



Graduate School Policy Manual for Graduate Directors

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The Graduate Studies Bulletin takes precedence over this manual. This manual is intended to provide a ready source of information concerning the policies of the Graduate School as stipulated by the Graduate Council and other University academic and administrative approval bodies. It is intended as a reference and guide for Graduate Directors and others in the administration of the graduate degree program(s) under their direction. The primary sources for its content are regulations and policies adopted and published in [*The Graduate Studies Bulletin*](#), minutes of meetings of the Graduate Council, graduate faculty, and policies and procedures established by the dean of the Graduate School. Every effort has been made to be accurate and consistent with the official policies and regulations, but to the extent that this manual differs from those policies and regulations, the latter take precedence.

Questions concerning the correctness, application, or interpretation of the various sections of this manual should be referred to the dean of the Graduate School.

All Graduate Directors should be familiar with the Graduate School section of *The Graduate Studies Bulletin*.

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I. THE GRADUATE SCHOOL--ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

The responsibilities and authority for the conduct and administration of graduate education are divided among the dean of the Graduate School, the graduate faculty, and the Graduate Council. Although they are not mentioned in the Faculty Manual, Graduate Directors carry as heavy a responsibility for the integrity of graduate programs at USC as any of the other parties cited. Requested exceptions to any policy stated in this manual should be made by the Graduate Director of the relevant program and addressed to the dean of the Graduate School.

A. The Dean of the Graduate School

The dean of the Graduate School, appointed by the President, establishes and enforces standards of graduate work, recommends and coordinates plans for development of graduate programs, and formulates policies to implement such plans. The dean serves ex officio on the Graduate Council, chairs meetings of the graduate faculty, coordinates graduate curricula, has administrative responsibility for admission to graduate study, and nominates candidates for graduate degrees. The dean of the Graduate School reports directly to the Provost.

The dean of the Graduate School is responsible, through the graduate faculty, for defining minimum standards for graduate work and for ensuring that both University-wide and program-specific standards are observed.

The dean of the Graduate School has oversight responsibility of the Graduate Directors of the various degree programs and maintains close contact with them. The dean informs Graduate Directors of changes in regulations or policies, announces new opportunities for funding and program development, and provides counsel in direction and/or revision of graduate programs and curricula. Semi-annual convocations of Graduate Directors permit updating and sharing of information, as well as identification and discussion of issues affecting graduate programs and graduate students.

B. The Graduate Council

The Graduate Council has twenty-three (23) members and is comprised of eighteen (18) graduate faculty members, one (1) Graduate Student Association representative, the dean of the Graduate school, the senior associate dean (who serves as Council Secretary), the assistant dean of the Graduate School, and the Director for Academic Programs/representative of the Office of the Provost. The eighteen (18) graduate faculty members and the one (1) student member are voting members. The dean of the Graduate School, the senior associate dean, assistant dean, and the Director for Academic Programs are non-voting members. There are five standing Graduate Council Committees. Graduate Council's authority is derived from its definition and charge in the Faculty Manual to make advisory recommendations to the dean of the Graduate School on graduate programs and curriculum, formulation and implementation of Graduate School policies, and the establishment and enforcement of standards of graduate work.

C. THE GRADUATE FACULTY

The principal responsibilities of members of the graduate faculty are to teach graduate students effectively, to conduct scholarly research and/or engage in creative activity of high quality, and to direct the research of graduate students. In order to fulfill these responsibilities, the Graduate Council recognizes regular, associate, and term membership in the graduate faculty. In judging the appropriateness of an applicant for the graduate faculty, primary consideration shall be given to whether the faculty member is an active and productive scholar and an effective teacher at the graduate level.

Regular Membership

Regular members of the graduate faculty on the Columbia campus shall include the president; provost; dean of the Graduate School; associate deans of the Graduate School; and chairs of academic departments offering degrees conferred by the Graduate School. Faculty members holding the Ph.D. or other terminal degree in their respective field of study are eligible to become regular members of the graduate faculty upon appointment to a tenured or tenure-track position at the University's Columbia campus. Nominations of eligible faculty for appointment to graduate faculty are made by the appropriate academic unit (college, department, or school) to the dean of the Graduate School. The appointment is made by the dean of the Graduate School in consultation with the Graduate Council.

Review and Retention

Consistent with the University of South Carolina's mission as a major research university committed to high quality graduate instruction, the university reviews scholarly and graduate teaching performance on a periodic basis to assure that each member of the Graduate Faculty continues to satisfy the unit's criteria for graduate faculty membership. Units shall establish procedures and criteria for review and retention of membership on the graduate faculty. Such procedures and criteria must be approved by the dean of the Graduate School in consultation with the Graduate Council. Retention reviews shall coincide with tenure progress reviews, tenure and promotion reviews, and post-tenure reviews. Review of chaired professorships, department chairs, and deans for retention on the graduate faculty shall coincide with their normal periodic reviews.

Regular members of the graduate faculty shall be retained on the graduate faculty unless they are judged by their peers, in a manner consistent with unit procedures and criteria, to be performing unsatisfactorily in terms of graduate teaching or research. A faculty member who is evaluated as unsatisfactory in graduate teaching or research by his or her unit may submit a letter of appeal to the unit requesting reconsideration. Upon receipt of an evaluation of unsatisfactory performance from the unit, the decision to retain or deny the request for retention on the graduate faculty rests with the dean of the Graduate School in consultation with the Graduate Council. Appeals of such decisions may be made to the Grievances, Appeals, and Petitions Committee of the Graduate Council. Persons who have been denied membership on the graduate faculty may reapply annually through the unit's normal

procedures.

Associate Membership

Professional-track USC faculty members and scholars who hold the Ph.D. or other terminal degree in their respective field of study may be appointed to associate membership in the graduate faculty. Requests for associate membership require nomination by the nominee's academic unit that grants the Ph.D. (or other terminal degree that requires a dissertation or thesis) to the Graduate Council. If the nominee does not belong to an academic unit, then the nomination may be from an academic unit that grants the Ph.D. (or other terminal degree that requires a dissertation or thesis) with which the nominee's area of research aligns. These nominations shall include a report that the nominee received a majority favorable vote by both the unit's current regular graduate faculty and by the unit's current combined regular and associate graduate faculty. The granting of associate membership is by vote of the council, subject to its procedures and criteria, and is based on the candidate's scholarly credentials, involvement in graduate academic affairs (such as teaching of graduate courses, serving as a member of thesis or dissertation committees, and serving on committees overseeing the department's academic programs), and expected continual appointment at USC. Associate membership is valid for a period of 6 years, also expiring if the faculty member leaves USC. Persons with associate membership are eligible for renomination and reappointment. Associate membership is appropriate for **full-time** USC clinical faculty, research faculty, and other full time USC scholars holding an appropriate terminal degree.

Associate membership in the graduate faculty does not modify voting rights in the university faculty or Faculty Senate. Voting rights in the academic unit are determined by local policies independent of graduate faculty status.

Functions

Regular and associate membership in the graduate faculty confers the right to teach graduate courses, direct theses and dissertations, and participate in graduate student committees (subject to the policies of the unit and university), serve on Graduate Council or its committees, and to vote on matters coming before the graduate faculty. The Graduate Faculty shall meet as called by the Graduate Council or on the written request of any ten members of the Graduate Faculty. The dean of the Graduate School shall serve as the presiding officer, assisted by the chair of the Graduate Council. The Graduate Faculty shall have the right to act on new graduate programs, Graduate School regulations, and related academic matters brought before it by individual members, the Graduate Council, or the administration.

Term Appointments

Faculty members and scholars not otherwise eligible for regular or associate membership on the graduate faculty may be appointed to term appointments. Term appointments to the graduate faculty are granted upon nomination by an academic unit to the dean of the Graduate School for a period not to exceed 3 years. Term appointments to the graduate faculty confer the rights only to teach graduate courses and/or serve on graduate students' committees as specified by the nomination approved by the dean of the Graduate School. Persons with term appointments are eligible for reappointment. Term appointments are appropriate for USC

faculty in the School of Law and the School of Medicine, emeriti USC professors, clinical faculty, research faculty, faculty members at other institutions (including other campuses of the USC system), and others holding an appropriate terminal degree or other credentials.

Policy on Faculty Teaching Graduate Courses

Departments or programs appointing persons to teach graduate courses who are not members of the graduate faculty must obtain permission from their respective dean and the dean of the Graduate School through the term appointment process. SACSCOC requires that faculty teaching graduate courses have earned the terminal degree in the field. In some cases, persons having specific career experience may be authorized to teach graduate courses upon provision of written justification from the department/program chair and the academic dean.

D. THE GRADUATE SCHOOL STAFF

In addition to the dean, the Graduate School is staffed by administrative personnel assisting the dean and graduate school program coordinators. Each staff member has primary responsibility for particular functions, but all staff members are knowledgeable in most areas and work cooperatively to provide the services of the Graduate School.

II. THE GRADUATE DIRECTOR

A. GENERAL AUTHORITY

The Graduate Director in an academic unit is a graduate faculty member appointed by that unit to administer its graduate program(s). The Graduate Director makes recommendations for admission, requests changes in a student's admission status, gives departmental approval of programs of study and thesis/dissertation committees, and gives departmental clearance for award of the degree. It is the Graduate Director's responsibility to transmit these and other actions (nominations for fellowships, curriculum proposals, etc.) to the Graduate School for processing or for final approval. The Graduate Director receives all inquiries, applications, announcements, and requests for data and information relative to academic program(s), and communicates Graduate School policies and actions to program faculty and graduate students.

Graduate Directors are expected to be knowledgeable of degree requirements, Graduate School regulations and procedures, and the general organization of the University as it affects graduate students, so that they can serve as resources for the students and faculty involved in their specific programs.

B. SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

The specific responsibilities of all Graduate Directors include:

1. Processing and evaluation of applications.
2. Transmitting to the Graduate School the program's recommendation on admission for ALL applicants by the first day of classes of the term for which the applicant applied.
3. Notifying the Graduate School, in writing, of student progress towards the

- degree (exams, etc.).
4. Submitting programs of study for approval by the dean of the Graduate School.
 5. Submitting committee nominations for approval by the dean of the Graduate School.
 6. Maintaining unit files on prospective, present, and past students.
 7. Clearing students for degrees (with respect to departmental requirements).
 8. Coordinating and submitting nominations of graduate students for awards, fellowships, and other forms of recognition.
 9. Providing departmental endorsement of requested exceptions to University policy.

The dean of the Graduate School should be advised in writing, each time there is a change in a Graduate School Faculty member serving as Graduate Director, as well as the effective date of the change.

C. SIGNATURES ON OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

Documents submitted to the Graduate School must be signed by faculty members who are authorized to make decisions or recommendations to the Graduate School. Administrative assistants and other staff members normally do not have such authorization, and it should not be delegated to them.

III. STUDENT RECORDS

Student records, whether written or electronic, are subject to the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA, also known as the Buckley amendment). That act assures the student access, with certain exceptions, to the contents of all the University's records relative to that student, while restricting the release of all but a limited category of information to third parties without his/her written consent. More details on the application of FERPA are available [here](#).

Graduate Directors and their staff members should request and/or access only information that is necessary to carry out their academic responsibilities, and should treat all such information as confidential.

A. GRADUATE SCHOOL RECORDS

Both the Graduate School and the individual graduate programs maintain records on enrolled students, but the Graduate School's electronic file is considered the official record.

- i. **Graduate School files.** Once students have enrolled in degree programs, their records are retained permanently by the Graduate School. Records on current and archived students are maintained electronically. The Graduate School's electronic file on a given student normally contains, at a minimum:

- a. The official credentials on which admission was granted.
- b. A record of progress made in satisfying requirements for the degree, including an approved program of study, committee approvals, reports of exams completed, etc.
- c. Any changes in admission status, degree objectives, etc.
- d. Final approval of the dean of the Graduate School, when given, for award of the degree.

The Graduate School normally discards the following records one calendar year after the term for which the student has applied: Incomplete applications, declined applications, such stray documents as transcripts, letters, or test score reports for which no application has been received, and applications approved but not activated by enrollment.

- ii. **Departmental files.** Normally, the department retains copies of files received from the Graduate School. Such files include copies of student credentials reviewed during the admissions process and copies of official actions of the Graduate School relative to students after their enrollment. The department also maintains records of departmental actions, evaluations, appointments, etc.

Since questions of equitable admission standards and admission appeals arise from time to time, it is advisable for departments to retain completed applications (approved and disapproved) for a period of at least three years. A tabulation of the quantitative components of the file (GPA, scores, rankings) might suffice, and, in any case, would be useful for statistical reports and analyses. Records of students who complete degrees should be retained permanently.

Each active student file should include:

- a. Reports on required exams (dates, results).
- b. Appointment and approval of committees as required.
- c. Approved program of study.
- d. Copy of approved thesis/dissertation proposal as required.
- e. All negative actions.
- f. Formal documentation for extenuating circumstances (e.g., appropriate disability accommodations, etc.)

Departments should retain complete, accurate, and dated records of any actions which adversely affect a student's subsequent standing in a program. Especially important are those records which support negative evaluations, notification of unsatisfactory performance or inadequate progress towards the degree, non- reappointment as an instructor or graduate assistant, disciplinary actions, etc. A formal appeal of a negative departmental action could require the presentation of such records.

B. RECORDS

Graduate Directors have access to Banner, either **Internet Native Banner (INB)**, **Banner Document Management Services (BDMS)**, or **Self Service Carolina (SSC)**. Access to

INB, BDMS, or SSC records are retrieved using the student ID number (student ID assigned by USC). All inquiries to the Graduate School about graduate students must adhere to the guidelines spelled out in the University's [FERPA](#) (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) policies.

1. **Authorization.** Authorization to access INB, SSC, BDMS, VIP Student Tab, and Admission Action Sheet Recommendations is granted by the Graduate School. Account requests should be made [here](#).

C. ACCESS, CONFIDENTIALITY AND SECURITY OF STUDENT RECORDS

The confidentiality of, and access to, student records at the University of South Carolina are addressed in ACAF 3.03, "Student Records," in the USC Policy & Procedures Manual. This information is accessible [here](#). Formulated as the official policy for compliance with FERPA, this document is binding on all faculty, staff, and students in the USC System.

IV. Applications and Admissions

A. Recruiting

Promotional materials developed by a program for the purpose of recruiting new students is the responsibility of the individual unit. Promotional materials prepared for distribution by academic units must be consistent with the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) policies and guidelines and University policies and procedures. Specific programs, degrees, majors, and specializations can only be referenced after they have been officially approved as such by CHE and SACSCOC, and by the Board of Trustees.

B. Application Forms

Prospective students apply for admission to graduate programs through an electronic application, available through the Graduate School's homepage. Supplemental application materials that serve particular needs of various programs have been added to the basic electronic application, and others can be added at the program's request.

Requests for program-specific information are referred to the Graduate Directors of individual units. Program-specific information is also available through a link on the Graduate School [homepage](#).

C. Applications

- i. **Application Deadlines.** Some programs have early deadlines or only consider admission for certain terms that are strictly enforced. Most programs have early deadlines for financial assistance (for example, fellowships, graduate assistantships, tuition supplements, etc.). Contact departments for deadline

information on specific degree programs. If a program has no specific deadline or if an applicant is requesting non-degree enrollment privilege, the following application deadlines are recommended to ensure full consideration:

Fall semester	July 1
Spring semester (including May Session)	November 15
First summer session	May 1
Second summer session	June 1

- ii. **Graduate School Application Fee Requirements.** A completed and submitted graduate application is official only after the Graduate School receives the appropriate application fee, and/or fee waiver (e.g., \$50 for standard applications; fee varies for selected applications that use a discipline-specific, separate application service). This fee must be paid online before the application can be submitted. Applications cannot be submitted without the required fee. Application materials received without a paid application will not be processed. Supporting documents will be held for 90 days and then discarded unless the completed application with fee is received by that date.
- iii. **Graduate Update Request Form.** Some fees apply as noted:
 - a. Program Transfer (**\$15 fee**);
 - b. Request Concurrent Enrollment in a second program (**\$15 fee**);
 - c. Reconsider previously declined application (**\$15 fee**);
 - d. First Time Non-Degree Enrollment Privilege (**\$15 fee**);
 - e. Renew Non-Degree Enrollment Privilege (**Free**);
 - f. Update Admission (more than 1 year; less than 3 years) (**Free**);
 - g. Term Change – Degree (change term of application, or, once admitted to change the term of enrollment) (**Free**);
 - h. Term Change – Non-Degree (change term of application, or, once admitted to change the term of enrollment) (**Free**);
 - i. Letters of Recommendation (to request additional letters to be sent to USC using the online system) (**Free**);
 - j. Submit Additional Supporting Document(s) (**Free**);
 - k. The **Graduate Update Request Form** is available [here](#).
- iv. **Degree-Seeking Students.** Only applicants to degree programs may be fully admitted to the Graduate School. Applicants for a degree program are required to meet all admission standards published by the Graduate School and by the department that houses the program. When fully admitted, graduate students have all rights and privileges assigned to them by the University, including eligibility for fellowships, assistantships, and other financial aid. Conditionally admitted graduate students may be eligible for these types of financial assistance at the discretion of specific departments.

Supporting credentials required by the Graduate School as a part of an application for admission to a degree program include:

- a. Official transcripts showing all college-level course work attempted and the award of the baccalaureate or higher degree by an accredited college or university. Official transcripts verifying all previous college-level course work are required for the University's records. To be considered official, transcripts must be sent directly from the institution to the Graduate School or delivered in a sealed envelope bearing a registrar's stamp.
- b. At least two letters of recommendation.
- c. Test scores. Most programs require a report of scores achieved on a national standardized test (e.g., GRE, LSAT, MAT, MCAT, PCAT, etc.). Programs in business administration may require scores from the GMAT. Please be aware that most testing agencies will not report scores older than five years.
- d. International applicants whose native language is not English are also required to submit a satisfactory score on the TOEFL, the IELTS International Academic Course Type 2 exam, or the Pearson Test of English Academic (PTEA). The minimum acceptable score on the TOEFL is 80 (Internet-based), or 570 (paper-based). The minimum acceptable overall band score on the IELTS Intl. Academic Course Type 2 exam is 6.5. The minimum acceptable score on the PTEA is 59. Many programs have set higher requirements than these minimum scores. TOEFL, IELTS International exam and PTEA scores are only valid for two years.
- e. Individual programs may have special application requirements in addition to those of the Graduate School. (e.g. personal interviews, statements of purpose, employment histories, auditions, portfolios, etc.). Please consult program websites for specific information. Links to program websites are found [here](#).

Academic units must recommend admission or declination for each completed application to their degree programs before the start of the semester for which the application was received. If an applicant is not admissible (with or without conditions), but the department wants to let the applicant enroll in one or more of its graduate courses, the department should refer the applicant to the Graduate School for a special application for non-degree enrollment.

- v. **Recommendation for Admission with Conditions.** Admission Action Recommendations (AARs) do not offer the option of recommending non-degree enrollment for an applicant to a degree program. Instead, they offer the option of recommending the applicant for admission with conditions, to be used when an admissions committee has met and concluded that they are not yet ready to recommend full admission for the applicant. This conditional recommendation should be limited to the first semester of enrollment and is appropriate for students

who need to:

- a. take specific prerequisite courses;
- b. prove themselves capable of graduate course work in the program by making acceptable grades in prescribed courses;
- c. satisfy any other conditions that a committee sets;
- d. submit official transcripts with degree posted;
- e. submit official scores for standardized tests.

All graduate hours (up to twelve) that are successfully completed by students admitted with conditions may be used in their programs of study (subject to approval by the academic unit). The academic unit must monitor the progress of such students and send a new action sheet recommending full admission once the conditions have been met, or to terminate enrollment privileges if conditions have not been met.

- vi. **Recommendation for Admission with Exceptions.** Admission Action Recommendations offer the option of recommending admission for an applicant with approved exceptions. A ‘best practice’ is to include conditions with an exception, to monitor whether or not an appropriate decision has been made to admit an applicant with a strong probability of successfully earning the degree objective. Exceptions require additional documentation to support the requested exception. Requests for exceptions must be approved by the Graduate School. This type of recommendation is appropriate for students who must show:

- a. alternative evidence for low or outdated standardized test scores;
- b. alternative evidence for low undergraduate GPA;
- c. acceptable proficiency in English (possibly including acceptable completion of English Programs for Internationals (EPI)).

Graduate Students admitted with conditions or exceptions may receive financial aid, including assistantships and fellowships (they still must meet all other requirements for such aid).

- vii. **Non-Degree Graduate Enrollment.** Individuals who possess at least a baccalaureate degree and have no degree objective may apply for a non-degree enrollment privilege to take up to 12 credit hours of coursework. This privilege, when exhausted, may be renewed at the Graduate School's discretion. A non-degree student who later applies to a degree program, however, may apply a maximum of only six hours of non-degree credits to that degree program, and only with departmental approval. Non-degree students may not receive fellowships, assistantships, or other financial aid. Non-degree privileges are granted by the Graduate School without Admission Action Recommendations from programs. Applicants submit the special Application for Non-Degree Enrollment, the \$50 fee, and proof of a baccalaureate degree. Non-native speakers of English must also provide evidence of English proficiency.

- a. The Graduate School codes all non-degree students as having "no major department" and "no degree objective" (a school/major/degree code set of 315/500/06).
- b. An academic unit may prohibit non-degree students from taking its courses, or require that they obtain permission from the unit before they enroll. Academic units need not worry about limiting the number of non-degree hours a student will be given. The number will automatically be set at twelve by the Graduate School.

D. Professional Development Coursework. A maximum of 6 hours of Professional Development graduate-level coursework may be presented on a graduate student's program of study. It is at the discretion of each academic unit to approve the inclusion of Professional Development graduate-level coursework on the program of study.

E. Reduced Tuition Rate Courses. A maximum of 6 hours of Reduced Tuition Rate courses (standard graduate-level contract courses) may be presented on a graduate student's program of study. It is at the discretion of each academic unit to approve the inclusion of Reduced Tuition Rate graduate-level coursework on the program of study.

F. Processing Applications and Credentials

- a. Transcripts and standardized test scores are transmitted directly from the originating institution to the Graduate School. Transcripts submitted under the registrar's seal by the applicant (or by the program) will be reviewed by the Graduate School to determine whether they can be accepted as official. When received by the program, such transcripts should be forwarded promptly to the Graduate School with the original envelopes as evidence of direct, secure transmittal.
- b. Final Transcripts with degrees posted might not be available if the applicant is still completing degree requirements. Admission for such a student is conditional, contingent upon the submission of the final transcript with degree posted. Registration beyond one semester will not be permitted unless a final transcript--with degree posted--is received.
- c. Stray documents (e.g., transcripts, test scores, reference letters, etc.), that cannot be matched to an application, are retained by the Graduate School for 12 months. If no application is received, the documents are properly disposed.

G. Status of Applications. The Graduate School does not monitor the completeness of an application until an admission action is recommended for that applicant by the Graduate Director.

Applicants may check the status of their application by returning to their application portal. For applicants using the general graduate school application, there is a checklist available from their [ApplyWeb Manage My Account portal](#). If the application was through a different vendor, applicants may return to their application portal or contact

their program office to verify submissions.

The Graduate Director can respond to status inquiries by checking the applicant's electronic file in [ADMIT](#). The Program Review Status field identifies ten possible stages for departmental users to know where the application is in the admission process, from “New” to “recommendation Sent to Graduate School” to “Decision Released to Student.”

Since it is the faculty of a program that evaluates and recommends candidates for admission, familiarity with individual files and more direct contact with the student usually puts Graduate Directors in a better position than the Graduate School to respond to status inquiries. Some programs require additional materials such as statements of purpose, intent, or goals, etc. Because of the varying requirements for such supplemental material among programs, the Graduate School cannot readily determine when this information is missing from an applicant's folder. However, ADMIT has a checklist for applications submitted through ApplyWeb. This checklist is viewable by applicants and program faculty and staff. It identifies all required documents and if unofficial or official scores and transcripts have been received. For non-CollegeNet applications, the Test Score tab will identify if official scores have been received. The Education tab will identify if official transcripts were received after application submission. Otherwise, documentation for these records is within the application vendor system until the AAR is submitted or in BDMS.

H. Admission Decisions

- i. **Admission Requirements.** For admission to the Graduate School, a baccalaureate or higher degree from a college or university accredited by a regional accrediting agency is normally required. Applicants’ academic records should demonstrate adequate preparation in the field in which graduate work is to be undertaken. Additional materials may be specified by the individual academic programs. The dean of the Graduate Studies admits applicants on the recommendation of the department or college concerned and after an appraisal of the credentials submitted.

Student application materials are housed in ADMIT. Comprehensive instructions for navigating this system can be found [here](#).

Once an applicant’s file is complete, and faculty from the program have reviewed it, the Graduate Director makes a recommendation to the Graduate School about the candidate's admission.

Upon the receipt of an Admission Action Recommendation (AAR):

- a) The application file is checked by the Graduate School for the required credentials.
- b) An applicant who is recommended for degree program admission but

whose *final* transcript has not been received will be permitted to enroll for one term only, until the final transcript is on file. Such students will not be allowed to register for a second term until their credentials are complete.

- c) The Graduate Director is informed when the department's admission action recommendation cannot be approved by the Graduate School. Such situations usually occur when a deficiency is found in the student's credentials.

A letter of admission from the Graduate School is sent to the student's permanent address stating that the applicant has been admitted or declined. The letter, states the degree program, type of admission, term of admission, and any conditions of admission. A copy of this letter is available to Graduate Directors in the student file in BDMS.

- ii. **Graduate admission can be granted only by the dean of the Graduate School,** who acts on a positive recommendation of a program. Graduate Directors *must not* inform applicants that they have been admitted to a graduate program. *Only the Graduate School can take that action.* A Graduate Director or other faculty may tell applicants that they have been "recommended for admission" to a program, but the communication must be worded carefully to make it clear that the final decision is made by the dean of the Graduate School.
- iii. **Financial Support of Admitted Students.** An award of financial support is made directly by the department, contingent upon formal admission by the Graduate School. For Council of Graduate Schools policy on offers of financial support to prospective graduate students, and the "April 15 Resolution" see this [link](#). For additional guidance for issues surrounding financial support, see this [link](#).

If the applicant is a foreign student, a copy of the award letter should be sent to the International Student Services (ISS). This is especially important since ISS cannot consider the value of financial support as a part of a student's financial certification until it has received official notification of the award, and the visa document may be held up unnecessarily.

Graduate Directors need to be aware of an additional, significant responsibility concerning graduate students who are receiving financial assistance through assistantships. If the amount of financial assistance offered on an official appointment (PBP-3G form) is subsequently increased or decreased, certain notification is required:

- a. American students should be advised directly by the department.
- b. International students and International Student Services (ISS) should be advised, since the funding level can affect visa approval.

- iv. **Readmission of Inactive Students.** A graduate student's admission to a program

lapses if that student has not enrolled in courses for three consecutive years (some programs specify shorter periods of eligibility). To resume work on the degree, the student must submit a new application, and meet current admissions standards and degree requirements. The student becomes subject to regulations of *The Graduate Studies Bulletin* in effect at the time of readmission. All work applied to the degree must be completed within the time limit specified by *The Graduate Studies Bulletin*.

- v. **Transient Admission.** Students who are candidates for graduate degrees at other institutions and who wish to take specific courses at USC for transfer to their institutions may do so using non-degree enrollment privilege.

USC graduate students seeking transient admission at other institutions should present the transient enrollment form to the Graduate School for the dean's signature.

I. International Applicants

International Student Services (<http://www.iss.sc.edu/>) can provide advice and assistance in processing and evaluating applications from international students. Links to forms for international applicants can be found [here](#).

- i. **Verifying and Evaluating International Credentials.** Many foreign universities either may not issue "official transcripts," or may provide the student with the only final transcript that will be issued. The Graduate School will determine whether the copies submitted constitute acceptable (i.e. official) transcripts, and may admit a student on condition that the original transcript is presented for verification.

Questions concerning the validity of foreign credentials should be referred to the Graduate School. The Graduate School maintains a set of reference publications that provide country and university specific information for evaluating credentials, and the Graduate School can be consulted for assistance.

- ii. **Issuing Immigration Documents.** The I-20 form is used by the student to obtain an entry visa at an American embassy or consulate abroad and must also be presented by the student at the point of entry into the United States. It is processed by International Student Services and mailed to the student *after* the student has been admitted by the Graduate School and provided proof of adequate finances to cover one year's expenses. Financial certification can include graduate assistantship awards as well as personal and family funds. Departments offering assistantships should send a copy of the offer letter to International Student Services.
- iii. **Visa Information Forms** also must be completed by the international applicant. It provides biographical information and contains the financial

certification.

Departments can expedite the admission process for international applicants by:

- a. Sending visa information forms to international applicants as early as possible.
- b. Sending a memorandum to International Student Services that lists the value of assistantships, fellowships, or other financial awards offered to students. This information is needed because all financial support, including tuition reductions, will be applied toward the finances required as part of the student's certification.
- c. Making decisions about international applicants as soon as possible. Because of the long delays in obtaining a visa in many countries, departments should make early decisions about recommending admission for international applicants.

J. Legal Residency Certification

A student's status as a legal resident or non-resident of South Carolina may determine the tuition rate assessed upon enrollment. The University of South Carolina is required by state law and by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education to verify the residency status of all South Carolina students for fee and tuition purposes and for purposes of state funding. Therefore, graduate students need to complete the residency certification form in [Self Service Carolina](https://my.sc.edu/self-service/carolina) (my.sc.edu). There is a deadline for submission for each term. If the form is not returned by the date specified, students will be classified as non-resident and billed non-resident fees. Students deemed ineligible to pay in-state fees after the residency review will be billed the difference in the resident/non-resident tuition retroactive to the applicable semester or term.

If a continuing graduate student (verified as a South Carolina resident for fee purposes) is not enrolled in a course during a major semester (Fall or Spring), a new Residency Certification Form is required to continue to be eligible for in-state tuition rate.

i. **Students Exempted from Non-Resident Rates are:**

- a. **Graduate Assistants.**
- b. **Non-resident graduate students who receive fellowships or traineeships of at least \$250 per semester** (awarded and paid through official University accounts) will be billed at resident rates for each term they hold them, provided that they are enrolled for the hours required by the academic unit. The Graduate School assumes that all students receiving a fellowship must register on a full-time basis to receive the fellowship. If this fellowship may be disbursed on a less than full-time basis, the hours required for disbursement must be noted on the "Graduate Fellowship/Awards Authorization" form. Instructions are available [here](#). or the Federal Traineeship Authorization form (instructions

available [here](#)).

- c. **SREB Academic Common Market Students.** The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Academic Common Market: Residents of 16 SREB states (Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia) may participate in the SREB Academic Common Market, an agreement that enables students to pursue unique majors offered at public institutions in the other SREB states while paying in-state tuition. See web site <http://www.sreb.org>

V. REGISTRATION AND WITHDRAWAL

A. REGISTRATION ELIGIBILITY

The eligibility of a graduate student to register for a given term can be confirmed before advisement is undertaken, or registration is attempted. Directions for signing in to Self Service Carolina is provided [here](#).

***Note:** The Graduate School does not retroactively award graduate credit for graduate-level (courses number 500 and above) USC courses previously taken for undergraduate, continuing education, or audit credit.*

The Graduate School abides by the following policy and procedure when considering the future registrations of graduate students who are deemed academically ineligible (suspension indicator set) to continue as graduate students. Once the suspension indicator is set for a graduate student, all future registrations are cancelled.

[STAF 7.06: The University of South Carolina requires all students born after December 31, 1956, to be immunized against, or provide proof of immunity to, measles (rubella) and German measles (rubella). Proof of immunity and/or immunization requires documentation of one of the following:

- a. two measles and one German measles (MR or MMR) shot after 1967 (not before first birthday)
- b. positive serum titers (blood antibodies) to measles and German measles
- c. physician-diagnosed measles illness and either shots or positive serum titer for German measles. (A history of German measles illness does not meet requirements.)

For more information, call the Immunization Office at 803-777-9511. Immunization records must be on file before attempting online registration.

Self Service Carolina (SSC) must be consulted to indicate the reason(s) for ineligibility.

An early check on student eligibility will allow time for the resolution of holds and other problems before registration is attempted. Registration checklists are available [here](#).

B. Advisement

Every graduate student admitted to a degree program is entitled to an advisor. In many programs the preliminary advisor is the graduate director for the academic unit concerned. Programs that do not automatically assign incoming students to the Graduate Director for advisement must designate a preliminary advisor to the student upon admission to the program.

Non-degree students, i.e., those who do not seek degree admission or who have not yet met all the conditions for degree admission, are not normally assigned to advisors but may consult Graduate Directors for both specific and general information.

A student's advisor should monitor progress toward completion of degree requirements. Early determination and submission of the student's *Program of Study* facilitates the appropriate selection of courses, allocation of the student's time, and monitoring the student's progress toward their degree.

The courses offered in the upcoming term are available in [Self Service Carolina](#). This listing will reflect the most up to date additions, cancellations, or changes to course offerings.

C. Mandatory Health Insurance

All graduate students and international students are required to have health insurance. Under this University requirement, graduate students enrolled in 9 or more hours, all graduate assistants, and international students must purchase the University sponsored student health insurance plan OR provide documentation of enrollment in a comparable health insurance plan. Information about Mandatory Health Insurance can be found at this URL: <http://www.sa.sc.edu/shs/billing/insurance/>

D. International Student Registration

All international students are required to report to the office of International Student Services (ISS), where they will undergo a passport and visa check, attend an orientation, and be advised of any required examinations or assessments <http://www.iss.sc.edu/>

Students for whom English is not their native language are required to take an English proficiency examination as a part of their orientation. The results of the exam, administered by the English Program for Internationals (EPI <http://www.epi.sc.edu/Content/?documents>) staff, are communicated promptly to the students and to their departments. The exam, consisting of a written portion and an oral interview, provides an evaluation of a student's deficiencies and readiness to undertake a normal graduate course load as well as recommendations for enrollment in ENFS (English for Foreign Students) courses. This examination should not be confused with the separate language assessment workshop required of all international graduate

students who wish to hold graduate teaching or instructional assistantships. More information and clarification regarding teaching assistant training requirements can be found [here](#).

E. Restrictions, Special Permission

Both *The Graduate Studies Bulletin* and the Registrar's Master Schedule provide information on requirements to enroll in specific courses. The course description in the *Bulletin* lists prerequisite courses required or recommended for that course. Prerequisites are enforced by the instructor, not by the computer, and the graduate director has the authority to waive the stated prerequisites if, in the instructor's judgment, a student appears to have sufficient preparation for the course. If enrollment requires the specific permission of the instructor or the department, the course description will so indicate.

F. Graduate Course Loads—General Regulations

The minimum graduate enrollment recognized as full-time for academic purposes is:

1. Regular term: Nine semester hours of graduate credit for students not holding assistantships and six hours for graduate assistants.
2. Summer terms: Three semester hours of graduate credit for any term. The ACAF 4.00 policy statement in the University Policies and Procedures stipulates that graduate assistants must enroll for at least three hours during the summer term(s) in which they are appointed. If graduate assistants are not enrolled for a summer term in which they are hired, departments have at least two alternatives. First, departments can hire students as temporary employees (through Human Resources), and FICA will be deducted. Second, departments can hire students as hourly employees and FICA will be deducted.

All graduate assistants must register for a minimum of six semester hours of graduate credit and are limited to a maximum load of 15 (fifteen) credits or the lower departmental maximum limit.

For fee purposes, full-time graduate tuition is charged when a student's enrollment reaches 12 semester hours. The Activities Fee is included in the full-time tuition rate.

G. Maximum Term Enrollment

A course load includes audit credits as well as undergraduate enrollment by a graduate student in calculating the maximum load. Audited courses and courses taken for undergraduate credit (courses numbered <500) count toward the maximum permitted course load, *but do not count toward the minimum load for graduate assistants*.

- i. **Summer Terms:** A two-course load (6 semester hours) is considered maximum for any summer term.

The exception to this policy is for enrollment in a third course which lists a database session ending before the other two course enrollments begin (i.e., a course assigned to the Summer I (May Session) term, or a third course during the May Session (of Summer I) which begins and ends before the start of the regular Summer I session. A student may thus enroll for a maximum of five courses (totaling 15 credits) over the summer (1 in May Session, 2 in Summer I, and 2 in Summer II). The intent of these restrictions is to ensure that no student is carrying more than 3 credits in May Session, or more than 6 credits in each regular summer session. Any exception would require Course Overload Enrollment Authorization
<http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/ceo.pdf>

- ii. **Fall/Spring Terms:** In a fall or spring semester, the maximum course load is 15 credit hours. Some academic units have set a 12 credit hour maximum. Any enrollment above these limits requires the submission of the [Course Overload Enrollment Authorization form](#)

H. Special Enrollment Status (aka: Z-Status)

The dean of the Graduate School, under certain circumstances (e.g., nearing completion of a thesis or dissertation, internship, practicum, required field experience, etc.), may certify that enrollment in less than the minimum load is considered a full-time equivalent for that student. Students seeking exceptions to minimum enrollment requirements should submit a request for special enrollment (also known as “Z status”). The form and complete directions can be found [here](#).

Note that international students must also obtain approval for a reduced course load. The form can be found [here](#).

Students needing exemption from full-time enrollment for financial aid purposes must also contact the Office of Financial Aid.

Access to Special Enrollment can only be approved after:

The student verifies in writing with the endorsement of their graduate director or major professor that:

- a. he/she is not employed full-time
- b. he/she is in fact working full-time or half-time (if not on assistantship) on completion of their thesis or dissertation.
- c. all course work on the Program of Study, excluding 799 or 899, has been completed.

Z status will be authorized on a semester basis for a maximum of three semesters.

I. Independent Study Contracts

The Graduate School [Independent Study Contract](#) should be used for any graded, for-credit course in which the student is doing academic work independently, and the content and requirements of the course are not governed by a standard syllabus (e.g. directed reading and research, independent study, etc.). The student and instructor should each keep a copy of the form, and a copy of the signed form should be placed in student's official file in his/her graduate program office, and must be submitted to the Graduate School.

J. Graduate Attendance Policy

(Approved by Graduate Council 10.25.21)

Graduate students at the University of South Carolina are expected to meet all academic objectives as defined by the instructor. Students are responsible for completing all assigned work, to attend all class meetings from the beginning of the semester, and to participate in class. The University aims to ensure the highest academic standards while recognizing that events occur beyond the personal control of students or faculty. Different courses demand different approaches to assessing student attendance and participation. Additionally, there are multiple degree categories at the graduate level, where standards and practices related to attendance and participation vary considerably. Therefore, subject to certain limitations described below, instructors should notify students, specifically in the course syllabus, of the attendance policy for the course by the first day of class. Should an instructor fail to provide a written attendance policy, this general policy applies.

Students are responsible for satisfying the requirements for attendance and participation for any class in which they are enrolled, including requirements for notification and documentation of excused absences. Whenever possible, and as specified below, documentation is required in advance of any excused absence.

This policy applies to all graduate level courses offered by the University of South Carolina, including synchronous or asynchronous online courses.

i. Excused Absences

Instructors requiring attendance as a component of a student's grade must distinguish between excused and unexcused absences in the written policy for the course.

Excused absences may not be penalized in a student's grade, and the student must be permitted to make up coursework missed due to an excused absence or to complete an equivalent assignment agreed upon with the instructor. Online courses, whether synchronous or asynchronous, are not exempt from this rule. In all cases of excused absence, the instructor of record must engage in an interactive process with the student to determine reasonable make-up work.

Instructors may refuse to grant a request for an excused absence or for make-up work that would result in a fundamental alteration of the essential academic requirements of the course. In

such instances, students should be apprised of the University's policy regarding course withdrawals.

The University of South Carolina is required by law to excuse absences from class for the following reasons:

- Performance of a military duty or obligation imposed by state or federal law, as documented in writing by the appropriate state or federal authority.
- Legal obligation to appear at or participate in a judicial or administrative proceeding, including the performance of jury duty, as documented in writing by the appropriate judicial or administrative authority.
- Any medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth, as documented by the student's health care provider, requiring the student's absence from class.
- A disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act and as documented by the Student with the Student Disability Resource Center, which prevents the student from attending class.
- Observance of a religious practice, holiday or holy day, if the instructor of the class is provided written notification by the student of their intent to observe such religious practice, holiday or holy day no later than the end of the second week of regularly scheduled classes in a full fall or spring semester term, and within twice the length of the drop/add period for any other term. Change / Drop dates can be found [here](#).
- Any other absences required to be excused by applicable state or federal law.

The University of South Carolina requires that absences from class for the following reasons must also be excused:

- Participation in an authorized University activity, in which the student plays a formal, required role. Such activities include, but are not limited to, musical performances, field-based research or other research activities sanctioned by the university, academic competitions, academic and professional conferences with permission from faculty/advisors, and varsity athletic events. University documentation of participation should be provided in advance of the absence.
- Illness or injury that is too severe or contagious for the student to attend class, with appropriate documentation.
- Death or severe illness of an immediate/dependent family member, with appropriate documentation.
- University closure for weather-related or other emergencies.
- International student visa conflicts, which may prevent a student from arriving on campus

ii. Requesting Excuses

To arrange excuses for absences that can be anticipated at the start of a term--including, but not limited to, authorized university activities and religious observances--students should submit a request in writing (email is acceptable) stating the dates of the anticipated absence, explaining

the reason for absence, providing supporting documentation as required above, and including any request for make-up work. Students should submit this request no later than the end of the second week of regularly scheduled classes in a full fall or spring semester term and within twice the length of the drop/add period for any other term. Change / Drop dates can be found [here](#).

To arrange excuses for absences that cannot be anticipated at the start of a term--including, but not limited to, legal proceedings or illness--students should submit in writing a request stating the date of absence, the reason for absence, and any request for make-up work as soon as reasonably possible after they become aware of the need to be absent. For instance, in the case of a contagious illness a student should notify the instructor soon after becoming aware of this illness. Instructors should not maintain records of student medical conditions. On the Columbia campus, the Graduate Student Ombuds is available to certify any excuses involving confidential personal information.

A graduate student registered for courses numbered 500-699, or for any undergraduate course for credit, is required to satisfy undergraduate attendance regulations and conform to the “5 percent rule.” The [Undergraduate Attendance Policy](#) states that absence from more than 5 percent of the scheduled class sessions, whether excused or unexcused, is excessive and the instructor may choose to exact a grade penalty for such absences.

iii. Class Auditing

Students who are auditing a graduate course are expected to conform to the same attendance requirements as students registered for credit, but must attend at least 75 percent of scheduled class meetings to receive audit credit.

iv. Assistance and Appeals

On the Columbia Campus, the Graduate Student Ombuds is available to assist instructors and verify, in certain cases, students’ stated reasons for requesting excused absences. Palmetto College campuses should work with their Faculty Organizations to define similar agencies.

Any student who is denied a request for an excused absence from class for any of the reasons set forth herein may appeal the decision per the STAF 6.30 Academic Grievance Policy. As described in STAF 6.27, the Graduate Student Ombuds is also available to help students resolve grievances and maintain policy compliance.

Students are expected to be fully honest with instructors, university staff and administrators when they make requests to excuse absences and when they work with instructors to arrange terms for the completion of coursework missed due to excused absences. Any dishonesty in requesting excused absences or accommodations for the timely completion of missed work is regarded as a violation of academic integrity and is subject to disciplinary action through the Office of Academic Integrity.

K. Dropping A Course After Drop/Add Date

Graduate students should consult their advisors before dropping graduate courses since such action:

1. Could delay the normal completion of course sequence and degree requirements.
2. Could reduce the student's course load below the minimum necessary for full-time enrollment or below the minimum required for financial assistance or continuation as a graduate assistant.

Grades assigned for dropped courses depend on the date and circumstances of the action. If a course is dropped before the withdrawal deadline, a *W* is recorded and this designation remains on the student's transcript, but does not impact the student GPA. If a course is dropped after that deadline, a *WF* is recorded, appears on the student's transcript and impacts the student GPA:

Simple cessation of class attendance does not constitute a drop, and a grade of *F* is appropriate.

A course cannot be dropped after the last day of classes for the session in which the course is scheduled.

L. Withdrawal (termination of entire enrollment for a term)

A complete withdrawal must be requested during the term and will not be processed after the scheduled end of classes, unless extenuating circumstances prevented the timely submission of the request.

- i. **Withdrawal.** Withdrawal from all classes after the drop/add deadline is handled like dropping a single class; except that the student's status with respect to financial assistance obligations may be changed (the student should consult the Student Financial Aid Office, if applicable, regarding the ramifications of such an action.) Grade assignments are made as described in the previous section for single courses.
- ii. **Withdrawal for Extenuating Circumstances.** Withdrawal for extenuating circumstances may occur at any time during the term, and requires the presentation of adequate documentation and justification for the action.

To withdraw from all courses for medical reasons or other acceptable cause after the penalty date, the student must submit to the Graduate School a "Request for Assignment of W Grade for Extenuating Circumstances After Penalty Date" form (AS-122A) with supporting documentation. The request must have the approval of the course instructor(s), the student's Graduate Director, and the dean of the Graduate School. A request for partial (rather than complete) withdrawal for extenuating circumstances must include evidence (e.g., a written

statement from a physician, counselor or other qualified professional; or other documentation of extenuating circumstances) that a reduction in, rather than termination of, student coursework is appropriate. Each course instructor assigns the grade of W or WF, depending on the student's performance in that course up to the time of withdrawal. Please use the forms for Faculty & Staff located on the Registrar's [website](#). You will need to contact your college's dean for user name and password authentication.

The schedule for full and partial refunds of fees following a drop or withdrawal is available [here](#).

M. Confirmation of Official Enrollment

The University policy on class attendance is that only officially enrolled (i.e., name on grade roll) students are permitted to attend class. Confirmation of official enrollment of individuals present in class is the responsibility of the instructor.

If an official enrollment cannot be confirmed, the student should be directed to enroll in the class. If the individual encounters problems, the unenrolled individual(s) should be excused and advised to contact the department administrative assistant or the Graduate School for clarification of enrollment status.

N. Senior Privilege Enrollment

Undergraduate students may elect to participate in Senior Privilege or the Accelerated Bachelor's/Graduate Plan, but not both. Senior Privilege permits undergraduate seniors in their final semester (who need less than a normal course load to complete their baccalaureate requirements) to earn up to six hours of graduate credit. An undergraduate student electing to enroll under Senior Privilege must be a senior, have at least a 3.00 overall GPA, and have approval of their undergraduate advisor, the Graduate Director of the relevant program, the dean of the Graduate School, and the instructor for each course to be taken. These endorsements should be obtained in the order indicated on the [Senior Privilege Form](#)

Once processed by the Graduate School, the Senior Privilege form (G-SPCA) is forwarded to the Registrar. It must be processed and on file at the time of registration to permit the Registrar's Office to properly enroll the student for graduate credit. That is, the form must be endorsed and on file before the first day of the relevant semester.

Courses for graduate credit under senior privilege cannot be used toward undergraduate degree requirements. Grades earned in senior privilege classes do not affect undergraduate or graduate GPA; the credit is added to the undergraduate record but not the graduate record (A comment is posted to the graduate record.). However, if a student goes on to enroll in a graduate program, courses earned under Senior Privilege may be included in the graduate program of study. Overload enrollment that includes one or more courses under senior privilege is not allowed.

O. Accelerated Bachelor's/Graduate Study Plan

Undergraduate students may elect to participate in Senior Privilege or the Accelerated

Bachelor's/Graduate Plan, but not both.

The Bachelor's/Graduate Accelerated Plan allows USC undergraduate seniors to apply up to twelve graduate credits toward both undergraduate and graduate degree requirements. Students must have completed at least 90 hours of undergraduate course work, have a minimum GPA of 3.40 overall as well as in their undergraduate major. The student must first submit to the Graduate School an [Application for Admission to an Accelerated Bachelor's/Graduate Plan](#)

The student must obtain approval of their undergraduate advisor, the Graduate Director of the relevant program, the dean of the Graduate School, and the instructor for each course to be taken. Endorsements should be obtained in the order indicated on the form.

Once processed by the Graduate School, this form is forwarded to the Registrar. They must be processed and on file at the time of registration to permit the Registrar's Office to properly enroll the student for graduate credit. That is, the form must be endorsed and on file before the first day of the relevant semester.

P. Transfer Credit From Another Institution

Course credit transferred from another institution for credit toward a graduate degree (including certificates of graduate study) must be relevant to the program and have course content and be taught at a level of instruction equivalent to that offered by the University's own graduate programs. This [form](#) must accompany each request, along with a copy of a relevant syllabus for each course. An official transcript reflecting the final grade for each requested course must also be on file.

The transfer of graduate credits is at the discretion of the academic unit and subject to the following restrictions: No more than 12 semester hours of graduate credit may be transferred into a graduate program that requires up to 36 hours; no more than 15 semester hours of graduate credit may be transferred into a graduate program that requires 37-45 hours; and no more than 18 semester hours of graduate credit may be transferred into a graduate program that requires 46 or more semester hours. Coursework transferred for credit toward a graduate degree must: (i) be from an accredited institution recognized by USC; (ii) carry graduate credit with a grade of *B* (3.0 on a 4.0 scale) or better (or equivalent marks if a different grading system is used); (iii) be within the six year period for courses used in a certificate, master's, or specialist program at the time of graduation; within the ten year period at the time of graduation for a doctoral program.

A maximum of 12 semester hours of graduate credit that is part of a completed master's degree or graduate certificate program at USC may be applied to another USC master's degree or graduate certificate program.

Q. 500 And 600 Level Courses

Per Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) recommendations, syllabi for all 500 and 600 level courses must clearly differentiate

course requirements for undergraduate and graduate students. Graduate students are required to complete additional work (e.g. a research paper and/or additional reading) and are evaluated on a more rigorous basis than the undergraduates. Any distinction must equate to at least one letter grade. That is, if work is not attempted, students should not be eligible to earn a grade of “A.”

R. Grievances, Appeals, and Petitions

Grievances, appeals and petitions of academic decisions should be filed with, and pursued according to the established procedures of, the student’s academic unit. Students should file grievances, appeals or petitions with the dean of the Graduate School using this [form](#), only after the processes for grievances, appeals and petitions at the academic unit level, and where appropriate at the college level, have been exhausted. The Graduate School will accept grievances, appeals and petitions on academic matters only. Disagreement with a grade assigned in a course is not a basis for grievance, appeal or petition to the Graduate School, but should be directed to the instructor. Grievances, appeals and petitions must be submitted in writing and must bear the name, student number, and signature of the student. Student grievances, appeals or petitions for reversal of departmental decisions are only accepted for consideration when questions such as inequitable application of regulations, bias, conflict with regulations, or extenuating circumstances are cited as grounds for the grievances, appeal or petition.

The dean of the Graduate School will attempt to resolve the grievances, appeals and petitions filed with the Graduate School and will refer unresolved issues to the Graduate Council, whose decisions are final. Any further grievances, appeal or petition must be directed to the Office of the Provost.

Graduate student grievances, appeals or petitions of disciplinary decisions reached under the Rule of Academic Responsibility procedures must be made to the University Committee on Academic Responsibility.

VI. Accommodations For Graduate Students with Disabilities

Graduate students with disabilities often need, and under current law are legally entitled to, accommodations which can reduce the barriers they face in the timely completion of degree requirements. The dean of the Graduate School strongly encourages faculty and units to make every reasonable effort to create an equitable learning environment for graduate students with disabilities, within the guidelines provided by USC's [Student Disability Resource Center](#).

Any student requesting individual accommodations in academic work because of a disability should be directed to the Student Disability Resource Center (777-6142), at 1705 College Street, Close-Hipp, Suite 102, Columbia, SC, 29208.

1. Certification of disability by the professional staff.
2. Evaluation of academic adjustments appropriate to the student's individual educational program.
3. Information on available USC special services.

An instructor should not offer or provide special accommodations to a student without a prior official verification of disability by USC's Student Disability Resource Center, since this may legally obligate the institution to continue to provide accommodations that are not justified by the student's actual disabilities.

VII. Financial Assistance for Graduate Students

A. Categories and Definitions

1. Graduate assistantships (teaching, research, instructional, and staff assistantships) normally obligate the holder to 10-20 hours of assigned duties each week and are supported by appropriated or institutionally administered funds.
2. Fellowships are unconditional awards to students to support their studies, and do not require any specific duties of the recipients.
3. Traineeships are awards provided by grants (almost all federally funded) to programs in specific disciplines to promote the professional training of students in areas of societal need.
4. Internships are funded appointments for which students are assigned to work in professional settings, generally off-campus, where they acquire specialized skills needed in their chosen profession.

B. Graduate Assistants

The policies and procedures related to Graduate Assistants are addressed in [ACAF 4.00](#) of the University Policies and Procedures manual. It is cited below in its entirety.

i. ACAF 4.00 GRADUATE ASSISTANT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION:	ACAF Academic Affairs
POLICY NUMBER:	ACAF 4.00
POLICY TITLE:	Graduate Assistantships
SCOPE OF POLICY:	University System
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
DATE OF REVISION:	October 1, 2020.

PURPOSE

This policy defines the rights and responsibilities for graduate students offered temporary employment as graduate assistants at the University of South Carolina.

DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Academic Unit: The department, school, or college administering an academic program.

Compensation: The amount paid to a graduate assistant for working as described in a written work agreement. The compensation can be either a salary (fixed amount for the term of appointment and services described) or hourly wages (amount based on hourly rate and reported hours worked). Certain graduate assistants are paid a stipend, a particular form of salary, when the assistantship responsibilities are directly aligned with the academic program.

Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA): The Fair Labor Standards Act, establishes minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, and child labor standards affecting full-time and part-time workers in the private sector and in Federal, State and local governments.

FICA exemption: FICA (Federal Insurance Contributions Act, including Social Security and Medicare) taxes do not apply to service performed by a student who is employed by a university where the student is pursuing a program of study and satisfies the criteria detailed in Rev. Proc. 2005p-11.

Graduate Assistant (GA): A degree-seeking student enrolled in the Graduate School who assists, under faculty supervision, in the conduct of the university's total education program by providing teaching, research, or other services.

Graduate Assistantship: The position held by a graduate assistant.

Hiring Unit: The administrative unit processing employment.

Tuition Supplement: Funds provided by either the student's hiring unit or academic unit and credited toward the student's tuition and fees.

POLICY

A graduate assistant is a student enrolled in the Graduate School who assists, under faculty supervision, in the conduct of the University's total education program by providing teaching, research, or other services.

The categories for appointment as a graduate assistant are as follows (see [Student Employment Job Codes](#)):

- Graduate Athletics Assistant (GAA/SGAA) – Assists with practice, training, and coaching responsibilities associated with student athletes and athletics programs;
- Graduate Instructional Assistant (GIA/SGIA) – Assists with instruction, but cannot be listed as the instructor of record and must have attended a series of workshops for Graduate Teaching Assistants and Graduate Instructional Assistants sponsored

by the Graduate School;

- Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA/SGTA) – Functions as an instructor of record, must attend a series of workshops for Graduate Teaching Assistants and Graduate Instructional Assistants and have completed 18 semester hours of graduate course work in the discipline to be taught. Additionally, in accordance with University Policy [ACAF 1.20](#) Credential Verification for Instructors of Record, a graduate teaching assistant who does not hold a graduate degree in the teaching discipline must be periodically evaluated by his or her faculty supervisor or other faculty member in the discipline.
- Graduate Research Assistant (GRA/SGRA) – Assists faculty or staff in conducting research;
- Graduate Residence/Housing Assistant (GRH/SGRH) – Works in campus housing;
- Graduate Staff Assistant (GSA/SGSA) – Provides administrative assistance. A graduate staff assistant must be hired on an hourly basis, is covered by FLSA and is subject to both the minimum wage and overtime requirements of the law.

In addition to fulfilling functions that would otherwise be performed by regular faculty and staff members, graduate assistants also receive valuable practical experience as they prepare for future teaching, research, or administrative responsibilities.

These regulations are designed to ensure compliance with state and federal law and to protect and enhance the student experience of every graduate assistant. The dean of the Graduate School is responsible for the implementation of these policies and regulations, and any deviations must have the dean's prior written approval. These regulations apply to all graduate assistantships, regardless of funding source. Any graduate students not meeting the requirements to be classified as a graduate assistant may be hired as a temporary hourly employee (see [HR 1.86](#)).

1. In addition to receiving compensation in the form of hourly wages, salary, or stipend, non-South Carolina residents who are graduate assistants are assessed the resident tuition rate¹ (see [FINA 4.03 Tuition and Fees Reduction](#)) and receive a subsidy toward the premium cos for student health insurance, if this coverage is not waived (see the [Student Health Service website](#)).
 1. The hiring unit may offer a tuition supplement in addition to the direct compensation. The tuition supplement will be processed by the hiring unit as a credit with the Bursar's Office against which tuition will be charged each semester. Students are responsible for any portion of their tuition and fees and not covered by the employing unit and/or by their academic unit.
 2. Assessment of resident tuition during the spring semester for a graduate assistantship shall be extended to summer enrollment.
 3. Graduate assistants who are appointed after the first 20 days of a semester or

after the first ten days of a Summer term (dates published annually by the Graduate School) shall not be coded as such for tuition or other purposes during the term of appointment.

¹ The Moore School of Business master's-level students are not included.

4. Non-South Carolina residents who receive timely appointments as graduate assistants, but whose duties terminate before the midterm date of the term appointed, shall be billed as non-resident for tuition purposes.
2. The minimum number of hours of work required per week for a graduate assistantship is ten, and the maximum is twenty. A graduate assistant's stipend must satisfy federal minimum wage requirements for the effort and duration specified in the work agreement. The current minimum salary, stipend and hourly rate for graduate assistants can be found at the [U.S. Department of Labor](#).
3. For fall and spring semesters, the minimum enrollment requirement for a graduate assistant is six graduate credit hours per semester. For the summer, the minimum enrollment requirements is three graduate credit hours. For under-enrolled students approved for special enrollment (Z-status), the minimum enrollment requirement is one graduate credit hour per semester. The student's program or academic unit may establish a maximum enrollment.
4. Graduate assistants must have a written agreement with the hiring unit. The [Human Resources Student Employment website](#) provides a template that includes some information, but the Graduate School encourages the hiring unit to address as much of the following information as possible:
 1. Beginning and end dates of appointment (not to exceed 12 months).
 2. Supervisor, if immediate supervisor is not a university employee, must also identify a faculty advisor for the appointment.
 3. Potential for reappointment.
 4. Tuition supplement and additional subsidy for student health insurance, if applicable.
 5. Anticipated work schedule (e.g., total hours or hours/week; expectation for work outside of normal working hours; accommodations for holidays, exams, personal requests).
 6. Compensation, expressed either as a salary or stipend for the described appointment (required for graduate research assistant, graduate teaching assistant, graduate instructional assistant, graduate athletics assistant, and graduate resident housing assistant) or as hourly wages to be paid for reported hours worked (required for graduate staff assistants).

7. Work responsibilities.
8. Evaluation for feedback processes.
9. Grounds for dismissal, including both unsatisfactory performance of the work responsibilities and academic performance/degree progression. Note that as temporary employees, however, the appointment can be terminated at any time with or without cause.
10. Procedures for grievance (or, reference to where to find language on how to deal with concerns with treatment by the hiring agent/agency).
5. Graduate staff assistants are hourly employees and must report time worked for compensation. The cumulative hours worked must satisfy a weekly average of 10-20 hours/week, although individual weeks may be outside of this range upon mutual agreement of the graduate assistant and supervisor.
6. Graduate assistants do not earn personal leave. The graduate assistant can request up to three weeks of leave without pay during any semester without loss of the graduate assistantship and related benefits. The request must include justification such as personal illness or hardship or serious illness or death in the immediate family.
7. Students serving as graduate teaching assistants, graduate instructional assistants, graduate research assistants, and graduate resident assistants are exempt from minimum wage and overtime requirements as defined in the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).
8. Students serving as graduate staff assistants are generally not exempt from FLSA minimum wage and overtime requirements. To request exempt status for a graduate staff assistantship, the hiring unit must submit a justification to the Classification and Compensation Office in the Division of Human Resources.
9. Students serving as graduate assistants and satisfying the enrollment and work requirements defined above are exempt from FICA withholding based on the status as an employee being incident to and for the purpose of pursuing a program of study.
10. Graduate assistants protesting dismissal, alleging violations of their work agreement, or expressing other concerns about their work conditions can consult with the [Graduate Student Ombuds](#) or petition for resolution following standard procedures for [grievances, appeals, and petitions](#)
11. Fellowships and Traineeships: A graduate assistant may receive additional aid in the form of a scholarship, fellowship or traineeship requiring no additional duties.
12. Outside Employment: Graduate assistants are expected to devote full-time effort to

their studies and their assistantship responsibilities. They are, therefore, discouraged from having additional employment on or off campus, during the term(s) for which they are appointed. In addition, regular university employees are not eligible for assistantships.

13. External Funding: Graduate assistantships may be funded by external sources, including for work performed on an externally sponsored project (e.g., grant) or for work performed directly on behalf of an external organization (e.g., state agency, nonprofit, or business). Externally-funded assistantships should include funds to cover a portion of, or all, of a student's tuition.

Students working on sponsored projects are appointed by the principal investigator/project director (PI/PD) and their salary is charged to the designated sponsored program account. The student works under the supervision of the PI/PD and all aspects of employment are treated as if paid by internal funds.

Students appointed to assistantships may also work directly for an external organization while being paid by the university. This type of assignment is deemed to be a Graduate Student Work Experience which is covered by a specific agreement between the university and the external organization. Students working under these agreements are advised by a USC faculty member and supervised by a qualified employee of the external organization. The Work Experience should be related to the students' academic program and is executed by the academic department and/or college.

14. MD/JD/PharmD Students: Students in the MD program are not eligible for graduate assistantships. JD students are eligible for appointments as graduate research assistants or graduate staff assistants in the School of Law. JD students enrolled in dual degree programs may be eligible for appointment as graduate assistants in schools or colleges other than the School of Law. JD students who are not South Carolina residents and who are appointed as graduate assistants are eligible for resident School of Law tuition rates if approved by the dean of the School of Law. Subject to the approval of the dean of the College of Pharmacy, students in the PharmD program may be appointed as graduate assistants. PharmD students appointed as teaching or instructional assistants must complete GTA/GIA workshops sponsored by the Graduate School.

PROCEDURE

- A. The hiring unit initiates the appointment of a graduate assistant following procedures documented by [Human Resources](#), after confirming that the student is enrolled in the minimum number of graduate credit hours. If applicable, the hiring unit submits any tuition supplement documentation to the Bursar. This includes a signed work agreement (see policy section E above) including a request for FLSA exempt status if applicable for graduate staff assistants.
- B. The Graduate School confirms enrollment eligibility for a graduate assistantship.

RELATED UNIVERSITY, STATE, AND FEDERAL POLICIES

[ACAF 1.20 Credential Verification for Instructors of Record](#)

HISTORY OF REVISIONS

DATE OF REVISION	REASON FOR REVISION
February 1, 1995	New policy approval
October 10, 2016	Policy revised to reference related policy, ACAF 1.20 Credential Verification for Instructors of Record, and to align graduate teaching assistant requirements with SACSCOC requirements for instructors of record.
October 1, 2020	Policy revised to document compliance with federal law, require a written work agreement for any graduate assistantship, and establish a grievance process for graduate assistants.

Recommended content for minimum compensation page

Compensation for Graduate Assistantships

Policies and procedures for the appointment and management of graduate assistantships are contained in policies ACAF 4.00 Graduate Assistantships and HR X.XX Student Employment.

- Effective August 16, 2020, graduate assistantship must receive compensation no less than \$8.67/hour or \$1300 for a ten-hour, 15-week position.
- Effective August 16, 2021, graduate assistantship must receive compensation no less than \$9.33/hour or \$1400 for a ten-hour, 15-week position.
- Effective August 16, 2022, graduate assistantship must receive compensation no less than \$10.00/hour or \$1500 for a ten-hour, 15-week position.

End of ACAF 4.00

C. Graduate School Policy on Graduate Assistant Appointments

1. Eligibility Requirements:

- 1) Must be enrolled in a degree program and in good standing;
- 2) Must be registered for at least six graduate credits during a major semester.

2. Stipend Range:²

- \$2,000 minimum for not more than 10 hours per week (per semester);
- \$4,000 minimum for not more than 20 hours per week (per semester).
- \$750 minimum for not more than 10 hours per week per summer session;
- \$1,500 minimum for not more than 20 hours per week per summer session.

2. Course Load:

- Fall/Spring Semester - 6 to 12 hours; Summer Session – 3 to 6 hours.

4. Work Assignment:

- 20 hours per week maximum (unless the student derives direct academic benefit from the work, e.g. thesis or dissertation research).

5. Access to Student Health Services:

- Access to the Student Health Center is provided to all
- Graduate Assistants. An additional activities fee is required to obtain athletic and student activities privileges.

6. Qualifications and Oversight of Teaching and Instructional Assistants
SACSCOC criteria call for the following measures to ensure the quality of instruction provided by GTAs and GIAs:

- Adequate preparation in the teaching field. A teaching assistant with primary responsibility for a class and/or assignment of final grades (designated a GTA) must have completed at least 18 semester hours of graduate work in the discipline being taught, and must work under the supervision of a faculty member.
- Adequate teaching skills. The Graduate School conducts annual teaching skills workshops for new GTAs and GIAs prior to the beginning of the fall semester. Graduate Directors

² Maximum amount cannot exceed the amount paid to a first-year postdoctoral fellow in the academic unit.

should inform all new GTA and GIA appointees that they must participate in the workshop.

- c. Effective communication skills. International GTAs and GIAs must participate in a special workshop that orients them to the educational and cultural environment of this University as well as evaluating their fluency in spoken English. An act of the South Carolina Legislature mandates that all instructors at the University have adequate proficiency in English. International graduate students who do not possess native or near-native fluency in American English can be appointed as teaching assistants only if their oral proficiency in English has been evaluated as satisfactory by EPI faculty in a special workshop these students must attend. Information about ITA training and assessment is available at this website: <http://www.gradschool.sc.edu/TA-training/index.html>
- d. Regular evaluation. All GTAs and GIAs who have direct contact with students should be regularly evaluated by faculty and students to assess their effectiveness as instructors and to provide them with constructive feedback on both the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching methods.
- e. Adequate oversight. GTAs and GIAs should work under the continuous oversight of a specifically appointed supervisor or mentor. Faculty guidance of the GTA in determining the scope, content, and organization of a course is the minimum to be expected. Faculty supervisors should be accessible to the graduate assistants under their direction and should take an active interest in the progress and problems of each class.

D. Tuition Policy for Graduate Students Supported with External Funds

Beginning August 1, 2002, the Office of Academic Affairs requires the following for externally sponsored graduate student assistantships and placements:

1. Federal Sponsored Program Applications. Request the in-state portion of tuition for the fall and spring semesters for any graduate student that is supported on a federal grant application.
2. State/Non-Profit/Industrial Sponsored Program Applications. Request the in-state portion of tuition for graduate students supported on these types of awards. If you decide not to request tuition, you will need to indicate that the department will be responsible for the in-state portion of the tuition.

E. Fellowships and Traineeships

- i. Fellowships fall into two categories which differ in application procedures and administration.

1. **Institutionally Awarded Fellowships** are those whose funding sources reside within the University. Nominations for these awards should be originated by or coordinated through the Graduate Director, the department Chair, or the Dean of the college and sent to the Graduate School using Financial Aid Graduate Fellowship/Awards Authorization [form](#). Information about fellowships grants, and other awards administered by the Graduate School can be found [here](#).
 2. **Externally Funded Fellowships** are those offered by governmental agencies, non-profit foundations, and other organizations. These awards, usually highly competitive, are made directly to the graduate student with the funds being administered by the USC Office of Sponsored Awards Management (SAM). Information about opportunities for external fellowships is available through their [website](#).
- v. **Traineeships** are paid from grants awarded to academic units, who determine which students in their programs will receive these awards. Students must be enrolled in a supported program to be eligible for appointment to a traineeship. These awards are made using Financial Aid Federal Traineeship Authorization form F9.5 (<http://www.gradschool.sc.edu/doclibrary/documents/FTA.pdf>).
- iii. Tuition reduction is not automatic. Some externally funded awards include amounts to partially or fully cover the costs of tuition and, perhaps, books or other educational expenses.

The University of South Carolina assigns special fee classes for in-state tuition rates to non-resident graduate students who are awarded fellowships or traineeships (that are designated qualifying fellowships) if the following conditions are met:

- a. The award is for education purposes and imposes no obligations on the recipient for service, participation, or repayment, either concurrent or future.
 - b. The award pays at least \$250 per semester.
 - c. Payment is through a University-administered account.
 - d. The recipient is enrolled for the required hours stipulated by the paying department.
- iv. May be taxable on the part of the compensation that exceeds necessary educational expenses (tuition, fees, books, etc.), but USC does not withhold taxes from the awards. Award recipients are responsible for calculating and paying taxes to the IRS.

i. **Internships**

Funding for internships generally is provided by the businesses or agencies to which students are assigned as interns. Internships do not entitle recipients to special tuition rates or fee classes.

VIII. Tracking Students' Progress to Degree

A. Academic Standards

It is the responsibility of all students to be aware of USC academic standards and their current academic record. Students should check their Record of Academic Work in VIP at the conclusion of each semester. The academic record will list any probationary status that requires attention by the student.

- i. **For Grade Point Average (GPA).** For purposes of academic standards, cumulative GPA is defined as the grade point average of all graduate-credit courses recorded on the official USC academic transcript. Grades earned on graduate credits transferred from other universities are not included in the grade point average.
- ii. **For Progression.** Graduate courses may be passed for degree credit with a grade as low as C, but a degree-seeking student's cumulative grade point average must be at least B (3.00 on a 4.00 scale).
- iii. **For Graduation.** At the time of graduation, the student's cumulative graduate grade point average must be at least 3.00. Additionally, the student's average on all grades recorded on the Program of Study for courses numbered 700 or above must be at least 3.00.
- iv. **For Suspension. ("3.00 Rule").** Graduate degree-seeking students whose cumulative grade point average drops below 3.00 (B) will be placed on academic probation and allowed one calendar year in which to raise the grade point average to at least 3.00. Students who do not reach a cumulative 3.00 grade point average during the probationary period will not be permitted to enroll for further graduate course work as a degree or non-degree student.
Colleges and departments may impose more stringent requirements than the Graduate School's Academic suspension policy. Students should consult their advisors to ensure familiarity with departmental regulations.
- v. **Academic Forgiveness.** The Academic Forgiveness Policy applies to any former USC graduate student who has not been enrolled in the Graduate School at the University for at least 24 consecutive months. Academic

forgiveness provides an opportunity for graduate students to complete a degree program by setting aside all former grades earned as a USC graduate student so that they will not be calculated into the student's graduate GPA. With notification from the dean of the Graduate School, the Registrar's Office will segment the student's academic record showing all courses and grades to be included in academic forgiveness and recalculate the USC graduate GPA accordingly. The courses and grades will remain a part of the student's academic record. A notation will appear on the transcript indicating the student was approved for academic forgiveness. Once academic forgiveness is granted, courses taken during and prior to the term elected cannot be revalidated or count toward the completion of a graduate degree.

- vi. **Extension of Probation, Reinstatement after Suspension, or Academic Forgiveness.** Appeals should be reviewed first by the department and/or college and then forwarded to the dean of the Graduate School. Appeals may be referred to the Grievances, Appeals and Petitions Committee of Graduate Council. Guidelines for Appeals of Academic Decisions are [here](#).

B. Graduate School Responsibilities and Actions

- i. **Programs of Study** require the dean of the Graduate School's approval after they have received departmental approval. Programs of Study should be submitted by all degree-seeking graduate students by the end of the first year for a master's degree program and by the end of the second year for a doctoral degree program. Students pursuing a Certificate of Graduate Study must also have an approved program of study on file in the Graduate School. No more than six hours of C credit can be used on the Program of Study for a Certificate of Graduate Study. Students pursuing a master's, specialist, or doctoral degree must have an approved Program of Study on file in the Graduate School. Candidates must achieve a cumulative graduate GPA of at least 3.0 on all USC course graduate credit. Some programs have more stringent requirements.
- ii. **Doctoral Committees**, including advisory committees, examining committees, and dissertation committees appointed by the department are not official until approved by the dean of the Graduate School. Committees appointed to guide or examine candidates for master's degrees do not need the approval of the dean of the Graduate School.
- iii. **Admission to Candidacy** is granted by the dean of the Graduate School, upon the recommendation of the program, to doctoral students who have performed satisfactorily on an Admission to Candidacy exam. Admission to candidacy, however, can not be granted until the student's records are clear of any deficiencies (official transcripts with degree posted, etc.).

- iv. **Theses and Dissertations** must be prepared in accordance with Graduate School guidelines and signed by the dean of the Graduate School.
- v. **Clearance for Degree** requires record checks and signatures by the Graduate Director and by the dean of the Graduate School's representative to signify that the student has completed all departmental and Graduate School requirements for the degree.

C. Departmental Responsibilities and Actions

Graduate students must satisfy both the uniform requirements which apply to all master's or doctoral degrees (as appropriate) and the specific requirements of their program. The Graduate Director and the faculty of each program should be conversant with both sets of requirements and able to guide students in planning curriculum and research programs.

The Graduate Director should inform the Graduate School in writing of a student's completion of specific degree requirements (e.g. admission to candidacy, comprehensive, and dissertation exams, proposed Program of Study, doctoral committee appointments).

- i. **Orientation to Program Requirements.** During the orientation to the program, the student should be advised in writing of the degree requirements. These include:
 - 1. **Program Guidelines or Handbooks**, explaining both degree requirements and departmental procedures and policies which students will be expected to follow.
 - 2. ***The Graduate Studies Bulletin***. Graduate students are allowed to complete degrees under the graduation requirements specified in the University Graduate Bulletin at the time they enter the degree or under subsequent graduation requirements published while they are enrolled in that degree program. However, students are restricted in their choice to the requirements of one bulletin. Graduate students in master's programs have a period of six years in which to claim the rights of a specific bulletin. Doctoral students have a period of ten years.
 - 3. **Program Website**. Guidelines, requirements, and other program specific information published for students on the program's website.

D. Master's Program Procedures and Policies

- i. **Program of Study**. The Program of Study lists the courses that a student must complete to meet the minimum requirements of the degree program to which the student has been admitted. The student may take more than the minimum, but it is not necessary and inadvisable to post these courses to the Program of Study. The [Masters Program of Study](#) must be endorsed by the student, the student's advisor, the Graduate Director, and the dean of the Graduate School. It is, in effect, a contract between the University and the student, and once approved is binding unless all parties agree to its

amendment and complete the [Program of Study Adjustment Form](#). The master's Program of Study must include:

- a. A minimum of 30 semester hours of graduate credit (many degree programs require more than 30 hours) of which no more than six hours may be in thesis preparation, 799
 - b. At least half of the credits, exclusive of 799, in courses numbered 700 or above
 - c. Not more than six hours of independent study other than thesis research, unless justified by the department and approved by the dean of the Graduate School
 - d. Only courses whose dates of completion are within six years of the award of the degree.
- ii. **Concurrent Programs of Study:** Students concurrently enrolled in certificate, specialist, masters, or doctoral programs may use no more than 12 semester hours that are common to all the programs of study. Departments or programs may permit fewer hours of concurrently enrolled courses.
- iii. **Foreign Language and/or Research Methods:** Specific language and research methods requirements for the master's degree vary from program to program and must be approved by the unit's graduate director and the dean of the Graduate School. Satisfying the requirement may entail one or more of the following: successful completion of an intensive reading course in a language--approved by the Graduate School--while a graduate student at USC (e.g., FORL 315), successful completion of a course at the intermediate level of language proficiency within six years of award of the degree, or a passing grade on a language reading proficiency examination administered by the USC Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures (students should consult the chair of the foreign language department in advance of the examination and make formal application for the exam at least one month before it is to be given). Students seeking master's degrees will have three opportunities to pass the language course or satisfy the reading proficiency examination.

In some programs a student is allowed or required to substitute competency in computer science, statistics, or another research method or competency for a reading knowledge of a foreign language. The requirement may be satisfied by the appropriate course work. The Graduate School should be apprised of a student's successful completion of this requirement. More detailed information addressing these issues may be obtained from the student's graduate director.

With approval of the dean of the Graduate School and the department concerned, English may be accepted as a foreign language for students whose native language is not English. In cases where it is relevant to a student's research, American Sign Language may be used to satisfy the language requirement.

The student should make arrangements to complete the foreign language and/or research

methods requirements at the earliest opportunity. Certification of foreign language and/or research methods competency for master's students remains valid for six years, after which it must be revalidated.

A reading knowledge of one foreign language may be required for the Master of Arts or Master of Science degree by the student's department. Programs which directly involve language study may have additional language requirements.

- iv. **Comprehensive Assessment.** A comprehensive assessment in the major field of study is required for all candidates for a master's degree. The nature and format of this assessment may vary according to the pedagogical and training needs of the graduate program. The assessment should be completed at least 15 days before the end of the semester and not more than two years prior to the date on which the degree is received. The results of the assessment are reported to the dean of the Graduate School by the Graduate Director. Certification of the comprehensive assessment for master's students remains valid for two years (term specific), after which it must be revalidated.
- v. **Completion and Submission of the Thesis.** A thesis or research project is required of almost all graduate students seeking the Master of Arts or the Master of Science degrees. However, some programs have a non-thesis option. Selection of a topic and work on the thesis are approved and directed by a faculty committee that is approved by the program. The thesis director is chosen by the student. The manner in which the thesis topic is selected and approved varies among academic units. The form of the thesis must meet the guidelines issued by the Graduate School.

The thesis in final draft requires approval of at least two faculty in the student's program before submission to the Graduate School for the dean's approval. The regulations regarding submission of theses are included in the Graduate School's guidelines and in *The Graduate Studies Bulletin*. The approved and signed thesis must be filed with the Graduate School at least 20 days prior to the end of the semester in which the degree is to be awarded (Consult the Graduate School website for the specific date).

A master's student must register for at least one semester hour of Thesis Preparation, 799, in any term in which University facilities are used, or faculty are consulted about the thesis, including the term in which the thesis is completed, approved, and submitted to the Graduate School.

Candidates who complete all degree requirements (including submission of the thesis, if applicable) before the beginning of a term, and who will receive a degree at its end, may, upon request, be registered in that term "for degree only" by the Graduate School at no tuition cost.

- vi. **Master's Projects** in lieu of a thesis are prepared and approved according to departmental regulations, do not require the dean of the Graduate School's approval, and are not normally submitted to the Graduate School upon completion. The deadlines for

completion of master's projects are set by the respective departments, and the results are communicated to the Graduate School as part of the clearance for graduation.

vii. **Guidelines for Appointment of Master's Committees:**

- a. Thesis committees should comprise only faculty from the Columbia campus; only in extraordinary cases will faculty from another accredited institution or holder of the terminal degree who are not associated with the University be allowed to direct theses or to serve as committee members.
- b. Tenure-track faculty at any rank who hold the doctorate or the discipline's terminal degree, whose units offer graduate programs, and tenured faculty at the rank of full professor who do not hold the terminal degree may serve on and chair thesis committees.
- c. Research, clinical, and adjunct faculty at any rank, who hold the terminal degree, may serve on and chair thesis committees with approval of the unit and the Graduate School.
- d. Instructors and lecturers who do not hold the terminal degree may serve as members of thesis committees with permission of the unit and the Graduate School.
- e. Emeritus or emerita faculty, with permission of the unit and the Graduate School, may continue to chair theses of students under their direction at retirement and be appointed members of thesis committees.

E. Doctoral Program Procedures and Requirements

The Graduate School should be notified at each of the following steps:

- i. **Program of Study.** The Program of Study lists all courses that a doctoral student must complete as part of the degree program to which the student has been admitted. The Doctoral Program of Study ([DPOS](#)) must be endorsed by the student, the student's advisor, the Graduate Director, and the dean of the Graduate School. It is, in effect, a contract between the University and the student, and, once approved, is binding unless all parties agree to its amendment and the submission of [Program of Study Adjustment Form](#).

This program must include at least 18 semester hours, other than 899, which are not used on any other degree program. Note that any course on this program which exceeds the 10 year limit before the degree is awarded must be revalidated, retaken, or replaced with another course.

- ii. **Admission to Candidacy Exam.** All candidates for admission to doctoral candidacy are required to pass an admission to candidacy examination administered by the department in which the major work is to be done. The exam may be written, or written and oral.

The scope of the exam should allow a determination of the candidate's potential for ongoing intellectual development, capacity for critical analysis and synthesis of

proposed field of study.

Upon receipt of a positive recommendation, the Graduate School evaluates the student's records for completeness (no delinquent transcripts, etc.), the student's academic standing and other pertinent factors. If everything is in order, the Graduate School notifies the student (with copy to the Graduate Director) of admission to candidacy.

It is advisable that doctoral students take this examination without undue delay to screen out unqualified students. Admission to candidacy is not necessarily a prerequisite to approval of the Program of Study, and must occur not later than one academic year prior to the date on which the degree is awarded.

- iii. **Appointment of Doctoral Committees.** The unit must appoint committees that serve specific roles in the supervision and examination of a doctoral candidate. The membership of these committees must be approved by the dean of the Graduate School. The dissertation committee, must include a qualified member from outside the student's major department. The program may request the same faculty composition for all committees.

- 1. **Committee Composition** Graduate Directors are requested to use form [G-DCA](#), Doctoral Committee Appointment Request, to recommend committees for approval by the dean of the Graduate School. A change in committee membership must be requested in writing, with appropriate justification, and receive approval before the new member can serve.

The Written and Oral Comprehensive Exam Committee administers the oral portion of the comprehensive exam. It is comprised of at least four members including one outside member, and requires the dean of the Graduate School's approval.

The Dissertation Committee, approved by the dean of the Graduate School, consists of three or more faculty from the major field and directs the student in the preparation of the dissertation. The dissertation must be accepted by this committee before it can be defended before the dissertation examination committee.

The Dissertation Defense Committee examines the student on the dissertation, and informs the dean of the Graduate School as to whether the student passed or failed. The final dissertation cannot be submitted to the Graduate School until it has been approved and signed by members of the dissertation defense committee. The committee, which requires the dean's approval, must include at least four members, one of whom is from outside the major department.

- 2. **Eligible Members.** The dean of the Graduate School considers all regular and associate Graduate School Faculty eligible for appointment as members of doctoral committees and to direct doctoral dissertations. Term appointed individuals may be approved for periods of eligibility of up to three years, during which time appointment

to doctoral committees requires no further justification.

- a. a doctoral committee member whose period of eligibility expires while a student is still pursuing the degree may continue to serve on that committee until the student completes the program, provided the faculty member is still employed by USC or an officially affiliated institution.
- b. a majority (more than half) of each doctoral committee's membership must be tenure-track USC faculty.
- c. The outside member of a doctoral committee must be from outside the student's department. This member may be a faculty member in another department at USC or another institution, or may be a qualified professional from the private or governmental sectors. "Outside" members are approved by the dean of the Graduate School on the basis of qualifications, as evidenced by their credentials, and their relevance to the student's field, as explained in the justification submitted with the nomination. Outside members are approved separately for each student's committee. A record of the dean of the Graduate School's action on the recommendation is maintained in the student's official file.

- iv. **Foreign Language and/or Research Methods.** Specific language and research methods requirements vary from program to program and must be approved by the unit's graduate director and the dean of the Graduate School. Satisfying the requirement may entail one or more of the following: successful completion of an intensive reading course in a language -- approved by the Graduate School -- while a graduate student at USC (e.g., FORL 315), successful completion of a course at the intermediate level of language proficiency within six years of award of the degree, or a passing grade on a language reading proficiency examination administered by the USC Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures (students should consult the chair of the foreign language department in advance of the examination and make formal application for the exam at least one month before it is to be given).

In some programs a student is allowed or required to substitute competency in computer science, statistics, or another research method or competency for a reading knowledge of a foreign language. The requirement may be satisfied by the appropriate course work. The Graduate School should be apprised of a student's successful completion of this requirement. More detailed information addressing these issues may be obtained from the student's graduate director.

With approval of the dean of the Graduate School and the department concerned, English may be accepted as a foreign language for students whose native language is not English. In cases where it is relevant to a student's research, American Sign Language may be used to satisfy the language requirement.

The student should make arrangements to complete the foreign language and/or research methods requirements at the earliest opportunity.

Programs which directly involve language study may have additional language requirements.

- v. **Residency Requirement.** The intent of a residency requirement is to ensure that doctoral students benefit from and contribute to the full spectrum of educational and professional opportunities provided by working closely with the graduate faculty and other students of a research university. The doctoral residency requirement may be satisfied only after admission to a doctoral degree program. The membership of the Graduate Faculty of the University of South Carolina subscribe to the position that a residency requirement may be met in a variety of ways, and that these ways may relate to the particulars of different degree programs.

All graduate programs are expected to encourage, design, provide and monitor the means for doctoral students to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values appropriate to their discipline through mechanisms that extend beyond mere course work. Regular attendance in courses to gain experience with specialized equipment and other scholarly materials and at seminars presented by scholars at the University of South Carolina and other invited guests is a beginning point. Additional experiences may include, but not be limited to, attending and presenting at professional conferences, participation in presentations of scholarly work, assisting with the conceptualization and development and application for funding of scholarly efforts.

Given the diversity of disciplinary traditions at a major research university, residency requirements may be met in different ways. At the University of South Carolina, residency requirements may be met in one of two ways:

Option 1. Two consecutive semesters of full-time enrollment. Full time enrollment is defined as enrollment for 6 hours for students serving as graduate assistants and 9 hours for students who are not graduate assistants; consecutive semesters could be fall/spring, spring/summer, summer/fall, or spring/fall. Programs are expected to provide enrichment opportunities beyond course enrollment to help doctoral students understand and meet the intention of the residency requirements.

Option 2. Program-specific alternative residency plan. Diverse academic traditions and rapidly changing technology are factors that make a single approach to meeting the intention of a residency requirement problematic. Hence, program representatives may propose alternative methods to achieving the residency goals. This proposal would be submitted to the senior associate dean of the Graduate School for consideration by the Graduate Council.

In approving a student's program of study, his/her Doctoral Advisory Committee must include a plan to satisfy the residency requirement, and this must be specified on the Doctoral Program of Study form ([GS-51](#)).

- vi. **Comprehensive Examination.** The doctoral comprehensive examination is administered after all courses listed on the student's Program of Study are completed, or during the term in which the remaining course(s) is/are to be completed. The exam tests the student's comprehension and depth in the field(s) for which s/he is responsible. The comprehensive exam must be passed not less than 60 days prior to the award of the degree.

The written part of the exam may be departmental or individualized. The oral part of the exam is given by the comprehensive oral examining committee appointed for the candidate with the approval of the dean of the Graduate School. The candidate must pass both parts of the comprehensive exam. The program's guidelines should clearly state the department's policy on re-examination in case of partial failure. The results of the exam are transmitted via a written memo by the Graduate Director to the Graduate School.

***Note:** Certification of the comprehensive examination for doctoral students remains valid for five years (term specific), after which it must be revalidated.*

- vii. **Completion and Submission of the Dissertation.** The format of the dissertation must meet the guidelines published by the Graduate School. Helpful templates, tutorials, and information about these guidelines are available [here](#). The candidate should read and review the current guidelines before beginning to write.

Candidates must satisfactorily complete a minimum of 12 hours credit in 899, Dissertation Preparation. Doctoral candidates should be registered for at least one semester hour of dissertation preparation credit (899) in any term in which University facilities are used or faculty consulted on the preparation of the dissertation, including the term in which the dissertation is completed and defended.

Candidates who complete all degree requirements, including submission of final copies of the approved dissertation before the start of a term, may register "for degree only" at no tuition cost.

The deadlines for submitting dissertations for each term are listed [here](#).

- viii. **Defense of Dissertation.** Defense of the dissertation is conducted by the approved dissertation examining committee as the final step in completing the requirements for a doctoral degree. It must be held at least 30 days prior to the award of the degree, and the result should be transmitted via a written memo from the Graduate Director to the Graduate School.

F. Certificates of Graduate Study—Procedures and Regulations

The Certificate of Graduate Study signifies that the recipient has completed a program of graduate course work in a defined area. Certificate programs may be post-baccalaureate or

post-masters, depending upon whether their admission requirements specify that the applicant must hold a bachelors or masters degree. Certificate programs do not require comprehensive exams, demonstration of foreign language proficiency, or research components as do many degree programs. A graduate student may pursue a degree program and a certificate program concurrently.

1. **Minimal Requirements** for Certificates of Graduate Study:

- a. A minimum of 12 semester hours, as specified for the particular certificate.
- b. At least 9 hours in prescribed courses, with the remaining courses selected by advisement from a list of approved options.
- c. At least half of the credit hours on the Program of Study in 700/800 level courses.

With the approval of the department or program concerned and subject to the regulations of the Graduate School, no more than nine semester hours of graduate credit with grades of B or better may be transferred into a graduate certificate program requiring 18-23 credit hours; no more than twelve semester hours of graduate credit with grades of B or better may transferred into a graduate certificate program requiring 24 or more credit hours. Course work transferred for credit toward a Certificate of Graduate Study must be from an accredited institution recognized by USC and must be dated within the six year period for courses used in the graduate certificate program.

All course work must be completed within six years of the award of the Certificate.

- a. A maximum of 6 hours below B may be included in a certificate program.
- b. Grades of less than B in 9 semester hours during the six-year period render the student ineligible to receive a Certificate of Graduate Study.
- c. The certificate student must achieve an average of at least B on all graduate course work taken within the 6-year period preceding award of the Certificate of Graduate Study.

There is no residency requirement for a Certificate of Graduate Study.

2. **Application and Admission.** Applicants to a certificate program are required to submit a regular application form to the Graduate School. Admission is granted by the dean of the Graduate School upon the recommendation of the program director and a review of the student's credentials. The criteria for admission vary with the particular certificate program.
3. **Procedures.** A Program of Study ([Masters Degree or Certificate Program of Study](#)) for each student must be completed and submitted for the dean of the Graduate School's approval. Certificate study may be carried on concurrently with or independent of work on a degree program and, with the approval of the

department concerned. Subject to the regulations of the Graduate School, students concurrently enrolled in certificate, specialist, master's, or doctoral programs may use no more than 12 semester hours that are common to all the programs of study. Departments or programs may permit fewer hours of concurrently enrolled courses. No course may appear on more than two programs of study.

Each certificate program has a Graduate Director and an Advisory Committee who review applications, recommend changes in the certificate program, and advise students. The administration of most Certificates of Graduate Study is assigned to specific academic departments or colleges.

G. Dual Degree Programs—Procedures and Regulations

Dual degree programs are pairs of graduate programs in different disciplines which have been approved by the Graduate School Faculty for concurrent pursuit, and whose total credit requirements are lower than the sum of the separate programs. Since each program may use up to 9 credits from the other program as electives, the total requirements of the dual program can be reduced by as much as 18 hours.

Application must be made to both programs at the same time, and approval given by both programs, for a student to pursue the dual program sequence. A single set of credentials accompanied by separate application forms for the two degrees should be submitted to the Graduate School as a package.

Programs of Study for two degree programs should be submitted together, with "Dual Degrees" noted on both programs in order for the overlapping course credits to be identified and approved.

Completion of the two degrees is independent in some dual programs, but in others (e.g., MA in English/MILS) neither degree will be awarded unless and until both sets of degree requirements are satisfied. Advisors should be aware of the linkage in dual programs and maintain some coordination with the other program as the student progresses toward the completion of the two degrees.

IX. Grading System

The USC system uses the following letter grades: A, B+, B, C+, C, D+, D, and F. These correspond, respectively, to the following grade point scores: 4.0, 3.5, 3.0, 2.5, 2.0, 1.5, 1.0, and 0.0.

Courses graded D+ or lower cannot be applied to a student's program of study.

The letter grades *S* (satisfactory) and *U* (unsatisfactory) are assigned only in courses that have been approved for Pass-Fail grading or in a standard graded course where the student, with the approval of the dean of the Graduate School, has elected an individual Pass-Fail Option (see

“Pass-Fail Option”). Thesis and dissertation courses (numbered 799 and 899 respectively) are graded with T and U, as described in section D below. Retaking a course does not delete the original grade. Certain forms used for grading purposes (such as the Grade Change Form and the Assignment of Incomplete form) are restricted-access.

A. Pass-Fail Option

Under certain circumstances, a graduate student may elect Pass-Fail grading in a course if the content is outside the major area. This option permits enrichment of the student’s experience and a grade of either satisfactory (*S*) or unsatisfactory (*U*) will be awarded. This is restricted to “totally free electives” which are not included in a Program of Study. Those courses completed with a satisfactory grade may be counted toward total credit hours earned (hours earned) but not grade hours. A grade of *U* received under the individual Pass-Fail Option in a letter-graded course will be counted as an *F* for grade point average purposes. Students interested in this option should consult their faculty advisor and the dean of the Graduate School for approval prior to registration.

1. **Courses Approved for Pass/Fail Grading.** All students in courses which have been approved for pass/fail grading by the Graduate Council can be graded only S or U. The A-F scale is not an option in these courses.

The Graduate Council reviews requests for pass/fail grading in graduate courses, and has established the following guidelines:

- a. Research courses, practica, and internships will be considered for approval for pass/fail grading without necessarily requiring specific rationale.
 - b. Requests for pass/fail grading in courses outside the above categories will be considered on the basis of the rationale presented by the department.
2. **Election of Individual Pass/Fail Option.** A graduate student can elect to be graded pass/fail (S/U) in a graduate course if :
 - a. The course is in a cognate area requiring a different background than his/her major but which is supportive of the major.
 - b. The student's request for pass/fail grading is approved by his/her advisor and the dean of the Graduate School.

An approved Pass/Fail Option [form](#) may be presented at the Registrar's Office at any time from enrollment up to the non-penalty withdrawal date specified in the session calendar for the course. Note that the approval of "Academic Dean" should be gotten from the Graduate School.

B. I and NR Indicators

The interim grade of *I* (incomplete) is assigned at the discretion of the instructor when, in his/her judgment, a student is prevented from completing some portion of the assigned work in

a course because of (i) an unanticipated work-related responsibility, (ii) family hardship, (iii) illness, (iv) accident, or (v) verified disability. The I grade is not to be used for the simple failure of a student to complete assigned work on time. Re-enrolling in the same course will not remove an I from the student's record, and may result in conversion of the I to an F after 12 months.

The indicator *NR* (no report) is a default mark assigned by the computer when no grade or a grade not permitted for that particular course is submitted by the instructor.

1. **Assignment of “I” Grade.** The instructor may assign a grade of I when s/he has knowledge of the student's situation and concludes that one or more of the above criteria justify an I. An *I* is not assigned to allow a student to repeat work or to do extra work to raise a grade, which is forbidden by University regulations. The grade is entered on the final grade report in Self Service Carolina. Instructors are strongly encouraged to also fill out an [Incomplete Grade Contract](#). The contract clarifies the reason for the incomplete, expected work and a timeline for completion.

An optional backup grade may also be entered. The instructor fixes a deadline which s/he considers adequate for the required work to be completed. That period cannot exceed 12 months after the course ended. If the initial make-up period assigned is less than 12 months, the instructor may later extend the deadline up to 12 months from the time the course ended s/he should advise the student of the new deadline in writing and maintain a record of the change. The backup grade must be one which is permitted for the course.

2. **Replacement of “I” Grade.** It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor for directions, to complete the conditions specified by the instructor, and to submit the work to the instructor by the deadline. As soon as the student has completed the course requirements, or at the expiration of the specified deadline, the instructor submits a Make-Up Grade Incomplete [Form](#) to replace the I on the student's record. Only grades approved for the course (either A-F or S/U) may be assigned as permanent grades. *W* and *WF* cannot be assigned to replace an *I*.

Failure to replace an *I* with a permanent grade will result in its automatic conversion to *F*, unless a backup grade was entered by the instructor when the *I* was initially assigned.

3. **Extension of Incomplete Beyond 12 Months.** In rare instances, the instructor who assigned an I grade may determine that the student cannot reasonably complete the assigned make-up work within the maximum 12-month limit because of circumstances beyond his/her control. The instructor may request an extension by submitting a completed "Extension of Incomplete Time Authorization beyond 12 Months" [form](#) to the Graduate School prior to the expiration of the 12 month period for approval by the dean of the Graduate School.

4. **Accumulation of Grades of Incomplete.** Any student who accumulates three or more grades of Incomplete at the same time, will be blocked from further enrollment until there are fewer than three grades of incomplete on their academic record.
5. **Replacement of “NR”.** An NR is recorded on a student's record when the instructor of the course fails to submit a grade for the student or submits an impermissible grade. An intentional omission of a grade is a violation of the Faculty Manual regulations on classroom procedure: "All students listed on the grade sheet shall be given a grade." ([Faculty Manual, 2021](#), p. 54). Failure to enter a grade for a student listed on the grade sheet results in a temporary NR which is corrected during the audit of NR grades by the Records Office.

In order to replace an NR with permanent grade, the instructor must submit the grade on the [Grade Roll Discrepancy form](#) (AS-181). In the 'Grades Assigned' section, put the grade which is to replace the 'NR' or you can send a memo on department letterhead with the course number, section number, student name and USCID, and grade.

6. **Conversion of “I” And “NR” To “F”.** The marks *I* and *NR* are temporary status indicators which should be replaced by permanent grades assigned by the instructor. All *I*'s not replaced with permanent grades within one year and all *NR*'s not replaced by the end of the next major term (fall or spring) are automatically converted to *F* as the permanent grade, unless the *I/NR* was erroneously recorded.

C. Auditing

A student must be eligible to register as a graduate student and go through the regular registration process to be eligible to audit a graduate-level course. Some departments do not permit auditing at the graduate level, and if space in the class is limited, degree-seeking students always are given priority over students who are auditing if space in the class is limited. Students wishing to audit graduate courses are advised to obtain permission from the appropriate department chair or graduate director. No record of audit shall appear on a transcript unless a student attends 75 percent of the classes.

Students who have registered for a course on an audit basis and who wish to change their registration to take the course for credit (or who wish to change from credit to audit) must do so no later than the last day to change course schedule or drop without a grade of W being recorded, as published in the Master Schedule of Classes.

Note: *Instructors should not apply the rule arbitrarily or unreasonably. For example, a student or prospective student who is not enrolled in the class may be permitted to observe a class session or two for an appropriate reason. However, individuals who are not enrolled should not be permitted to attend class on a regular basis or otherwise participate in class activities (e.g. class discussions, submission of class assignments).*

D. Thesis and Dissertation Courses

Courses numbered 799 or 899 in all departments are restricted to thesis preparation (variable credit, 1-9 hours) and dissertation preparation (variable credit, 1-12 hours). All doctoral candidates are required to successfully complete a minimum of 12 hours of dissertation preparation. Completion or satisfactory progress in thesis preparation or dissertation preparation will be indicated by the grade of T; unsatisfactory progress in thesis preparation or dissertation preparation will be indicated by the grade of U. These grades will not be used to calculate the student's grade point average. Programs may establish policies regarding eligibility for continued enrollment.

While not required, treating thesis and dissertation hours like a contract between students and advisors can clarify what work is required for students to make satisfactory progress to degree completion. Agreeing on specific landmarks to be achieved to earn beyond set hours can be helpful. For example:

Doctoral Students must do the following to earn the indicated hours:

- To earn 3 hours requires an approved committee, and a topical outline for a dissertation.
- To earn 6 hours requires an approved proposal with the equivalent of an introduction, review of literature, an outline of methods, a reference list, and submit a document for a preliminary format check.
- To earn 9 hours requires data in hand and an approved preliminary format check.
- To earn more than 12 hours requires a draft of results and analysis with conclusions/implications, and a date for a defense.
- Adjustments may be made as conditions dictate.

E. Faculty Requests for Grade Changes in Graduate Courses

Following the grade submission deadline for each term, grades are 'rolled' to academic history and are applied to the student's academic record. Once grades have been rolled, grade changes must be processed through the registrar's office using a [Change of Grade](#) form.

Grade changes based on ordinary errors (transcription, computation, etc.) do not require Graduate Council review if submitted to the dean of the Graduate School within 12 months of the original grade assignment. Requests for a grade change submitted more than a year after the assignment of a grade must be accompanied by a justification. These requests may be referred, at the dean of the Graduate School's discretion, to the Grievances, Appeals, and Petitions Committee of the Graduate Council for examination and recommendation to the full Graduate Council for its disposition.

F. Out-of-Date Courses

Candidates for graduate degrees at the University of South Carolina may revalidate out-of-date USC graduate courses over six years old for certificate, master's, and specialist programs;

over ten years old for doctoral programs. Each academic unit will determine which of its graduate courses are appropriate for the revalidating process. The Graduate School's Permit for Revalidation Examination [form](#) must be completed for the revalidation process.

Courses transferred from other institutions may not be revalidated.

1. Procedure:

- a. Student should complete section one of the "Permit for Revalidation Examination" [PRE](#), available from the student's academic department, or from The Graduate School. The form is intended for use with only one course. (List course designation and number. For example: ENGL 738.)
- b. Verify with the Department Head or Graduate Director of the Department offering the course that the requested course may be revalidated. If so, the authorized examiner, a regular faculty member who currently teaches this course, will be identified.
- c. Obtain assigned advisor's approval signature.
- d. Pay course revalidation fee at the Bursar's Office.
- e. Present fee receipt and Permit for Revalidation Examination form to the Graduate Director for approval signature.
- f. Present fee receipt and Permit for Revalidation Examination form to the dean of the Graduate School for approval signature.
- g. Present the approved form to the course examiner to schedule and complete the examination.
- h. The course examiner, after administering and grading the examination, will endorse the Permit for Revalidation Examination and return it to the dean of the Graduate School.

X. Approval Process for Graduate Curriculum Changes

All proposals for establishment and modification of graduate programs and courses originate within the graduate programs themselves. Approval is then sought from the Graduate Council, which recommends new programs and significant modifications of existing programs to higher levels of review (which can include the Provost's Office, Board of Trustees, CHE, and SACSCOC), as described on the Office of the Provost page [here](#).

i. Graduate Programs (new or modified)

The originating program formulates the proposed new courses/programs, course/program changes, and/or regulations which it desires to initiate. It is the originating program's responsibility to compile and include supporting data, justification, cost estimates, enrollments, or other information required for review at higher levels. New courses and curriculum for new and modified programs are routed through Graduate Council for review and approval.

All program and course proposals (new and modified) that will result in a change to content contained in the Graduate Bulletin must be routed through the [Academic Programs Proposal System](#) (APPS). Tutorials for each of these kinds of submissions are available.

ii. **Curriculum Committees of the Graduate Council**

Curriculum proposals received by the Graduate School are referred to one of two curriculum committees for review and recommendation to the Graduate Council. The assigned responsibilities for proposals from the academic colleges are shown below:

Curriculum Committee on Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, and Related Professional Programs

Mass Communications and Information Studies
Social Work
Humanities and Social Sciences
Music
Education

Curriculum Committee on Science, Math, and Related Professional Programs

Nursing	Hospitality, Retail, & Sport Administration
Business Administration	Pharmacy
Public Health	Engineering & Computing
Medicine	Science and Mathematics

Each committee is chaired by a member of the Graduate Council and includes other members who are appointed from the Graduate School Faculty.

The committees normally consider a number of elements in their review of course proposals:

- Rationale or Justification
- Syllabus
- Are course content, bibliography, and the student effort appropriate for a graduate course?
- Is the subject properly within the discipline of the proposing unit?
- Is there potential overlap with other courses, and have other affected departments reviewed the proposals?
- Is the proposed credit justified by the course requirements?
- Are course title and description accurate and informative?

The curriculum committees give careful scrutiny to the proposals in their areas, and may ask a program's designated contact person for further information or clarification. A curriculum committee may request, or may accept the program's request, that a program spokesperson meet with the committee, especially during reviews of complex proposals and new degree

programs. A proposal which is incomplete will be returned to the proposer for re-submission. A committee may propose revisions in a proposal or recommend approval or disapproval by the Graduate Council.

Courses numbered 500-699 are reviewed first by the Curricula and Courses Committee of the Faculty Senate and then forwarded to the Graduate Council for its review. The completed proposals should be submitted using [APPS](#) and will be routed accordingly.

Approved proposals are forwarded to the Faculty Senate and Graduate Council for action. The Faculty Senate must approve proposals; once approved, proposals are included in Graduate Council Minutes for information purposes only.

XI. Forms and Processing Requiring Graduate School Approval

A. Special Topics Courses [no longer require Graduate School approval]

All special topics courses whose subject, content and title vary from one semester to another must be submitted to the Office of the Registrar for approval of title and course description before they may be placed on the Master Schedule or advertised in any way. Approval is valid for the requested term only, and must be obtained from the Office of the Registrar each time such a course is to be offered, using this [form](#).

A Special Topics course is identified by title for the student's transcript. Thus, for example, PSYC 589 "Selected Topics in Psychology" might be listed on the transcript as "Psychology of Reading." PSYC 598 could be offered multiple times in the same or separate semesters, and vary by title.

If a particular topic is to be repeated at less than three-year intervals, it should be proposed as a new catalog course for Graduate Council approval (700-800 numbers) or for Faculty Senate approval (500-600 numbers).

B. Session Calendars and Course Schedule Exception

Courses offered in non-traditional formats, e.g., concentrated or abbreviated time periods, should be designed to ensure an opportunity for preparation, reflection and analysis concerning the subject matter. At least one calendar week of reflection/analysis should be provided to students for each semester hour of graduate credit awarded.

A minimum of one week per credit hour should be proposed and the appropriate contact hours should be scheduled evenly across the session to allow for continuous instruction and adequate time for reflection and analysis outside class time. For example, a three-credit graduate course should meet over three calendar weeks with class meetings comprising at least 2100 contact minutes spread evenly across the three-week period. Note that final exams and breaks do not count as class meeting time.