# UNIVERSITY OF South Carolina

## Arnold School of Public Health

# Department of Exercise Science

# Graduate Student Handbook

# 2025-2026

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# *Section One: Overview*

## 2025-2026 Graduate Academic Bulletin

It is the right and responsibility of every graduate student at the University of South Carolina to be familiar with the current version of the Graduate Academic Bulletin.  This document contains general information concerning the Graduate School and includes information specific to the Arnold School of Public Health (ASPH) graduate degrees offered by the Department of Exercise Science (EXSC) and a description of graduate courses.

## Program of Study

The program of study lists all courses that a graduate student must complete as a part of the degree to which the student has been admitted.  The program of study form must be signed by the student, the student's advisor, and the graduate director in accordance with the graduate curriculum for the department of exercise science.  The approved program of study must be submitted to the program graduate coordinator who will then submit the form to the Graduate School for review and approval by the graduate dean. The time at which it is submitted is based on degree requirements and should be discussed with the student's advisor.

## Timeline to Completion

All courses in a program of study leading to a master's degree must be completed within a 6-year period from the date of enrollment to graduation.  Courses not completed within this period must be retaken.  All courses in a program of study leading to a doctoral degree must be completed within a 10-year period from the date of admission to graduation.  Courses not completed within this period must be retaken.

## Transfer Credits

A maximum of 12 credit hours can be transferred from another institution toward earning a graduate degree for programs of 30-65 hours, and up to 15 credit hours can be transferred for programs of 37-45 hours. Transfer credits must be approved by the Graduate School and the Department of Exercise Science. Upon the approval of a program of study by the advisor and graduate director, the student must complete a Request for Transfer of Graduate Credit (G-RTC) for each course to be transferred. The following provisions apply:

- The courses must be documented by an *official* transcript mailed to the Graduate School by the awarding institution.

- The transcript must clearly indicate that *graduate* credit was awarded or specifically verified by the institution's registrar or graduate dean.

- The courses must be judged as appropriate by the student's academic committee and listed on a program of study approved by the graduate school.

- Courses with grades lower than "B" are not transferrable.

- Students who have another graduate degree in a related field (e.g., MS, MPH, DPT) can transfer their degree (not individual courses) which allows for the first 30 hours of the required 60 hours of their PhD.

- Students in doctoral programs defined as **post-baccalaureate** must have on the Doctoral Program of Study (D-POS) a minimum of 60 hours that are in-date (i.e., completed within 10 years), 30 of which must be unique to the University of South Carolina. Students in doctoral programs defined as **post-master's** must have on the Master's Program of Study (MPOS) a minimum of 30 hours in-date and unique to the University of South Carolina.

# Research Projects

Students who are involved in research projects associated with degree programs (e.g., master's theses, master's projects, and dissertations) are required to be formally enrolled during the period that they are actively engaged in the project. Collection of data, laboratory analysis of data, computer analysis of data, manuscript review (with faculty) and revisions are examples of active engagement. The minimal enrollment is 1 credit hour. The student would normally be enrolled in either EXSC 798, EXSC 799, or EXSC 899, but enrollment in any course within the EXSC department or another university department will satisfy the requirement. This requirement is to reflect the involvement of the university's resources in the process. Students who enroll for research hours in a given semester must execute the work for which they are receiving credit in that same semester.

The above stated regulation applies to master's degree students completing a project (EXSC 798) as well. A project student should not enroll in EXSC 798 until the student is prepared to conduct the work. A project proposal must be approved by the student's faculty mentor and the MS graduate director prior to the student's enrollment in EXSC 798. Failure to complete the project within the enrolled semester will require the student to register for at least one graduate credit hour each semester until the project is complete.

# Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools in Written Products of Research Projects

All written work completed by the student for their research project (e.g., master's theses, master's projects, master's practice experience products, and dissertations)– all process work, drafts, brainstorming artifacts, final works – will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups as directed by their primary advisor. This policy indicates the following constitute violations of academic honesty: a student has another person/entity do the work of any substantive portion of a written product for them, which includes purchasing work from a company, hiring a person or company to complete written work, and/or using generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT). Use of AI tools to edit or refine text may be acceptable but must be discussed with and approved by your primary advisor prior to use. Documentation and disclosure of the use of AI tools in your research project including the final written product should be discussed with your primary advisor.

# Progress Toward Degree

To stay on track for graduation, students must meet major Graduate School milestones and academic requirements for their degree program. The Graduate School website provides links to the forms and a list of deadlines for master's and doctoral degree programs and graduation.

# Advisement and Registering for Classes

Each semester **all** graduate students need to be advised prior to registering for classes. This includes meeting with your academic advisor and completing an advisement form.

For each course, list the department, course number, section number, credit hours, and name of the instructor. After the advisement form is signed by you and your advisor/mentor, send the form to your department graduate coordinator, who will verify the section and course registration numbers (CRN), and lift the advisement hold. A scanned copy of the form will be emailed to your @email.sc.edu account once processed.

- Graduate coordinator for MS, MPH, and PhD Programs: Barbara Reager, breager@mailbox.sc.edu

Course registration dates and deadlines can be found on the University academic calendar webpage. For more detailed information on the advisement and the registration process, see Appendix.

# Independent Study Courses

The purpose of an independent study is to allow the student to pursue an area of academic interest not adequately covered by the regular course offerings. Therefore, an independent study course cannot be used to fulfill a core requirement.

Prior to enrolling in an independent study course, a student must complete a graduate Independent Study Contract (G-ISC) form. The approval of the course instructor, the master's student's advisor or chair of the student's doctoral advisor committee, and the graduate director of the program is required. Students will send the signed form to the appropriate graduate coordinator who will send the approved copy of the G-ISC to the Office of the University Registrar. The graduate coordinator will notify the student when the student is able to register for the course.

*Note:* Not more than **6 hours** of independent study may be used on a **master's** program of study and no more than **9 hours** of independent study may be used on a **doctoral** program of study.

# Course Enrollment Load and Full-time Status

An exercise science graduate student **without** a graduate assistantship is considered full-time when enrolled in 9 or more hours during a fall or spring term. An exercise science graduate student who **does** have a graduate assistantship is considered full-time when enrolled in 6 hours during a fall or spring term. The maximum course load in fall or spring semesters is 15 credit hours. The maximum course load in any summer session is 6 hours. Summer enrollment is not required **unless it is your first semester of study. If summer is your first semester of study, full-time enrollment is required.**

For international graduate students, the International Student and Scholar Support office recommends that students refrain from starting during the summer term if at all possible because of potential difficulties with the full-time enrollment requirement. A student must be enrolled for at least 1 credit during any semester in which dissertation/thesis/project progress is made and such university resources as the library, computer facilities, or faculty time are used.  As an international student, **only one online class per semester counts toward full-time enrollment.** This means you must be enrolled in mostly traditional classes that require presence in a classroom.

For information on Advisement and Registration, see Appendix.

# Special Enrollment Status (Z-Status)

Special Enrollment Status was created for students in traditional research programs who typically complete their coursework but need an additional semester or two to complete their project, thesis, or dissertation. This status allows for students toward the end of their program to reduce required credit hours while focusing on their thesis or dissertation. With Special Enrollment Status, students do not need to enroll beyond one hour of thesis or dissertation preparation. However, many of these students receive graduate assistantships (GA), fellowships, or external funding that require 6-9 hours of enrollment. Special enrollment status was created to treat these students as full-time even though they are enrolled in less than 6-9 hours. This privilege can also be given to students in non-thesis/dissertation programs, but with similar capstone experiences, such as practice experiences and for students covered under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

# International Graduate Students

The International Student and Scholar Support office provides assistance, support and community for international students to help them get the most out of their time in graduate school. The office is staffed by trained and experienced experts who offer support for international students, including immigration advice, special programming, support for international organizations, and advising for cultural adjustment.

## Leave of Absence

Occasionally, a student may request a leave of absence for medical, family, or personal reasons. During the leave of absence, there is no policy that mandates or guarantees that a mentor or program continues financial support of the student or that guarantees student support upon resumption of the program following a leave of absence. A leave of absence longer than two academic semesters decreases the likelihood of a mentor being able to resume financial support. An extended leave of absence may also impact the student's timeline to completion and potentially result in courses having to be retaken.

## Communication

Communication between students, faculty, and staff is critical. To ensure accurate and consistent communication, graduate students are expected to follow these guidelines:

- Use your USC email account (email.sc.edu) instead of your personal email account throughout the entire time you are enrolled in the graduate program.
- Check your email regularly and respond in a timely manner, (e.g., 24-48 hours).
- Use appropriate and professional language in emails.
- Check the MS, MPH, or PhD Blackboard organization for updates and important announcements.

## Student ID Numbers

USC assigns each student **2** ID numbers which can be found in Self-Service Carolina under Personal section. Click on "View my IDs and Manage Passwords" to see your VIP ID and your USC ID.

- Your **VIP ID** is an eight-digit number that is assigned to you when you apply for admission to the university or for financial aid.

- The **USC ID**, also known as your **Banner ID**, is a unique combination of a **letter and numbers** used by faculty and staff to securely manage your student information and records. It is also to be used when applying for travel authorizations. You may be asked to provide your USC ID to verify your identity. The USC ID, which is not used to log in to any system, is printed on the back of your CarolinaCard.

## Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is an important mechanism used by the faculty to evaluate the curriculum and course objectives. Students participate in this process through the following mechanisms:

- Formal course and instructor evaluations are administered by the department or university. Faculty and administration expect students to take the responsibility to participate in this evaluation process seriously and provide constructive feedback to assist the faculty in their efforts to keep the curriculum and program timely and progressive.

- For doctoral students, informal feedback through the Individual Development Plan (IDP) evaluations, structured group forums, and the academic curriculum committee structure.

- Completion of surveys (via consent to text/phone/email) related to program progression, career progression, and outcomes following graduation from the program. Keeping the department updated related to changes in contact information makes these communications possible.

# SECTION TWO:  PROGRAMS OF STUDY

## Master of Science Degree Program

The MS in Exercise Science degree program provides students with advanced foundational knowledge and skills in exercise physiology application, research methods, and statistics. In addition to this foundational knowledge, the curriculum offers a variety of electives to prepare students for career opportunities in the areas of:

- • Strength and conditioning
- • Sport science
- • Performance nutrition
- • Clinical exercise physiology
- • Cardiac rehabilitation

- • Corporate fitness
- • Health and wellness
- • Research
- • Preparation for additional graduate training (PhD, DPT, MD, PA)

## MS Curriculum – 33 Credit Hours

The MS curriculum is 33 credit hours. It consists of 15 credit hours of core courses, 12 or 15 credit hours of electives, and a culminating project or thesis. Students have the option of completing a 3-credit project or a 6-credit thesis. The program is typically completed in 4 to 5 semesters (2 years). The MS curriculum is presented in the table below:

| MS in Exercise Science Core | | 15 |
|---|---|---|
| PUBH 700 | Perspectives in Public Health (online) | 3 |
| BIOS 700 | Introduction to Biostatistics | 3 |
| EXSC 780 or 781 | Physiology of Exercise or Physiology, Exercise, & Disease | 3 |
| EXSC 787 | Research Methods and Design for Exercise Science | 3 |
| Choose one of the following: | | 3 |
| EXSC 700 | Physical Activity and Health: Epidemiology, Research, and Practice | |
| EXSC 710 | Behavioral Aspects of Physical Activity | |
| EXSC 731 | Mechanisms of Motor Skill Performance | |
| EXSC 777 | Endocrinology of Exercise and Health | |
| Electives (12 or 15; minimum 9 EXSC credits) | | 12 or 15 |
| Project (EXSC 798, 3 credits) or Thesis (EXSC 799, 6 credits) | | 3 or 6 |
| | Total | 33 |

**Examples of Advisor-Approved Elective Courses**
   *EXSC 507 - Exercise, Sport and Nutrition (3h)\**
   *EXSC 541 - Physiological Basis for Strength and Conditioning (3h)\**
   *EXSC 555 - Current Topics in Exercise Science (3h)\**
   *EXSC 562 - Impairments of the Human Motor System (3h)\**
   *EXSC 563 - Physical Activity and the Physical Dimensions of Aging (3h)\**
   *EXSC 585 - Women's Health and Physical Activity (3h)\**
   *EXSC 608 - Apps, Wearables & Technology for Lifestyle Behavior Change & Weight Loss (3h)*
   *EXSC 620 - Nutrition and Immunology (3h)*
   *EXSC 641 - Neuromuscular Basis of Functional Strength Training (3h)*
   *EXSC 651 - Analysis of Everyday Motor Behavior (3h)*
   *EXSC 663 - Environmental Exercise Physiology (3h)*
   *EXSC 666 - Cardiorespiratory Exercise Physiology (3h)*
   *EXSC 695 - Writing and Presenting in Research (3h)*
   *EXSC 711 - Ecological Momentary Assessment in Health Behavior Research (3h)*

*EXSC 723 - Genetics in Health Sciences (3h)*
*EXSC 732 - Measurement of Body Composition and Associated Health Behaviors (3h)*
*EXSC 735 - Applied Human Biomechanics (3h)*
*EXSC 742 - Clinical Exercise Testing (1h)*
*EXSC 754 - Community-based Physical Activity Interventions (3h)*
*EXSC 755 - Special Topics in Exercise Science (3h)*
*EXSC 775 - Neural Basis of Skilled Motor Behavior (3h)*
*EXSC 776 - Ergogenic Aids (3h)*
*EXSC 790 - Independent Study (1-3h, repeatable up to 6h)*
*EXSC 795 - Internship in Exercise Science (3h)*
*EXSC 808 - Neuro Repair-Rehabilitation (3h)*
*RHAB 540 - Assistive and Adaptive Technology (3h)*
*RHAB 710 - Medical Aspects of Rehabilitation (3h)*
*PHPH 750 - Fundamental Neuroscience (4h)*
*BIOS 757 - Intermediate Biometrics (3h)*

**\* Note:** Limit of **three** 500-level EXSC courses

# MS Advisement

Students entering the MS degree program in exercise science will be advised by the MS graduate director prior to their first semester.  Students must identify a faculty advisor/mentor in the department of exercise science by the end of their first semester. Students are required to meet with their advisor/mentor prior to the start of each semester to complete the advisement form. The student and academic advisor are responsible for completing the Master's Degree Program of Study (MPOS) **before the last semester of coursework.**  The advisor and the student should review the student's academic performance to ensure that appropriate progress is being made toward the completion of the Master's Degree Program of Study.  If academic problems arise, the advisor will be directly involved in the resolution of the problem, and the MS graduate director may also serve as a resource. Students are encouraged to consult with their academic advisor and MS graduate director to express concerns over the program and/or their future professional interests.

# MS Program of Study

The Master's Degree Program of Study lists all courses a student must complete as part of their degree program. The Master's Program of Study (MPOS) form must be signed by the student, advisor, graduate director, and graduate dean. The program of study must include the following:

- Coursework listed in **chronological order**
- The correct number of hours for the degree (33 hours)
- A maximum of three **500-level** EXSC courses may be included
- No more than six hours of independent study (EXSC 790)
- If the student is a teaching assistant, GRAD 701 is not included on the MPOS.
- Only courses with dates of completion no more than 6 years prior to the satisfaction of all degree requirements.

The MPOS must be submitted to the Graduate School **prior to the student's last semester of coursework.**

### Adjustments to the Program of Study

After the MPOS is submitted to the Graduate School, if there are any changes to courses listed (e.g., substitution, addition, or deletion of courses), students must complete the Program of Study Adjustment (GS-43-POSA)  form. This form must be approved by the student's advisor, graduate director, and the dean of the Graduate School.

# MS Selection of Project or Thesis

As part of the MS curriculum, students have the option of completing a 3-credit project or a 6-credit thesis at the end of their program.  Students are strongly encouraged to start planning for this when they begin the MS program.  Students must identify a faculty mentor to oversee their project or thesis **by the end of their first semester.**  The faculty mentor must have graduate faculty status in the department of exercise science.  Students should consider the following when deciding between a project or thesis:

### Project (EXSC 798) 3 credit hours
- The purpose is application, analysis, evaluation, or creation of knowledge related to the field of exercise science.
- Is completed in the student's last semester.
- May consist of practical experience (e.g., internship) at a cardiac rehabilitation clinic, sports team, or wellness/fitness center or a smaller research project.
- Students must produce a written product. Examples include:
    - Original research article
    - Systematic literature review (including introduction, methods, results, discussion)
    - Abstract and poster presented at a conference during semester of project work
    - Paper applying concepts from a practical or clinical experience
- Great option for students who want to work as a strength and conditioning coach, exercise physiologist, or cardiac rehabilitation specialist.

### Thesis (EXSC 799) 6 credit hours
- The purpose is to create knowledge by going through the entire scientific process to answer a research question.
- Students may collect data (primary data collection) or analyze data that have already been collected (i.e., secondary data analysis).
- Is completed in the student's last two semesters.
- Students must produce a written product that follows the Graduate School's thesis guidelines.
- Great option for students who want to teach at the university level, conduct research, or go on to further graduate work (PhD, MD).

# Process for Completing an MS Project

Students choosing to complete a project must complete 3 credit hours (EXSC 798) during their last semester. The process for completing the MS project is described below.

1. By the end of their first semester, students choosing to complete a project must identify a graduate faculty member in the department of exercise science to serve as their project mentor. The project mentor has the responsibility to guide the activities of the project and provide final approval of the written project proposal and final product. If a student does not identify a project mentor, one may be assigned based upon the interests of the student and the professor's expertise.

2. Before registering for the project (EXSC 798), the student must develop a written project proposal approved by the student, project mentor, and MS graduate director. The **EXSC 798 MS Project Proposal form** is found in the Content folder of the EXSC-MS-PROGRAM in Blackboard. If the student's project topic is related to the student's employment, the objectives of the project must be above and beyond their work for employment. The student will register for EXSC 798 with their project mentor.

3. Together with the project mentor, the student may form an advisory committee to aid in the development of their project. Creating an advisory committee is optional.

4. The project must include a written component. Examples include an original research article, systematic literature review, or an abstract and poster for a conference.

5. At the end of the student's last semester in the MS program, the student must present their project work upon completion by giving a PowerPoint presentation and answering questions directly following the presentation, which will be the comprehensive examination. The presentation will be attended by the project mentor and a second reader (a graduate faculty member in the department of exercise science).

6. The student must contact Barbara Reager, graduate coordinator, at [breager@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:breager@mailbox.sc.edu) to schedule the presentation and reserve a conference room. The project presentation must be given by the last day of classes in the semester (i.e., before final exams).

7. After the student successfully presents their project, the student must obtain signatures of the project mentor, second reader, and MS graduate director on the **EXSC 798 MS Project Presentation Approval form**. The student must make any requested changes to the written product and submit it to the project mentor and MS graduate director with the correctly formatted title page (instructions posted in the Content folder of EXSC-MS-PROGRAM organization in Blackboard).

## Process for Completing a MS Thesis

Students choosing to complete a thesis must complete 6 thesis credit hours (EXSC 799). Most students split this into their last 2 semesters by taking 3 hours each semester.  The process for completing the MS thesis is described below.

1. **By the end of their first semester,** students choosing to complete a thesis must identify a graduate faculty member in the department of exercise science to serve as their thesis director. If a student does not identify a thesis director, one may be assigned based upon the interests of the student and the professors actively pursuing research in that area.

2. **Before registering for thesis credit hours** (EXSC 799), students must have a thesis director. The student will register for thesis credit with their thesis director.

3. **During the first semester of thesis work**, the student will develop a thesis proposal with their thesis director.
   a. After the student and thesis director have discussed a proposed thesis topic, the student will prepare a brief preliminary proposal that includes a brief rationale for the study, a clear statement of the proposed topic, and a reasonably detailed methodology to be used.

   b. The proposal document must be approved by the thesis director before proceeding any further.

4. The student must identify a **thesis committee** with the aid of the thesis director. The thesis committee will act as critical reviewers of the thesis proposal and all activities associated with the thesis.
   a. The thesis committee is responsible for giving final approval to the thesis proposal, the thesis proposal presentation, the final written form of the thesis, and the oral defense of the thesis.

   b. The thesis committee must consist of a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 5 members, all of whom must have graduate faculty status. At least 2 must be members of the USC department of exercise science. If the student and thesis director want to include an expert who does not have graduate faculty status, they must provide rationale (in the form of a memo) to the MS graduate director who will submit the request to the Graduate School. This must be done as soon as possible to allow time for the Graduate School to process the request.

   c. The names of the thesis committee members must be submitted to the MS graduate director for approval **before the student proposes the thesis**. The **EXSC 799 MS Thesis Committee Appointment form** is found in Content folder of the EXSC-MS-PROGRAM organization in Blackboard. The thesis committee must be approved before the student can register for the final 3 thesis credit hours.

5. The student and the thesis director may wish to schedule a **pre-proposal committee meeting**. The purpose of this meeting is to get committee input and consensus before beginning work on the thesis proposal.

   a. Once approval is given, the student will develop a thesis proposal. This proposal will be distributed to the thesis committee only when the thesis director judges it to be ready to be read by the committee.

   b. A thesis proposal should provide pilot data and/or other evidence that the procedures to be used are appropriate.

   c. After a draft of the thesis proposal is approved by the thesis director, it will be distributed to the thesis committee and a thesis proposal presentation will be scheduled.

   d. After completion of the thesis proposal presentation, the thesis committee will either approve the proposal or make appropriate revisions. Primary data collection or secondary data analysis must not occur before final approval by the thesis committee.

   e. For all theses that use human subjects, approval must be obtained from the appropriate institutional review board(s) before data collection can begin.

6. **At the end of the student's last semester** in the MS program, the student must complete the thesis defense and the corresponding comprehensive examination.

   a. Thesis defense deadlines are set by the Graduate School and are **approximately 6 weeks before** the end of the semester.

   b. The format of the written thesis must be consistent with [Graduate School requirements](#).

   c. The body or text of the thesis must be in the form of a journal-style article and should be written in the reference style appropriate for the intended journal of publication. It is the responsibility of the student and the thesis director to ensure proper referencing of citations.

   d. The student must contact Barbara Reager, graduate coordinator, at [breager@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:breager@mailbox.sc.edu) to schedule the thesis defense and reserve a conference room.

7. **After the student successfully defends the thesis**, the student must obtain signatures of the thesis committee and MS graduate director on the [Master's Thesis Signature and Approval Form](#) (G-TSF).

   a. Requirements for master's theses are available from the Graduate School. It is the student's responsibility to follow the required master's [thesis format](#).

   b. Deadlines for submitting theses are subject to change. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of these [deadlines](#). In general, the following date is important: the deadline for submission of the thesis is approximately 20 days prior to graduation.

# MS Comprehensive Examination

The Graduate School requires that all candidates for a master's degree must complete a comprehensive assessment in the major field of study that is distinct from program course requirements. Therefore, the department of exercise science will administer a comprehensive examination in the last semester of the student's program.

The MS comprehensive examination is an oral examination directly following the thesis defense or the presentation of the project. Graduate faculty in the department of exercise science will administer the oral comprehensive examination. MS students must complete the comprehensive exam and (the corresponding thesis or project presentation) during their last semester.

Students failing in their initial examination will be required to repeat all or part of the exam. *A second failure of the comprehensive exam will result in the student's release from the graduate program.*

## MS Progression to Degree

Below is a general progression to the MS degree.

A. Submit program of study – Every student must complete a Master's Program of Study (MPOS) with the Graduate School for approval by the dean of the Graduate School. This must be submitted prior to the student's last semester. If needed, the student may file a program adjustment form to request changes to the original MPOS.
   - Master's Program of Study (MPOS) form
   - Program of Study Adjustment (GS-43-POSA) form

B. Select a faculty mentor and decide to complete a project or thesis.

C. Submit the **EXSC 799 MS Thesis Committee Appointment Request** form or the **EXSC 798 MS Project Proposal** form**.** The form must be submitted prior to the student's last semester. The forms can be found in the Content folder of the EXSC-MS-PROGRAM organization in Blackboard.

D. **Apply for graduation** – In the final semester of study, students submit the application for graduation online in Self Service Carolina by the designated date for that semester. This should be done no later than **15 days** after the beginning of the semester in which a student plans to graduate.

E. **Check thesis format** – Students submit a draft of your thesis via the ETD process for a preliminary format check. To submit the draft, create an account within the UMI/ProQuest site. This is the site to submit the final thesis and make any final revisions required by your thesis committee and the Graduate School. Visit the Thesis & Dissertation webpage to view the format guide, ETD samples, templates, and instructions on how to submit your document.

F. **Defend thesis or present project** – Students defend their thesis or project work. Students will give a presentation and answer questions. The defense/project presentation serves as the comprehensive examination.

G. Submit the **Thesis Signature and Approval** form or the **EXSC 798 MS Project Presentation Approval** form to the MS graduate director who will sign it. The thesis form will be submitted to the Graduate School. The forms can be found in the Content folder of the EXSC-MS-PROGRAM organization in Blackboard.

H. **Submit thesis** – Students submit the final approved thesis via the ETD process.

I. **Graduate** – Congratulations, you made it!

# Doctor of Philosophy Degree Program

The PhD program in exercise science is designed to prepare students for research careers in the exercise sciences. Graduates are trained for entry into positions in universities, colleges, research institutes and research-oriented clinical settings. Areas of research emphasis correspond to those of the departmental faculty. The Graduate School's general progression to degree can be found on their website.

## PhD Curriculum

Students will complete an approved Doctoral Program of Study (DPOS) form of up to 60 hours beyond the baccalaureate level or 30 hours beyond the master's or clinical doctorate level. Included in the plan of study are any approved transfer credits. The PhD curriculum includes coursework in exercise science, statistics, and research methods and design. The student will also be required to form a cognate of specialization, which can include electives from such areas as physiology, neuroscience, epidemiology, health promotion, motor control, rehabilitation sciences, and psychology, as well as independent study and dissertation hours. Doctoral students are also expected to attend and present at graduate research seminars. In addition to coursework, all doctoral students are expected to be heavily involved in ongoing research during their time in the academic program.

## General Course Requirements – PhD

>*Public Health (> 3 hours) - course defined below*
>*Exercise Science (>6 hours)*
>*Research/Statistical Methods (>6 hours)*
>*Electives (>3 hours)*
>*Dissertation (>12 hours)*

***PUBH 700 Perspectives in Public Health or equivalent (3h)*

*Students with a MPH degree from a CEPH-accredited school of public health will have had this course equivalent and can be released from this requirement.

**All PhD students are required to fulfill the equivalent of the existing MS program in their emphasis or a closely related field**. If students do not wish to take any of the required courses, they must provide evidence of successful completion of equivalent courses prior to matriculation into the doctoral program. In consultation with their advisors, students are to develop a cognate of emphasis, and electives should be related to this area of specialization. Students can develop a specialization in many areas, including but not limited to physiology, neuroscience, epidemiology, health promotion, motor control, rehabilitation, and psychology.

**Note: All courses should be at the 700- or 800-level. In general, 600-level courses are not acceptable for doctoral students unless otherwise approved by your advisor, program of study committee, and/or graduate director.**

## Sample Course Options

These courses are by no means exhaustive and can be supplemented with other courses approved by the student's advisor, program of study committee, or the graduate director.

### Exercise Science

>EXSC 710 - Behavioral Aspects of Physical Activity (3)
>EXSC 711 - Ecological Momentary Assessment in Health Behavior Research (3)
>EXSC 731 - Mechanisms of Motor Skill Performance I (3)
>EXSC 732 - Measurement of Body Composition and Other Associated Health Behaviors (3)
>EXSC 735 - Applied Human Biomechanics (3)
>EXSC 754 - Community-based Physical Activity Interventions (3)
>EXSC 755 - Selected Topics in Exercise Science (3)
>EXSC 775 - Neural Control of Movement (3)
>EXSC 776 - Ergogenic Aids (3h)
>EXSC 777 - Endocrinology of Exercise and Health (3)
>EXSC 780 - Physiology of Exercise (3)
>EXSC 781 - Physiology, Exercise and Disease (3)
>EXSC 787 - Research Methods and Design for Exercise Science (3)
>EXSC 790 - Independent Study in Exercise Science (1-3)
>EXSC 801 - Ethical Conduct in Public Health Research (1)
>EXSC 802 - Predoctoral Fellowship in Writing Course with Special Emphasis on NIH F31 (1)
>EXSC 805 - Introduction to Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (1-3)
>EXSC 808 - Neuro Repair-Rehabilitation (3)
>EXSC 882 - Physical Activity and Health: Epidemiology, Research, and Practice (3)
>EXSC 899 - Dissertation Preparation (1-12)

### Rehabilitation/Physical Therapy (considered as EXSC hours)

>PHYT 788 - Evidence-Based Practice in Physical Therapy (2)

### Biostatistics

>BIOS 700 - Introduction to Biostatistics (3)
>BIOS 701 - Concepts and Methods in Biostatistics (3)
>BIOS 757 - Intermediate Biometrics (3)
>BIOS 770 - Longitudinal Data Analysis (3)

### Epidemiology
EPID 741 - Intermediate Epidemiologic Methods (3)
EPID 744 - Cardiovascular Disease Epidemiology (3)
EPID 758 - Application of Epidemiology in Public Health (3)

### Psychology
PSYC 727 - Foundations in Community Psychology (3)
PSYC 783 - Health Psychology/Behavioral Medicine (3)
PSYC 801 - Cognitive Neuroscience I (3)
PSYC 888 - Selected Topics in Psychology (1-6)

### Health Promotion Education and Behavior
HPEB 701 - Theoretical Foundation of Health Education (3)
HPEB 710 - Evaluation for Public Health Education Programs (3)
HPEB 731 - Health Promotion for Older Adults (3)
HPEB 748 - Community Health Development (3)
HPEB 752 - Nutrition and Public Health (3)

### Physiology, Pharmacology, Neuroscience
PHPH 741 - Special Topics in Neuroscience (3)
PHPH 745 - Neurophysiology (3)
PHPH 750 - Fundamental Neuroscience (4)
PHPH 751 - Fundamentals of Neuroscience II (4)

## Primary Mentor

The student's primary mentor must be a member of the faculty in the department of exercise science with graduate faculty status. The primary mentor is determined at the time of admission based on the student's area of interest and the faculty member's acceptance of the student. This mentor/mentee relationship is considered a commitment for the duration of the student's time in the program. Mentors accept students based on a mutual area of research interest and the ability to provide funding.

The primary mentor has the responsibility to guide the student in choosing appropriate coursework and experiences to facilitate their development related to career objectives and to meet the standards and requirements of the program. Students are responsible for their plan of study and ensuring that individual objectives and program requirements are met.

### Change in Primary Mentor

Occasionally, a student may wish to petition the graduate director to change mentors. Petitions will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and the program is not obligated to permit a change in mentor. If a suitable new mentor, who can fund the student, cannot be found, the student may withdraw from the program or continue with the original mentor.

A mentor may also petition the graduate director for the termination of a mentoring commitment. Reasons could include but are not limited to the mentee not fulfilling graduate assistantship responsibilities, ethical conduct issues, or a conflict affecting the mentor/mentee working relationship. If efforts by the graduate director and department to resolve the situation are not successful and a new mentor who can fund the student cannot be found, the student may withdraw or be dismissed from the program.

## PhD Program of Study

Students, in consultation with their faculty mentor, will track their program of study from their first year onwards as part of the Individual Development Plan (IDP) process. After passing the qualifying examination each student must formally submit a Doctoral Program of Study (DPOS) form. Students enrolled in the doctoral program have 10 years from the first term of enrollment in which to complete the degree. Students must be enrolled for at least 1 credit hour during the term of graduation.

**Adjustments to the Program of Study**

The official Doctoral Degree Program of Study (DPOS) represents a contract between the university, the department and the student. Once approved, it is binding unless all parties agree to its adjustment. Any adjustments to the doctoral program of study must be completed using the [Program of Study Adjustment](#) (GS-43-POSA) form and approved by all parties concerned.

# 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 at a research university. All doctoral 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.

Doctoral students in the department of exercise science must enroll in an approved program of study for at least 3 academic years. The department, based on the types of research conducted, the mentorship model, and the belief that doctoral education goes far beyond coursework alone, uses a model of full-time in-person training and mentorship. Beyond academic coursework, there are professional development experiences that contribute to student success and represent the required skills for a successful transition into research, academic, or industry careers. Students are expected to engage in and contribute to relevant experiences of graduate study and the academic community through the following:

- Attendance of exercise science seminars, departmental guest speaker seminars, and program proposal and dissertation defenses of fellow graduate students.
- Presentation at the graduate exercise science seminars, University Discovery Day, and professional conferences.
- Attendance of other program, department, college, Graduate School, Office of Research, and university professional development activities, as appropriate.
- Engagement with service activities of the department, school, university, or professional organization aligned with the student's interest.
- Engagement in leadership opportunities within the department, school or university (e.g, student coordinator of department graduate seminar series, role in graduate student government, and roles with professional organizations.)
- Attending faculty candidate presentations and participating in the interview process of faculty candidates.

The University has a residency requirement of two-consecutive semesters or one academic year (August - May) that must be spent on the Columbia campus as a full-time student. The department's expectation for full-time in-person training is greater than the university's requirement.

# Teaching Opportunities

**Guest lecture** opportunities in undergraduate and potentially some graduate courses may be part of your individual development plan and with the permission of the course instructor.

**Teaching assistant** (TA) opportunities for undergraduate and some graduate courses are negotiated with your mentor, and the graduate directors (MPH, MS, and PhD) in conjunction with the department chair. These are paid graduate assistantships with assigned responsibilities by the course instructor related to the course materials, assessments, or lab experiences.

**Teacher of record** opportunities are designed to provide graduate students with a mentored teaching experience that includes skill development in relationship to the delivery of course materials, classroom management, and student assessment. These opportunities to teach an undergraduate class as the ***teacher of record*** require preparation and planning by you, your mentor, and the graduate and undergraduate program directors.

Therefore, if you are interested in an opportunity to teach a small section of an undergraduate course, there are several steps that need to be taken at minimum **2 semesters** prior to the experience:

1. Discuss your desire to seek an opportunity and appropriate courses with your mentor. These can be courses in which you served as a TA or a course in which you have content expertise.

2. After identifying a course, have a preliminary conversation with the course instructor about the potential of a teaching opportunity and their mentorship during the experience.

3. Obtain a letter of support (LOS) from your mentor that also verifies you have the content expertise necessary to teach the course.

4. You must have completed the university-required TA training and the associated Grad 701 course.

5. You must have taken at least 1 Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) workshop or be officially enrolled in the Preparing Future Faculty program.

6. Apply for the opportunity by contacting the PhD graduate director to express your interest. The graduate director will need the name of the course, the name of the teaching mentor, and when the course is typically taught, along with the LOS from your mentor. The request will be vetted by the PhD admissions and curriculum committee, the director of the undergraduate curriculum, and the department chair. If the class is a 500 or 600 level course, the request will also be vetted by the MS graduate director.

7. If granted the opportunity, the department will provide an appropriate graduate assistant stipend for teaching the course section.

8. You must arrange for the teaching mentor to provide a formal evaluation of their teaching during the first semester they teach a course as teacher of record. The teaching mentor will attend one day of class and complete a teaching evaluation form similar to the forms used for evaluation of faculty. The completed form will be provided to the student and the graduate director of the PhD program.

9. At the completion of the first semester of teaching a course as teacher of record, you must meet with the teaching mentor and the graduate director of the PhD program to review and discuss the course, course evaluations, and teaching evaluation. An additional meeting with the director of the undergraduate curriculum and/or the MS graduate director may also be scheduled.

10. The ability to serve as teacher of record for subsequent semesters will be at the discretion of the graduate director of the PhD program in consultation with the PhD admissions and curriculum committee, the department chair, and the director of the undergraduate curriculum (and MS graduate director if appropriate).

# Progress to Degree Completion

Progression through the exercise science PhD program is based on the yearly assessment of the individual development plan (IDP) and the completion of program milestones. The milestones, benchmarks, requirements, and process of remediation are outlined in the table and following sections.

## Milestone 1: Individual Development Plan (IDP)

### Purpose

The IDP is an intentional and purposeful activity that is the product of a thoughtful analysis of the background, interests, and needs of each student. This includes developing a mentoring plan that assesses the needs and goals of each student, describes short- and long-term career objectives, and identifies professional development activities needed to reach them.

The IDP is a tool to help in this planning process and to facilitate communication between mentees and mentors. The IDP should be viewed as a dynamic document that is **reviewed annually** and updated throughout an individual's training.

**Expectations**

**Creation and Submission of IDP**

- <u>Fall semester IDP</u>: Each doctoral student will complete an IDP within the first 30 days of each fall academic semester. The fall IDP will establish the goals and plan for the upcoming academic year.

- <u>Spring semester IDP</u>: At the end of the spring semester, each doctoral student will complete an assessment of their progress on their IDP goals over the academic year.

- An academic curriculum vitae should accompany the spring semester progress assessment for the IDP and should be updated and included each year thereafter. The format for the CV can be found in the Content folder of the EXSC-PHD-PROGRAM group on Blackboard.

**Faculty review of IDPs**

Each IDP (fall and spring) should be reviewed and approved by the student's mentor and their program of study or doctoral committee before final submission to the graduate director. The student's mentor and program of study/dissertation committee should work closely with the student to create and revise the IDP throughout each semester. The IDP should be reasonable and appropriate based on the combined needs, experience, and expectations of the student and mentoring team. The entire exercise science faculty will have access to all IDPs and the opportunity to review them annually.

**Oral defense of IDP**

Every other year (1st, 3rd, 5th, …), each student will make a 15-minute oral presentation to the exercise science faculty describing their IDP goals, progress, and future plans. Based on the results and feedback from the oral IDP presentation, each student will receive a letter of progress from the department indicating their rating of progress towards degree.

Any deficiencies in training or achievements will be adjudicated with additional course work or scholarship, as deemed necessary by the mentor and program of study committee, or via a potential exam to determine ability to stay in the program. Identification of any deficiencies will result in an automatic **yearly** oral presentation of accomplishments and progress to the PhD faculty. Failure to submit an IDP each semester or to give the oral IDP presentation and/or unsatisfactory performance in either of these may result in the student losing their GA/TA position.

# Exercise Science PhD Milestones for Progress to Graduation

| | ITEM | DESCRIPTION | ESTIMATED TIME | BENCHMARK | REQUIREMENT | REMEDIATION |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **No Grad Degree** | **Master's of Science** | Students without a graduate degree must complete all required Master's of Science core courses (no electives) prior to proposal of their dissertation. | End of 2nd or 3rd year. | Completion of all required courses for Master's of Science. | Students must take and pass all required courses for Master's of Science with a cumulative 3.0 GPA or higher in those courses. | |
| **Milestone 1** | **Annual IDP** | Completion of IDP outlining 1st year courses completed and plan for future courses, research, scholarship, teaching, and service related activities. Creation of Program of Study (POS). | Establish goals with IDP within 30 days of 1st semester each academic year. Submit completed accomplishments by last day of classes of 1st year. To be reviewed by POS Committee and full doctoral EXSC faculty each year. Orally presented to full doctoral EXSC faculty every other year (1st, 3rd, 5th, …) | Satisfactory performance towards degree as indicated by mentor and POS Committee. | Student completes IDP document and presents an oral summary to faculty regarding annual progress from IDP. Student receives written letter rating progress towards degree from department. | Additional course work, scholarship, or exam, as deemed necessary by mentor and POS Committee, to determine ability to stay in program. May lose GA/TA with unsatisfactory performance. |
| **Milestone 2** | **Qualifying Exam** | Produce a written product and orally defend to Qualifying Exam Committee (see details below). | Typically end of course work – usually end of 2nd or start of 3rd year. | Pass, conditional pass, or fail. Must pass prior to moving to comps/ proposal in Milestone 3 | See Qualifying Exam Format section below | Allowed only one fail to continue in program. Fail/conditional pass – must retake, rewrite, or revise all or portion of same or new written product. May lose GA/TA with unsatisfactory performance. |
| **Milestone 3** | **Dissertation Proposal (Comps)** | Student develops written dissertation proposal document and presents the research orally to faculty and students. | End of course work – typically start or end of third year. | Satisfactory performance as indicated by mentor and dissertation committee. Must satisfactorily pass prior to moving to Milestone 4. | Student provides written document and presents orally. Oral presentation advertised 2 weeks in advance for attendance by EXSC faculty and students. | Revisions of written document, specific aims, analysis plan, and/or study design per dissertation committee's recommendations. |
| **Milestone 4** | **Dissertation Defense** | Student develops written manuscripts and presents the results orally to faculty and students. | Typically end of 4th year. | Satisfactory performance as indicated by mentor and dissertation committee . | Student provides written document and presents orally. Oral presentation advertised 2 weeks in advance for attendance by EXSC faculty and students. | Revisions of written document per dissertation committee's recommendations. |

# Committee Membership Composition

| Milestone | Committee | Composition |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Program of Study Committee | Minimum 3 faculty: Mentor plus 2 other EXSC faculty |
| 2 | Qualifying Exam Committee | Minimum 3 faculty: Mentor plus 2 other faculty (can be faculty at USC or outside the university).<br>*NOTE: Committee can include members from the Program of Study Committee, but this is not required.* |
| 3 and 4 | Dissertation Committee | Minimum 4 faculty: Mentor plus 2 other EXSC faculty (other members can be faculty at USC or outside the university). Exceptions can be made based on expertise required for the dissertation.<br>*NOTE: Committee can include members from the Program of Study Committee or Qualifying Exam Committee, but this is not required.* |

## Milestone 2: Qualifying Exam Format

- Topic and format are determined by the mentor and/or qualifying exam committee.

- Timeframe to respond - 1 to 4 weeks (mentor/qualifying exam committee determined).

- Written product(s) could encompass one or more of the following:
  - Data analysis (data set provided) with manuscript as written product to defend,
  - Paper (e.g., position paper, methods paper, systematic review),
  - Small grant (e.g., R03/R21 style),
  - Scholarly analysis or discourse related to questions in the field,
  - Other – as determined mentor/qualifying exam committee.

- The topic and product can be aligned with the student's dissertation but cannot be the entire dissertation.

- Student independently completes written product in adherence to the honor code.

- Following a successful or conditional pass on the written product, student will orally present/defend the product with the mentor/qualifying exam committee within 30 days, as determined by the committee.

- Following the oral defense, the mentor/qualifying exam committee determines if the student is ready to progress to their dissertation.

- Grading options: Pass, Conditional Pass, or Fail.
  - Pass - admission to candidacy.
  - Fail/Conditional Pass – must retake the exam, as specified by the committee, <u>within 30 days of the decision</u>.

- Upon passing the comprehensive examination Milestone 2 and completion of the Qualifying Exam Verification and DPOS forms, the doctoral student earns the title of doctoral candidate. All documents should be sent to Barbara Reager, the graduate program coordinator for the PhD Program, at breager@mailbox.sc.edu, who will check for their completeness and accuracy prior to forwarding to the graduate director for signatures.

## PhD Committee

The Graduate School dean must approve an advisory committee for the candidate before a program of study can be recommended for the PhD student. The student must submit the Doctoral Committee Appointment Request

(G-DCA) form, which names the members of the committee.  In addition to securing the permission of graduate faculty members to be named to this committee, the composition of this committee must receive the approval of both the exercise science graduate director and the Graduate School dean. The committee for the comprehensive exam and dissertation can be the same or different.

The committee includes **3** members in the USC department of exercise science and **1** outside member (outside the department of exercise science, see Graduate School requirements for outside member).  This committee must be appointed prior to the student's admission to candidacy.

All committees requiring the Graduate School dean's approval must receive that approval *before* functioning as committees.  Where alteration of committee membership is necessary, the change must be requested in writing with appropriate justification and receive approval before a new member can serve.

Committee member updates (e.g., additions or deletions) must be submitted as they occur using the Doctoral Committee Appointment Request (G-DCA) form.

## PhD Comprehensive Examination

The student must satisfactorily pass a comprehensive exam in their field(s) of study.  The comprehensive exam must include both written and oral components and should reflect the student's curriculum as represented by the program of study.  The degree must be completed within 5 years of completing the comprehensive exam or a revalidation of the exam will be required.

The student's committee administers the oral part of the comprehensive examination.  The doctoral comprehensive exam verification form must be completed by the graduate director and submitted to the Graduate School (no less than 60 days prior to graduation). The successful passing of the dissertation proposal defense will constitute the completion of the comprehensive exam. Please see PhD Dissertation section below.

**USC Grad School Requirements:**
A comprehensive exam (aka dissertation proposal) must be administered no later than 60 days prior to graduation. Written and oral assessments are required.

## Milestone 3: PhD Dissertation Proposal Procedures - Comprehensive Examination

Based on extensive review of the literature and pilot work, the student must propose and defend before the dissertation committee a research project that addresses a deficiency or weakness in the literature. The doctoral student will develop a dissertation proposal using departmental guidelines.  Generally, the proposal document will include the following:

- **Introduction** in which the rationale for testing the hypothesis(es) is (are) clearly stated, including limitations, delimitations and scope of the proposed investigation.

- **Review of the literature** pertaining to the research question.

- **Detailed methodology**, including pilot data which corroborate the need for the research, provides data for power calculations and documents the validity and reliability of the selected methodologies.

The proposal document is prepared by the student in conjunction with the chairperson of the committee.  Once approved by the chairperson, it is then distributed to the other members of the dissertation committee, and a proposal defense is scheduled. The candidate must notify the graduate faculty in writing **at least 14 days prior to the scheduled defense**.  The format of this written notification should include the title of the dissertation, along with the date, time, and location of the defense. **Sample formats** can be found in the EXSC-PHD-PROGRAM organization in the *Handbook and Requirements* folder in Blackboard. The written notification should be sent to

Barbara Reager, the graduate program coordinator for the PhD Program, at breager@mailbox.sc.edu, in time to allow for distribution to graduate students and faculty no less than 14 days prior to the defense date.

The general format of a dissertation proposal defense is as follows:

- **~30 minutes:** Presentation of dissertation research by the student candidate to include an introduction, rationale, hypothesis(es), and methodology.

- **15-20 minutes:** Question and answer period by the full audience, after which all but the student and committee members are excused.

- **15+ minutes:** Continued questioning of the student by the committee.

At the conclusion of the proposal presentation, the dissertation committee will either approve the proposal or make appropriate revisions.  The doctoral comprehensive exam verification form should be completed and sent to Barbara Reager, the graduate program coordinator for the PhD Program, at breager@mailbox.sc.edu who will check for completeness and accuracy prior to forwarding it to the graduate director for signatures.

Approval from the appropriate institutional review board(s) must be received prior to data collection for all dissertations that use human subjects. Candidates using animal models must participate in a short course on handling laboratory animals.

## Milestone 4: PhD Dissertation Defense Procedures

The student must publicly defend the results of his/her research before the dissertation committee and any other interested parties and must satisfactorily pass the dissertation defense of original work in his/her field(s) of study. During **all** phases of the completion of the dissertation, any candidate who uses university resources or facilities or confers with a faculty member on dissertation work must be officially enrolled for dissertation credit.

The body or text of the completed dissertation must be in the format and written in the style appropriate for the intended journal(s) of publication. The candidate works under the guidance of the chairperson of the dissertation committee and the other committee members in preparing the dissertation for dispersal to the full dissertation committee. Upon completion of the dissertation research, the candidate must notify the graduate faculty **in writing at least 14 days prior to the scheduled defense.**  The format of this written notification should include the title of the dissertation, along with the date, time, and location of the defense. **Sample formats** can be found in the EXSC-PHD-PROGRAM organization in the *Handbook and Requirements* folder in Blackboard. The written notification should be sent to Barbara Reager, the graduate program coordinator for the PhD Program, at breager@mailbox.sc.edu,  for distribution to graduate students and faculty.

The general format of a dissertation defense is as follows:

- **~30 minutes:** Presentation of dissertation research by the candidate to include an introduction, rationale, hypothesis(es), methodology, results, interpretation/discussion, summary and conclusions.

- **15-20 minutes:** Question and answer period by the full audience, after which all but the student and committee members are excused.

- **15+ minutes:** Continued questioning of the candidate by the committee.

The final official approval of the dissertation is by a majority vote of the dissertation committee.  Signatures of committee members on the title page constitute approval. The student obtains dissertation committee signatures on the Dissertation Signature and Approval Form (G-DSF) which should be sent to Barbara Reager, the graduate program coordinator for the PhD Program, at breager@mailbox.sc.edu, who will check for completeness and accuracy prior to forwarding it to the graduate director for signatures. The graduate director will submit the form to the Graduate School.

## Submission of the Written Dissertation to the Graduate School

The successfully defended dissertation is submitted to the Graduate School in the accepted format specified according to Graduate School regulations. The dissertation must be turned into the Graduate School approximately 20 days before the end of the semester in which the student plans to graduate, but students are responsible for verifying deadlines associated with graduation. **An electronic copy of the final approved dissertation should be provided to the candidate's advisor/chairperson of the dissertation committee.**

## Associated Forms for Progression through PhD Degree

*All forms can be found in the Graduate School Forms Library.*

A. **Choose your plan of study committee** - Your plan of study committee and qualifying exam committee members should be listed in your IDP. If your comprehensive examination and dissertation committee are also known they may be appointed at the same time using the Doctoral Committee Appointment Request (G-DCA) form.

B. **Complete the qualifying exam** - Take the qualifying exam and submit your Qualifying Exam Verification form and approved Doctoral Degree Program of Study (D-POS) to the Graduate School. If needed, you may file a Program of Study Adjustment (POSA) form to request changes to your original D-POS.

C. **CHOOSE OR ADJUST YOUR COMMITTEE** –IF YOUR COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION COMMITTEES HAVE NOT BEEN APPOINTED, THAT NEEDS TO BE COMPLETED PRIOR TO YOUR COMPREHENSIVE EXAM USING THE DOCTORAL COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT REQUEST (G-DCA) FORM.

D. **Pass the comprehensive exam/fulfill language requirements** - You must pass a written and oral comprehensive examination conducted by your academic program under the direction of your comprehensive examination committee. Language and research methods requirements for the doctoral degree vary from program to program. The graduate director will submit the Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Verification form to the Graduate School on your behalf.

E. **Apply for graduation** - In your final term of study, submit your application for graduation to the Graduate School. Complete the online graduation application found in the Graduation box in Self Service Carolina.

F. **Check dissertation format** - Submit your dissertation draft to the Graduate School for a preliminary format check. In order to submit your draft, you will create an account with the UMI/ProQuest site. (This is the same site you will use to submit your final approved dissertation.) Visit the Thesis & Dissertation webpage to view the format guide, ETD samples, templates, and instructions on how to submit your document.

G. **Pass dissertation examination/submit approval form/complete survey/doctoral hooding information** You must pass a written and oral dissertation defense examination conducted by your academic program under the direction of your doctoral committee. Submit your Dissertation Signature and Approval Form (G-DSF) to the Graduate School in hard copy. Complete the Survey of Earned Doctorates. Submit doctoral hooding information to be published in the doctoral hooding program.

H. **Submit dissertation** - After you complete your dissertation defense, and make any final revisions required by your committee and the Graduate School, submit your final approved dissertation via the ProQuest ETD process.

# Doctor of Physical Therapy

Please refer to the webpage for current PT students for [DPT program criteria](#).

# Master of Public Health in Physical Activity and Public Health

Please refer to the program's [handbook](#) for [program criteria.](#)

# Master of Science in Performance Nutrition and Dietetics

Please refer to the program's [handbook](#) for [program criteria.](#)

# Master of Science in Athletic Training

Please refer to the program's [handbook](#) for [program criteria.](#)

# Master of Science in Advanced Athletic Training

Please refer to the program's [handbook](#) for [program criteria](#).

# Section Three: Requirements of Graduate Assistants

## Professionalism Standards and Expectations

Graduate assistants are fully admitted graduate students who are paid employees of the University of South Carolina.  As such, they are expected to perform their assigned duties in a timely, effective, and responsible manner.  Graduate assistants play key roles in the department of exercise science and the way they perform their duties reflects importantly on the department's reputation with students, clients, research participants, and other members of the University community.

Graduate assistants are typically appointed to 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions and, accordingly, are assigned to work 20 hours per week throughout the semester.  However, in some cases appointments are made at lower fractions of an FTE.  Starting and finishing dates for work assignments are designated on a semester-to-semester basis and may vary with the nature of the specific assignment.

## Graduate Assistant Funding

All graduate assistants who are paid through the department (e.g. research assistant, teaching assistant) will receive a stipend rate set by the department and/or the primary mentor. Additional fellowships provided from the Graduate School (e.g. Presidential Fellowship, Grace Jordan McFadden Professors Program, Trustee Fellowships) or by the School (Norman J. Arnold Doctoral Fellowship) may provide additional salary support but must be disclosed to the graduate director and the graduate coordinator of the program the student is enrolled in. Any additional funding for salary or tuition obtained through a program at USC must be disclosed immediately to the program graduate director and the department human resources manager to ensure that all appropriate regulations are followed. Receipt of a fellowship may result in a change in the stipend or tuition supplement provided by the department and/or the primary mentor.

If graduate assistants hired by the exercise science department for less than 20 hours per week are hired by a different department/office at USC, they must notify the program graduate director immediately to ensure that all appropriate regulations are followed. Any appeals for a graduate assistant to work more than 20 hours must align with the Graduate School and other university policies and must be approved by the program director prior to submission to the Graduate School.

## Research and Lab Safety Training Programs

The department of exercise science requires all graduate students who are teaching labs or conducting research in any of the department labs to complete the appropriate Research and Lab Safety Training Programs. These may include but are not limited to chemical and lab safety, biosafety level 2 for labs, hazardous waste, bloodborne pathogens, radiation safety, etc. See course dates on the Environmental Health and Safety website. Students conducting research involving human subjects as part of their graduate assistantship, project, thesis or dissertation are required to complete training in human subjects research, good clinical practice and responsible conduct of research (RCR) available online at the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). Additionally, all students are required to complete research ethics training from the CITI program and other sources (e.g., ethics classes, seminars, online training) as appropriate. **It is the responsibility of the student to complete these courses prior to or after enrollment and annually or as required thereafter. Completion certificates should be sent to the student's direct supervisor and will be reviewed as part of the annual IDP process.**

## Animal Care and Use

The Animal Care and Use course is required for all personnel who may work with animals. The intent of this AALAS Learning Library online course is to familiarize students with appropriate precautions when working with animals,

as well as how to handle animals safely to prevent injury to the personnel and the animals. Additional tutorial sessions can be arranged to learn advanced techniques that may be necessary to fulfill either assistantship or thesis/dissertation responsibilities.

# Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification

Graduate students **may** be required to be certified in adult and/or pediatric cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and automatic external defibrillation (AED) in order to work or perform research in specific exercise science classrooms, research labs, or clinical settings. Failure to comply with this requirement could impact your graduate assistantship.

**Teaching assistants** in exercise science courses that include exercise testing labs are required to be certified (EXSC 742 and EXSC 330L). GA's working in the Clinical Exercise Research Center (CERC) are required to be certified. Such students will present their CPR/AED card to the department administrative coordinator, Barbara Reager in PHRC 220, where a photocopy will be kept on file. Online CPR certifications **will not** be accepted.

**Research assistant** requirements are based on the type of research carried out by the lab and will be determined by the mentor/lab director. CPR certification documentation will be the responsibility of the mentor/ lab director.

Graduate assistants who are not required to be certified in CPR/AED are strongly encouraged to at least complete an online "hands only" CPR training, as part of their responsibility as a public health professional.
- American Heart Association
- American Red Cross

# Placement/Assignment for Teaching Assistants

Graduate teaching assistantship work assignments are made on a semester-to-semester basis. These assignments are made by the department chair with input from the faculty. In making the assignments the following issues are considered:

- The needs of the department
- Competencies and background of the graduate student
- Interests of the graduate student

While consideration is always given to the graduate student's preferences, the needs of the department must take precedence.

# University Training for Teaching Assistants

Graduate assistants who are assigned to serve as teaching assistants (e.g., instructors in laboratory sections or other courses) are **required** by the university to participate in the GTA/IA Orientation and training. These workshops are held prior to the start of the fall and spring semesters. Teaching assistants are also required to take GRAD 701 in the semester they start their assistantship. Teaching assistants only need to complete these trainings one time unless otherwise notified.

# English Proficiency

The South Carolina legislature mandates that all instructors at the university have adequate proficiency in English. International students for whom English is not their primary language can be appointed as teaching assistants only if their oral proficiency in English has been evaluated as satisfactory by the faculty of the English programs for internationals (EPI). All international graduate students who will be newly appointed TA's/IA's must additionally participate in an International Teaching Assistant Workshop & Assessment and subsequently have their English proficiency assessed tested prior to the start of classes.

# Office Hours

It is both a university and department requirement that graduate assistants with teaching responsibilities adhere to regular office hours.  The purpose is to facilitate communication between students and their teaching assistant.

# Enrollment Requirement

Graduate assistants are required to be registered as full-time students during any semester in which they are appointed to an assistantship.  Therefore, the minimum number of credits a student must take is 6 credits in the fall and 6 credits in the spring. During the summer, 3 credits are required to work under a graduate assistantship. Students who are in the dissertation, thesis, or project phase can apply to be on Special Enrollment Status (Z-Status).

# Appointment Dates: University Holidays vs. Assistantship Responsibilities

In general, graduate assistantship duties start on the date designated by the department chair at the beginning of each semester and extend through the end of the final exam period for the semester.  Typically, graduate assistants are not required to work during university holiday periods.  However, in some special cases graduate assistants may be required to work during holiday periods.  University holidays are different from class holidays (i.e., fall and spring breaks, election day).  Graduate assistants will be notified of any special requirements at the time of assignment.  In some cases, additional compensation will be awarded to graduate assistants for work during holiday periods.  Communicate with your faculty supervisor to determine dates you are expected to work in fulfillment of your responsibility as an employee.

# Outside Employment

Graduate assistants who are appointed at the 0.25 FTE level (10 hours per week) or more are discouraged from having additional employment outside the department.  This Graduate School recommendation applies to any activity that involves a continuing commitment to an outside employer for which compensation is made.

# Exercise Science Graduate Seminar Attendance

Exercise science seminars are part of the graduate curriculum providing opportunities for student presentation and professional development. Speakers are departmental students and faculty who present current research data, as well as visitors who are nationally and internationally recognized researchers. Professional development topics and the development of soft skills (e.g., ethics, postdoc positions, career preparation, the construct of higher education) are also covered in these seminars. The seminars occur regularly throughout the semester. The date, time, location, and speakers will be posted at the beginning of each semester. **All graduate assistants (teaching and research assistants) are required to attend these seminars.** Attendance will be taken during the seminar. If you are unable to attend due to a TA assignment, please email the graduate director indicating your teaching conflict. All students are strongly encouraged to attend these seminars.

# Grievances, Problems and/or Concerns in the Program

Students who have a concern or grievance regarding a mentor/advisor or faculty member should first speak with the mentor or faculty member regarding their concerns. If the concern is not resolved or if the student deems the concern needs to be addressed outside a discussion with mentor/advisor or faculty member they should bring that concern to the appropriate graduate director (MS, MPH, or PhD).

The policies and regulations of the University of South Carolina serve as purposeful guidelines and standards for students as they pursue degree objectives. Occasionally, individual students may feel they have grounds to seek exception from the uniform application of such regulations and policies. Graduate students may file written grievances, appeals, or petitions to the Office of Faculty Affairs and Curriculum seeking to reverse or modify decisions made at a lower level of authority. Resolution of any written grievance must follow the procedures outlined in policies maintained by the USC Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support (STAF 6.27 Student Grievance Policy–Non-Academic) and (STAF 6.30 Academic Grievance Policy). As described in STAF 6.27, student ombudsmen are also available to help students resolve grievances and maintain policy compliance. For more information, visit the My Arnold School website for Student Grievance, Appeals and Petitions.

# Section Four: Health and Safety

## Policy on Bloodborne Pathogens

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Bloodborne Pathogens Standard applies to all employees who have occupational exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials (OPIM). Students enrolled in the program should be particularly aware of the potential contamination from infectious agents in the health care environment.  All employees will utilize **universal precautions**. Universal precautions is OSHA's required method of control to protect employees from exposure to all human blood and OPIM. The term, universal precautions, refers to a concept of bloodborne disease control which requires that all human blood and certain human body fluids be treated as if known to be infectious for HIV, HBV or other bloodborne pathogens. The standard states that any health care worker who might potentially come in contact with bodily fluids should be educated in infection control. **Engineering controls** and **work practice controls** will be used to prevent or minimize exposure to bloodborne pathogens.

## Precautions for the Transmission of HIV and HBV

Basic training for students and faculty in the safe handling of bodily fluids and blood in conjunction with the following blood and bodily fluid precautions can help prevent the transmission of blood borne agents.

   a.  The blood and other bodily fluids of all patients/participants will be considered to be infectious at all times.

   b.  Whether or not the patient/participant is known to be infected with HIV, HBV, the student/faculty will:
   * Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before and immediately after contact with patients, their blood, urine, or other bodily fluid.
   * Wear gloves when handling patient's or participant's blood, bodily fluids, and/or items soiled with these fluids.
   * Wear gown, mask and eye coverings when performing procedures where aerosolization or splattering is likely to occur.
   * Consider sharp items (needles, pipette tips, scalpel blades etc.) as being infective and handle with extreme care to prevent accidental injury.
   * Dispose of sharp items in puncture-resistant sharps containers immediately after use.
   * Do not recap, purposefully bend, or otherwise manipulate needles by hand that are to be disposed.
   * Minimize the need for emergency mouth to mouth resuscitation by using pocket masks, bag valve masks, or other ventilation devices.
   * Clean up spills of blood or bodily fluids immediately with a disinfectant and clean work areas with a disinfectant after work is completed.
   * If a cut or abrasion is present, cover these with a waterproof dressing.

   c.  If an incident occurs, please follow the following instructions:
   * During normal working hours (Monday-Friday, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm):
   The exposed individual should immediately report to USC's Student Health Services for a confidential post-exposure evaluation and for assistance with any necessary referrals and appropriate follow-up care. Student Health Services is only equipped to provide medical evaluations for low risk and minor exposure incidents. Higher risk and more significant exposure incidents will be referred to the Prisma Health ER.  The Student Health Services clinical staff and the exposed individual will ensure the health care professional evaluating the exposure incident receives a description of the job duties relevant to the exposure incident, route(s) of exposure,

circumstances of exposure, agent or hazard involved in the incident (e.g. HIV+ blood, Vibrio parahaemolyticus, lentiviral vector), and relevant medical records.

- Exposures occurring outside normal working hours and on weekends or holidays:
  Report to the Emergency Department at Prisma Health Richland Hospital. USC main campus faculty/staff/students and USC School of Medicine students should verify that USC's Student Health Services is provided an incident report and any medical evaluation records. This report must include the date of the incident, person involved and their supervisor, nature and consequences of the incident, root cause, and a description of the material/hazard involved.

If you need immediate assistance, call Campus Police from a university phone at 777-9111 or from any other phone at 803-777-9111 (24 hours a day, 7 days per week).

# Immunizations and Health Insurance

Visit the Graduate School website to see the health requirements for immunizations and health insurance. Students must submit proof of your health insurance during the waiver period each term or you will be billed for the university health insurance plan.

# Counseling and Psychiatry Services

Maintaining your mental health during this vital time of your life is of the utmost importance in sustaining your academic performance and success here at the University of South Carolina. Counseling & Psychiatry provides students with a safe place to speak privately and confidentially with a trained counselor or psychiatrist about a variety of concerns. These may include stress, anxiety, loneliness, depression, relationship difficulties, questions about identity, eating concerns, substance use, sexuality, managing an existing mental health condition or any other issue. Their multi-disciplinary team of professional mental health providers includes psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, social workers and supervised trainees in psychology, counseling, and social work.

Currently enrolled USC students who have paid the student health fee are eligible to receive most services for counseling at no additional charge. However, students who request more than 10 individual sessions per academic year may incur additional charges. Visits with a psychiatrist require additional charges. Enrolled students who have not paid the student health fee are eligible to receive most services within Counseling and Psychiatry but are charged on a fee-for-service basis. You can schedule an appointment at (803) 777-5223 or on MyHealthSpace. You can also call after-hours for crisis counseling.

Wellness Coaching can help you improve in areas related to emotional and physical wellbeing, such as sleep, resiliency, balanced eating and more. Wellness Coaching appointments can be made by calling 803-777-6518 or on MyHealthSpace. You can also access virtual self-help modules via Therapy Assistance Online (TAO). Resources and support for health and emotional well-being can assist with all the dimensions of your health and well-being, from physical and emotional to financial and intellectual.

Anyone in the Carolina community who feels a student is a risk to themselves or the community can report a concern; including students, parents, faculty and staff, and other community members. All referrals are kept confidential. Submit a referral and find additional information on resources by going to the Student Care and Outreach Team.

# Section Five: Academic Standards for Graduate Students

## Academic Integrity

Only in an environment where honesty and integrity are core values can we truly advance the science and practice of public health. The department of exercise science places a premium on academic integrity. Violations of academic integrity are thus taken very seriously. Many details about academic integrity are described below, but a fundamental precept to guide your approach is to take pride in doing work to the best of your natural abilities and doing so honestly and fairly. The following excerpts are taken from STAF 6.25 Academic Responsibility – The Honor Code, last revised August 1, 2017.

> "The Honor Code is a set of principles established by the university to promote honesty and integrity in all aspects of a student's academic career. It is the responsibility of every student at the University of South Carolina to adhere steadfastly to truthfulness and to avoid dishonesty in connection with any academic program. A student who violates, or assists another in violating the Honor Code, will be subject to university sanctions. The Honor Code delineates the values set forth in the tenets of the Carolinian Creed. When a student is uncertain as to whether conduct would violate this Honor Code, it is the responsibility of the student to seek clarification from the appropriate faculty member or instructor of record."

**The following is a list of honor code violations with associated prohibited behaviors.**

**Plagiarism:** Use of work or ideas without proper acknowledgment of source. Prohibited behaviors include:
- Partial or incomplete citation of work or ideas.
- Improperly paraphrasing by acknowledging the source but failing to present the material in one's own words.
- Paraphrasing without acknowledgment of the source.
- Multiple submissions of the same or substantially the same academic work for academic credit.
- Copying, partially or entirely, any material without acknowledgement of the source.

**Cheating:** Improper collaboration or unauthorized assistance in connection with any academic work. Prohibited behaviors include:
- Copying another individual's or group's academic work.
- Receiving and utilizing academic work for purposes of fulfilling an academic requirement.
- Completing any academic work for someone else or permitting someone else to complete academic work on your behalf.
- Using any bribe or unauthorized aid (e.g., outside source, cell phone, calculator, notes, previous testing materials).

**Falsification:** Misrepresenting or misleading others with respect to academic work. Prohibited behaviors include:
- Signing in for another student who is not in attendance or requesting this action.
- Interfering with an instructor's ability to evaluate accurately a student's competency or performance on any academic work.
- Fabrication of documents submitted in connection with academic work.

**Complicity:** Assisting or attempting to assist another in any violation of the Honor Code. Prohibited behaviors include:
- Sharing academic work with another student (either in person or electronically) without the permission of the instructor.

- Communicating (either in person or electronically) with other student(s) or other individual(s) during an examination without the permission of the instructor.

All work submitted by a student is expected to be that student's own work **unless the instructor specifically states that students may work together on the assignment/ homework/project, etc.** If permitted by the instructor, students may use their notes and books and other references for take home examinations but cannot consult with each other.

If a student is writing a paper that uses external sources of information**, all external sources of information must be cited**. If the sources are used verbatim, the words must be in quotation marks and the source must be cited. If the sources have been paraphrased, the sources still must be cited. A paper submitted for one class may not be submitted for a subsequent class, unless a student has the express permission of the professor of the subsequent class. This might happen if the current work builds upon previous work.

These rules are not meant to cover all circumstances. If any questions arise, please discuss them with your instructor, advisor, or graduate director. Plagiarism and other violations of the Honor Code are serious offenses and will be taken up with the office of academic integrity. For more information, visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website.

## Academic Probation and Suspension Policy - "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. In the case of conversion of grades of incomplete that cause a cumulative GPA to drop below 3.00, a graduate degree-seeking student will be placed on academic probation at the end of the semester in which the grade is posted. Students whose cumulative GPA falls below the required minimum of 3.00 by receiving a grade for a course in which they received an Incomplete will, instead of a one-year probationary period, be granted only one major semester of probation dating from the semester in which the grade is received by the registrar in which to raise their cumulative GPA to 3.00 or above. 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.

## Graduation Grade Point Averages

At the time of graduation, the student's cumulative grade point average must be at least 3.00. Additionally, the student's average on all grades recorded on the program of study must be 3.00 and the student's GPA for courses numbered 700 or above, recorded on the program of study, must be at least 3.00.

## "I" (Incomplete) to "F"

An "Incomplete" is a temporary mark that may be assigned at a professor's discretion to allow an additional specified amount of time to finish course requirements following illness, accident or unusual hardship. **A grade of "I" is automatically converted to a grade of "F" after a default of one (1) year or unless otherwise assigned by the course instructor.** In the event of an "I" grade, the student must make arrangements with the course instructor to finalize the completion of the course. If a student receives an "incomplete" in three courses, the student will be prohibited from registering for additional coursework.

# Student Assistance Program for Behavioral and Academic Problems

Faculty, staff, and other students may notice behavior that appears unethical or unprofessional in a student enrolled in the program. In addition, a student may experience academic problems with selected course content. Independent observations of isolated events may not be sufficient to draw attention to a larger potential problem. For this reason, collective observations may assist in the identification of a significant problem and indicate a need for external assistance.

Faculty and staff of the department have established policies and procedures for assisting students who are exhibiting behavioral or academic problems. The objectives of this program are:

- The early identification of students exhibiting behavioral and/or academic problems that will be detrimental to their progression in the academic program or outside work experiences.

- The development of a remedial plan of action designed to assist a student in managing and addressing behavioral or academic problems.

USC has a wealth of resources to assist students, faculty, and staff in addressing a range of student issues that may arise. An individual who observes unusual behavior (physical signs, emotional signs, or social interactions) should complete an incident report related to the issue. The confidentiality of the respondent will be assured. Upon receiving a completed form, the appropriate university office will follow-up with the matter promptly. Students may also be referred to additional support agencies on campus including the Counseling and Psychiatry Services at Student Health Services for professional and personal problems and Student Affairs and Academic Support services for problems related to academic skills.

# Academic Assistance

All students at USC can perform at their maximum potential when given the appropriate guidance and assistance. The division of Student Affairs and Academic Support designs and provides comprehensive resources to support students' academic achievement, and our outreach and intervention efforts strive to ensure that no student falls through the cracks. The Student Success Center offers graduate students access to classroom success consultation.

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If students have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in a class, contact the Student Disability Resource Center: 777-6142, TDD 777-6744, email sadrc@mailbox.sc.edu, or stop by Close-Hipp room 102. All accommodations must be approved through the Office of Student Disability Services. It is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor of any approved accommodations for each course.

# Financial Aid

Information regarding financial aid may be obtained from the Financial Aid and Scholarships office.

# Section Six: Funding Opportunities

## Graduate Research Grants

Sponsored by the Office of the Vice President for Research, the SPARC Graduate Research Grant Program is a merit-based award designed to ignite research and creative excellence across all disciplines at USC. The overall objective of the SPARC graduate research grant is to provide support and to encourage outstanding students to pursue exciting research directions during their graduate career at the University of South Carolina. To achieve this end, the SPARC program provides the opportunity for eligible graduate students to secure funding up to $5,000 to support their research, creative or other meritorious scholarly project. SPARC funds can be used to pay for salary, supplies and other costs essential to completing and promoting funded projects. By completing SPARC's competitive research proposal process, graduate students also gain experience that helps prepare them to seek national fellowship and grant awards throughout their academic careers.

## Travel Grants for Graduate Student Research

***All information and required forms regarding travel can be found on the EXSC Online Request portal.***

Travel grants are designed to provide opportunities and support for graduate student research presentations at professional scientific conferences. Travel grants are awarded from the Department of Exercise Science (EXSC), Arnold School of Public Health/Dean's office (ASPH), and the Graduate School. Faculty mentors may also provide additional financial support.

### Eligibility and Guidelines

**You must……**
- Be enrolled in a degree-seeking MS, MPH, or PhD program when you apply and when you travel. The department of exercise science will allow you to use their grant up to 6 months after your graduation date.
- Be presenting a research paper or poster at a conference or meeting of national or international standing to qualify for a travel grant from the Graduate School.  Students presenting at a state or regional meeting or participating in a group competition at a national meeting are eligible for ASPH and EXSC grants. When the paper or presentation under review for the student travel award involves co-authors, only the presenter may be awarded a travel grant.
- Have a grade point average of 3.00 - 4.00 or higher.

**Please note……**
- Travel grants are applicable to the following travel-related expenses: airfare, baggage fees, lodging, meals, registration fees, ground transportation, and parking. Travel grants cannot be used for membership fees or abstract submission fees.
- All student travel support is based upon the availability of funds.
- Students will receive email notifications upon approval of each award application. These email notifications should be included as attachments when the student requests a travel authorization. It is not advisable to make any travel purchases (airline tickets, lodging) until you have confirmation of awards.

**To apply for travel grants**, students must provide the following for each application. **Student's name** must be on each document.
- Conference name, location, and date.
- Copy of the abstract being presented.

- Evidence of the abstract acceptance. If acceptance notification has not been received at the time of application, it may be submitted later, but **all awards are conditional upon that acceptance**.
- Statement of justification and significance of research.
- Estimated travel expenses.
- Unofficial transcript reflecting GPA (print from my.sc.edu).

| NUMBER OF TRAVEL GRANTS ALLOWED | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **EXSC** | **ASPH** | **Grad School** |
| **Master's students** | 1 per academic year (July 1-June 30) | 1 while at ASPH | 1 per academic year, no more than 2 while at USC |
| **Doctoral students** | 2 per academic year | 2 while at ASPH, no more than 1 per year | |

## Graduate School Travel Grant

Graduate students may receive up to $500 for domestic travel and up to $800 for international travel. Students may receive no more than one travel grant in any fiscal year (July 1-June 30) and no more than two while attending USC.

Applications for travel grants are accepted in four cycles each year. The application portal remains open for one week per cycle and then grants are awarded on a rolling basis until funds for the cycle have been exhausted. Students who apply early in the award cycle have a significant advantage.

Please go to the Graduate School Travel Grant page for **full instructions** for their application.

| Cycle | Application Period | Travel Dates |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | June 1 – 7 | July 1 – Sept. 30 |
| 2 | Sept. 1 – 7 | Oct. 1 – Dec. 31 |
| 3 | Dec. 1 – 7 | Jan. 1 – March 31 |
| 4 | March 1 – 7 | April 1 – June 30 |

## Arnold School of Public Health Travel Grant

Students may receive up to $500 from the Dean's office with supplemental funds from the department, center, or research grant. Students are allowed one ASPH travel grant during the master's program and two grants during the doctoral program. Funds are allocated on a fiscal year basis (July 1 - June 30). ASPH travel grant applications are accepted year-round.  Please go to the ASPH Student Travel Support page for **full instructions** for their application.

## Exercise Science Travel Grant

Students may receive up to $300 from the Department of Exercise Science and may be eligible for up to $500 if also applying for an ASPH travel grant. Funds are allocated on a fiscal year basis (July 1 - June 30). EXSC travel grant applications are accepted year-round.

- o To apply for **BOTH** **the EXSC and the ASPH travel grants**, complete this application:
- o ASPH Student Travel Application

- To apply for **only the EXSC travel grant**, complete this application:
  - o EXSC Student Travel Grant Application

# Travel Authorization (TA) Instructions
*All information and required forms regarding travel can be found on the EXSC Online Request portal.*

- DO NOT make travel arrangements through THIRD PARTIES, like Expedia, Chase Travel, Citibank Travel, etc. These companies do not provide the receipts that the university travel office requires for reimbursement.
- When planning travel, students should be practical and economical with due consideration given to the time involved, travel costs, and the mission to be accomplished. It is advisable to take advantage of early-bird conference registration, purchase economy class airfare, avoid change-of-flights fees, and share lodging with other conference attendees whenever reasonable.

- **A travel authorization must be approved by the department PRIOR to travel.** Travel authorizations submitted after travel has commenced will not be approved. No reimbursements will be given without an approved TA.

- **DO NOT REQUEST A TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION UNTIL YOU HAVE CONFIRMATION OF ALL TRAVEL AWARDS FOR WHICH YOU HAVE APPLIED**.

- Once official notifications of travel awards are received, submit a [Travel Authorization](#) (TA) request through the [Online Request](#) portal no later than **2 weeks prior to travel**.

- You must provide the following information on the TA request:
  o Dates of travel - If you wish to extend business travel for personal reasons, it must be noted on the TA request. You will only be reimbursed for the dates of business travel for conference or meeting.
  o Destination city, state, country.
  o Purpose of travel – conference name.
  o Estimated expenses ([registration](#), [ground transportation](#), mileage, [flight](#), [lodging](#)).
  o Sources of funds for reimbursement. This includes any travel award letters from ASPH, EXSC, and/or Graduate School. If your faculty mentor is contributing to your travel funds, please provide an email or letter from them with their name, amount they are contributing, and the account number.

- [If students plan to share lodging](#), **only one TA** should be requested, listing all student names.
  o It is not advisable for students to pay the travel expenses of other travelers. Each traveler must submit their own receipts for reimbursement separately.
  o If travel expenses are inconsistent among a group of travelers, expense reports will likely be returned for additional information and may not be reimbursed.

- The university will reimburse mileage only for days trips, not meals or lodging.

- A travel authorization does not ensure full reimbursement of all travel expenses. You will only be reimbursed for approved expenses on the TA that are covered by the amount received from travel grants, faculty mentor support, or other approved sponsors. It is not advisable to purchase airline tickets until your TA has been approved. Not all faculty mentors may agree to provide reimbursement for certain expenses or meal per diems.

## Required Receipts for Reimbursement of Travel Expenses

- **If you want to be reimbursed for travel expenses, it is imperative that you provide the correct form of receipt.**
- Within 7 days of completing your travel, submit all receipts and proof of purchase (credit card statement) to Barbara Reager ([breager@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:breager@mailbox.sc.edu)) or Libby Furr ([furrke@email.sc.edu](mailto:furrke@email.sc.edu)) for reimbursement.
- Complete and Include the [Receipt Checklist for Reimbursement](#) form with your receipt submission.

- Receipts must identify the following information:
  - ✓ Vendor's name
  - ✓ Date of purchase (dates on receipt must be within the date range of the travel authorization)
  - ✓ Location and time
  - ✓ Amount of purchase - some purchases may also require proof of payment.
  - ✓ Name of the person to be reimbursed.
  - ✓ Service or items purchased. Notification of an item ordered and/or shipped is not proof of purchase.
- Receipts emailed to the student from the conference organizers, airlines, Uber/Lyft, and hotels should be saved as PDFs to ensure all vendor contact information is included. Do not copy and paste portions of the receipt emails in your submission for reimbursement.
- No phone screenshots of receipts will be accepted; obtain receipts via computer, not phone, if you do not have a hard copy receipt. Save the receipts in pdf format.

**Conference Registration**
- Membership fees and abstract submissions are not reimbursed through the travel office, but, with prior approval, can be submitted as [Non-Employee Student Reimbursement](#) request.

**Ground transportation** (Taxi, Uber, Lyft, etc.)
- Uber and Lyft will email receipts upon request. Save email as a pdf.
- USC pays 70 cents per mile when using your personal vehicle for transportation. USC does not reimburse fuel purchases.
- You may elect to receive mileage in lieu of flying as long as the mileage is less than economy airfare. In such cases, you must provide proof of cost comparison.
- USC will not reimburse rental car expenses unless preapproved by the department.

**Air transportation**
- All flights charged to federal projects must be taken on U.S. flag air carriers or on foreign air carriers that code share with a U.S. flag carrier on the flight taken. This includes flights within the U.S. See [Fly America Act](#). You can find a complete list of certified [U.S. flag air carriers on transportation.gov](#).
- Receipts for air travel **MUST include the traveler's name, ticket number, class of airfare, itinerary, and proof of payment**. Dates on the airline receipt must match dates of travel on the approved travel authorization.
- USC will reimburse economy class airfare only, not business or first-class airfare.

**Lodging**
- Students are encouraged to share lodging when reasonable. **All student names must be on lodging receipt for each student to be reimbursed.** Names on the receipt must match the names on the TA.
  - Hotels - If sharing a hotel room, students can ask for separate receipts with their name upon checkout of their share of the room rental.
  - AirBnB or Vrbo - When making a reservation for lodging through AirBnB or Vrbo, you will be asked for names and email addresses of other guests so an email of the itinerary can be sent to each guest. If you **use this option**, the receipt will automatically list each student name as required for reimbursement.
- The total of the receipt will be divided by the number of people listed on the receipt to reimburse each traveler on the TA, so do not add a name to a reservation unless you are sure that person will share lodging. **USC will only reimburse you if your name is on the receipt.** Reimbursement will not be given for the lodging of any unapproved traveler. It is not advisable for students to pay travel expenses of other travelers. Each traveler must submit their own receipts for reimbursement separately.

- The maximum lodging rate is **$441.14** per person, per night.

## Meals

No receipts are necessary for meals. Report your time of departure and return to and from your residence or office so the per diem can be calculated for travel days. USC pays per diem for meals as follows:

| Per Diem Meal Allowance | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Meal** | **In-State** | **Out-of-State** |
| **Breakfast** | $8.00 | $10.00 |
| **Lunch** | $10.00 | $15.00 |
| **Dinner** | $17.00 | $25.00 |
| **All Meals** | $35.00 | $50.00 |

*Rates above apply to trip destination

| Day of Departure | | Day of Return | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Time of Departure** | **Meals Reimbursed** | **Time of Return** | **Meals Reimbursed** |
| Before 6:30am | All Meals | Before 11:00am | None |
| 6:30am - 11:00am | Lunch & Dinner | 11:00am – 1:30pm | Breakfast Only |
| 11:01am - 5:15pm | Dinner Only | 1:31pm – 8:30pm | Breakfast & Lunch |
| After 5:15pm | None | After 8:30pm | All Meals |

# *APPENDICES*

## Advisement and Registration

Each semester ALL graduate students need to be advised prior to registering for courses. This includes meeting with your academic advisor and completing an advisement form.

For each course, list the department, course number, section number, credit hours, and name of the instructor. After the advisement form is signed by you and your advisor, send the form to your specific department graduate coordinator, who will verify the section and course registration numbers (CRN), and lift the advisement hold. A scanned copy of the form will be emailed to your USC email address once processed.

- Graduate coordinator for **MS, MPH, and PhD Program**:  Barbara Reager, breager@mailbox.sc.edu

If taking an independent study course, note that an Independent Study Contract will be required. Please review the instructions and links below for more information about registration.

### First steps
Upon receipt of the official notification of acceptance from the University of South Carolina Graduate School, which may take 1-2 weeks after receipt of the department recommendation letter, you may access your account in Self-Service Carolina.

### Access Self-Service Carolina (SSC)
Self-Service Carolina is the university's interactive website where you will manage your academic, financial, and personal information. You will need to claim and manage your account through myaccount.sc.edu before accessing SSC. Please follow these 4 steps in the order presented:

1. Obtain your VIP ID from your official offer letter sent to you by the USC Graduate School.
2. Claim your account (for admitted students).
3. Enroll in the university's Multifactor Authentication service.
4. Login to SSC (my.sc.edu).

### Before you register
Before you can register for classes, you must submit the following to remove registration holds:
- Immunization information must be submitted through sc/edu/myhealthspace.
- US students must submit the Citizenship Status Verification form through SSC. Non-US citizens must submit immigration documentation to International Student and Scholar Support.
- Students seeking in-state tuition must establish proof of South Carolina residency. Students with assistantships do not need to submit proof of residency to qualify for in-state tuition.
- Apply for SC Residency (through SSC).

### Register
How to Register for Classes? SSC has a Registration window with multiple options to select. Start with "Look Up Classes" to view course offerings and proceed from there.

### Additional Registration Details
- For information about payment deadlines, go to:
  https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/bursar/my_bill/important_dates/index.php

- If a student is dropped for non-payment and re-enrolls in classes after the payment deadline, these students and any students registering for the first time will need to pay their account balance in full or enroll in the University's payment plan option by the drop/add date to retain their class schedule.

- Students who have been dropped for non-payment who request to be re-enrolled in their classes AFTER the last day to drop/add must submit a Registration Exception Form (AS-199) and will be assessed a $75 reinstatement fee.

- Late Registration: you can register yourself during the drop/add period. After that period, you will be required to submit a Registration Exception Form.

- With the implementation of On Your Time Carolina and multiple terms per semester, you are encouraged to review the Part of Term Dates associated with your specific section to ensure you meet deadlines.

- Some courses have restrictions or special permissions. If you attempt to register for a course listed on your approved advisement form and are unable to register, please contact your graduate program coordinator and provide details of the error message posted in SSC. If a course is full (indicated by the letter 'C' listed beside the section in the first column labeled 'Select'), a capacity override will only be processed with written approval from the instructor.

- Students can drop a course or withdraw with a grade of W or WF via Self Service Carolina. Deadlines for dropping a course without receiving a W and WF, as well as refund dates, are determined by the part of term to which a course is attached. Every part of term during a semester has a drop/add deadline.

- Should you wish to withdraw from a course with a grade of W or WF, a grade of W or WF will be recorded on your transcript. A grade of W will not be calculated in your GPA but will be recorded on your permanent record. Courses dropped after the WF deadline will be recorded as a WF on your permanent record. The grade of WF is treated as an F in the calculation of your GPA. The WF deadline will vary based on the part of term for your class.

- **Health Insurance** - The following groups of students are required to show proof of health insurance as a condition of enrollment: undergraduate or graduate students enrolled in 6 or more credit hours, students with a graduate assistantship, students in the School of Medicine enrolled in 1 or more hours, and international students. Students must either enroll in the USC Student Health Insurance Plan or waive the plan by showing proof of their own health insurance. Answers to common questions are available by visiting the USC Student Health Insurance Plan site. If students do not waive out by the deadline or do not have adequate health insurance coverage, students will be enrolled in the university-sponsored Student Health Insurance Plan, and the premium fee will remain on their tuition bill.

- If a course is not posted in the "Look Up Classes" section of SSC, you may register using the CRN provided on your advisement form. Go to *Student>Registration>Register for Classes>Select Term>Enter CRNs* tab.

- Courses with adjustable credit hours will default to 1 hour. To adjust:
  - Sign into SSC and select the Student tab.
  - Select the Registration menu then select Register for Classes.
  - Once the effective term is entered, all registered courses for that term will appear.
  - Select the Schedule Options tab and there will be a hyperlink for any course with variable credit hours.
  - Click the link and update the credit hours for the specified course.

# Graduate Student Handbook Acknowledgement

All new graduate students are asked to acknowledge that they have read this handbook and are aware of the policies and procedures. To sign and submit this form, go to the My Arnold School - Online Requests page for the Graduate Student Handbook Acknowledgement form and follow the instructions.

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**Exercise Science**
Arnold School of Public Health
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

**Graduate Student Handbook Acknowledgement**

I acknowledge that I have read the contents of the 2025-2026 Department of Exercise Science Graduate Student Handbook. I agree to follow the policies and procedures stated within.

_____          _____
Printed Name                                                                        Degree Program

_____          _____
Student Signature                                                                   Date

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**If students have questions about departmental policies, they are expected to find the answers by checking the handbook first, before questioning faculty and staff.**

## QUESTIONS?

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