area Head notifies students and the program whether they have passed the first-year screening	**Second Year Research Requirement** **Deadline: Last Day of Classes of 4th Semester Screening:** • Second Year Project in the form of a Research Report or Master's Thesis: See Handbook for details • Completed at least 24 PSYC units (including both substantive & non-substantive courses) After completing the 2nd year project, discuss with faculty advisor to form guidance committee for Qualifying Exam	**Second Year Research Requirement II: Poster Fair** **Date: January of the 6th semester** Third year students are required to present their second-year projects. **Appointment of Committee Form for Qualifying Exam** **Deadline: Last Day of Classes of 6th semester**

4th Year		5th Year
Qualifying Examination **Deadline: Last Day of Classes of 7th Semester** • See Handbook for Qualifying Exam requirements • Areas may have additional requirements • After Written the portion of the exam (i.e., Part I) is completed, students and the faculty must report the passing date to the Academic Program Administrator. Then the student will receive the Graduate School Qualifying Examination Form from the Academic Program Administrator to be signed by committee members during the Oral portion of Examination (i.e., Part II). **Appointment of Committee Form for Dissertation** **Deadline: Last Day of Classes of 8th semester**		**Dissertation** **Deadline: Review Dates on Graduate School's Thesis Center Website** • Students must set up a profile on the Graduate School's Thesis Center portal • Make appointment with Academic Program Administrator

Graduation	• 60 Units min for Ph.D. • Required Department Coursework	• Required Area Coursework • Completed All Milestones

By my signature, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the contents of this handbook.

Student Name:_____

Student Signature:_____

Date: _____