



**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**

**University of  
South Carolina**

**PhD STUDENT  
POLICIES AND  
PROCEDURES  
MANUAL  
2024-2025**

# PhD Program Contact Information

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## College of Social Work

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## 2024-2025 PhD STUDENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

This manual covers the Fall, Spring, and Summer terms of the 2024-2025 academic year. This manual is intended only to provide information for the guidance of the University of South Carolina College of Social Work PhD students. The information is subject to change and the College of Social Work reserves the right to depart without notice from any policy or procedures referred to in this manual. This manual is not intended to be and should not be regarded as a contract between the University of South Carolina College of Social Work and any student or other person.

### PROGRAM MISSION, GOALS, AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

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#### PhD Program Mission

The PhD Program in the College of Social Work develops scholars who generate and disseminate new knowledge to drive social change and create a more equitable, just, and inclusive society.

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#### PhD Program Goals and Learning Outcomes

Graduates of the USC CoSW PhD Program are:

- Emerging experts in a self-determined specialized substantive area, making unique contributions to knowledge advancement in the pursuit of social change.
  - Skilled in diverse theoretical and methodological approaches, with deep expertise for pursuing the scientific exploration of their specialized substantive area.
  - Equipped with the knowledge, skills, and experience to teach the next generation of social work practitioners and scholars
  - Productive scholars, with records of scholarly publications, national presentations, and applications for independent research funding.
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#### Program Evaluation

The PhD Program routinely collects and evaluates data to monitor progress and achievement of program goals. Students are included in this process through their involvement in instructor evaluations, course objective outcomes, and other means. Students are also invited to provide feedback through the PhD Student Association and PhD student membership on the PhD Program Committee.

## ADMISSIONS

All applicants must fulfill the admission requirements of both The Graduate School and the College of Social Work.

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### Admission Requirements

Admission to the PhD program is selective; only a small number of applicants are admitted for each fall semester. We seek applicants who embrace our mission to advance social change and improve individual lives and communities in South Carolina and beyond. Requirements for admission include:

- Master's degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited graduate program (a master's degree in a related field may be considered on a case-by-case basis)
- Grade point average of 3.5 or above for graduate level work;
- Evidence of scholarly potential as indicated by three letters of reference;
- A detailed personal statement that addresses:
  - ✓ your career goals,
  - ✓ how earning a PhD will help you achieve your career goals,
  - ✓ why you want to pursue a PhD at the USC CoSW,
  - ✓ what, if any, experience you have conducting research/evaluation (e.g., with a faculty member, for employment),
  - ✓ your major research interest/focus,
  - ✓ what personal and professional experiences have influenced your
  - ✓ research interest/focus,
  - ✓ how, if at all, your research interest/focus fits with the program's emphases on community-engaged, trans-disciplinary research (i.e., team science) and leadership for social change;
- Sample of the applicant's scholarly writing; and
- [Satisfactory score on TOEFL or IELTS](#) for international applicants for whom English is not their primary language

The individual strengths of each candidate will be considered. An applicant's undergraduate and graduate academic record, post-MSW work experience, commitment to social work research and teaching, and indicated potential for success in scholarship at the doctoral level are among factors considered. Each class is selected to include individuals with high potential to learn from each other as well as from our faculty. PhD students are admitted in the spring to begin full-time study in the fall.

## PROGRESS TO DEGREE COMPLETION

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### Degree Requirements

Satisfactory completion of the following are required for the PhD in social work:

- Required courses listed in the program of study;
- University residency requirement;
- Elective courses outlined in the student’s individual Doctoral Program of Study;
- Qualifying examination (written and oral components);
- Comprehensive examination (written and oral components) in the form of a dissertation proposal that is approved by the student’s dissertation committee;
- Completion and oral defense of dissertation approved by dissertation committee

Students have ten years from the first term of enrollment in which to complete the degree. Please see the Academic Bulletin, [Doctoral Degree Requirements](#), for additional information, including information about “Special Enrollment” options to extend this timeline through family or medical leave exceptions.

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### The Core Curriculum – Residency and the First Two Years

The PhD program in social work is designed so that the core curriculum can be completed in two years. A student must enroll full-time during the first year in residence (see the USC Graduate Studies Bulletin, [Doctoral Degree Requirements](#) for additional information about the “Residency Requirement”).

It is assumed that all required courses will be taken at the University of South Carolina. Under some circumstances and with the approval of a student’s advisor and the PhD Program Director, limited coursework taken from an accredited doctoral program may be accepted in lieu of required or elective courses at USC.

**Grades.** In the COSW PhD program, no grade below a **B** can be applied to a core course. Additionally, per USC policy, a student must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.00 (B) on all approved coursework completed in the University of South Carolina doctoral program. Students whose cumulative GPA drops below 3.00 will be placed on academic probation. Please see the [Graduate Academic Regulations](#) for more information about academic standards including policies regarding grades, course credits, transfer credits, revalidation of courses, exception petitions, and similar topics.

**Course Loads.** PhD students typically enroll in 10 credit hours per semester during the first 2 years of the program. A minimum of 6 hours per semester is required for full-time status while a student has a GRA/GTA assignment, and to be eligible for GRA/GTA assignment, a student is required to be full-time or on z-status (please see the Graduate Academic Regulations for more information on z-status, and plan carefully for use of z-status as it is generally limited to 3 semesters across the degree program).

For students receiving tuition reimbursement as part of their funding package, it is critical that CoSW administrators/staff have early information about the number of credit hours you will enroll in, so that the appropriate paperwork can be submitted in advance of the payment deadline. Please be alert to notifications through **myPhD** in BB or by email about internal deadlines for you to notify us your intended number of credit hours each semester.

It is rare, but at times a PhD student may wish to enroll in more than 10 credit hours per semester. A student may enroll for a semester load not to exceed 15 hours (including audits and undergraduate courses). Students requesting an overload exception over 15 hours must submit the required Course Overload Enrollment Authorization (CEO) Form to the Dean of Graduate Studies for approval prior to the beginning of the term for which the exception is requested. Students should consult their academic advisor for assistance. Additional Course Enrollment Load information can be found in the bulletin. Full-time benefits for veterans are determined by the Office of Veterans Services.

## Typical Program of Study

The program of study described below constitutes a typical schedule for the minimum courses required of all PhD students. Dissertation chairs and committees may require students to take additional courses to prepare them to carry out their dissertation research, so students should work closely with faculty advisors to plan for a program of study that efficiently meets the student’s unique needs.

<b>Fall Year 1</b>
SOWK 803: History of the Profession of Social Work SOWK 804: Understanding and Using Social Science Theory SOWK 805: Knowledge for Social Change SOWK 850: Professional Development Seminar
<b>Spring Year 1</b>
SOWK 806: Conducting a Systematic Literature Review SOWK 892: Design and Critical Analysis of Social Work Research SOWK 890: Analysis of Social Work Data <sup>1</sup> SOWK 850: Professional Development Seminar
<b>SOWK 872: Social Work Education Practicum and SOWK 889: Doctoral Social Work Practicum</b> may be taken any time after the first year but must be completed prior to the comprehensive examination. They are not required prior to the Qualifying Examination.
<b>Fall Year 2</b>
SOWK 802: Intellectual Foundations of Social Welfare and Social Work: Conceptual model building SOWK 891: Advanced Analysis of Social Work Data <sup>2</sup> SOWK 811: Qualitative Methods of Inquiry for Social Work Research SOWK 894: Planning and Design of Dissertation Research

<b>Spring Year 2</b>
Elective #1 Elective #2 Elective #3 SOWK 894: Planning and Design of Dissertation Research
Spring/Summer – Qualifying examination and entrance to candidacy stage (or after all core courses successfully completed).
<b>Fall Year 3 to Degree completion</b>
SOWK 899: Dissertation Preparation (total of 12 credits required) <sup>3</sup> Comprehensive examination (Dissertation proposal defense) Dissertation defense

<sup>1</sup> Students who enter the program with a strong background of graduate-level statistics/research methods courses may request to waive one or more core course. This will require committee review of syllabi from past courses. Students who successfully waive one or both of these courses will substitute additional advanced methods or other elective courses as approved by the PhD Program Director.

<sup>2</sup> Successful completion of SOWK 890 or its equivalent is prerequisite for enrolling in SOWK 891.

<sup>3</sup> Completion of SOWK 899 credit hours should be linked to a specific goal or deliverable focused on the completion of the dissertation. These credit hours will be reviewed annually by the doctoral program director.

**Course Information – the Core Curriculum.** Successful completion (e.g. with a “B” or better) of these courses is required prior to taking the qualifying examination.

- **SOWK 802: Intellectual Foundations of Social Welfare and Social Work III: Conceptual Model-Building (3 credits)**  
Examines the process of developing theory-based welfare and social work scholarship from a variety of research approaches, focusing on conceptual model-building.
- **SOWK 803: History of the Profession of Social Work (3 credits)**  
Examines the theoretical and empirical foundations of the profession of social work in historical, economic, social, and political contexts from the early 20th century to the present.
- **SOWK 804: Understanding and Using Social Science Theory (3 credits)**  
Introduces the concept of theory and its relation to empirical investigation. Introduces middle range social science theories widely used for research in social work and social welfare.
- **SOWK 805: Knowledge for Social Change: Core principles of ontology, epistemology, and methodology in social science research (3 credits)**  
Understanding what we can know as social scientists (ontology) and how we can know it (epistemology), and a deep dive into how these approaches play out in 1) understandings of scientific inquiry and core methodological concepts, 2) qualitative and quantitative methods, and 3) the researcher’s role and positionality in advancing change-oriented knowledge claims.
- **SOWK 806: Conducting A Systematic Literature Review For Publication (3 credits)**  
Step-by-step approach to conducting a systematic review of scientific literature and summarizing findings in the format of a journal manuscript for potential publication.
- **SOWK 811: Qualitative Methods of Inquiry for Social Work Research (3 credits)**  
Foundations of qualitative methods in social research with emphasis on intensive interviewing and

grounded theory.

- **SOWK 850: Social Work Doctoral Professional Seminar (1 credit)**  
Examines issues related to making a successful transition from doctoral student to professional social work scholar. Repeatable: 2 credits required for the doctoral program.
- **SOWK 890: Analysis of Social Work Data (3 credits)**  
Approaches to the organization, analysis, interpretation, and utilization of data sets available from social agency records or from existing empirical research.
- **SOWK 891: Advanced Analysis of Social Work Data (3 credits) (Prereq: SOWK 891)**  
Analysis of complex data sets from social services agencies and other research sources.
- **SOWK 892: Design and Critical Analysis of Social Work Research (3 credits)**  
Advanced study of research methods employed in the development of knowledge for social work practice and education. Critique of published social work research using a standardized critique model.
- **SOWK 894: Proposal Writing Seminar (1 credit)**  
A seminar designed to provide intensive faculty supervision and peer consultation to the doctoral student in professional writing for community and scholarly audiences. Repeatable: 2 credits required for the doctoral program.

**Course Information – Additional Course Requirements.** Prior to the comprehensive examination, students must complete any of the following course requirements that were not completed prior to the qualifying examination.

- **SOWK 782 Social Work Education Practicum (required).** The purpose of this 0-credit, pass/fail teaching practicum is to develop teaching skills at the university level under the direction of an experienced social work educator. Students may complete the practicum either as an additional set of activities to accompany a Teaching Assistant position, or as a stand-alone experience with a faculty member in the College of Social Work. In exceptional situations when a student begins the PhD program with extensive independent teaching experience, the student may request permission from the Program Director to complete the teaching practicum while serving as an Instructor in the College. The particular structure and content of the practicum depends upon the experience and the learning objectives of the student. In preparation for the practicum, the student should consult with his or her Academic Advisor about individual learning needs to be addressed through the teaching experience and potential faculty instructors to supervise the practicum. The faculty member who supervises the practicum works with the student to develop a learning contract that defines the learning objectives, the activities designed to meet the objectives, learning outcomes, and criteria for establishing that learning objectives have been met. The final learning contract must be approved by the PhD Program Director. The PhD Program Director is the instructor of record and gives the final grade upon recommendation by the Supervising Faculty Instructor. *Completion of the teaching practicum is a prerequisite for teaching classes at the College of Social Work.* The guidelines for the teaching practicum are found on the syllabus for SOWK 872 which is available on the PhD Program space (**myPhD**) in BB.
- **SOWK 889 Social Work Research Practicum (required).** The purpose of this 0-credit, pass/fail research practicum is to develop competence in conducting research under the direction of an experienced faculty researcher. Students may complete the requirement for the research practicum in a variety of ways, depending upon their level of experience, learning objectives, the availability of opportunities to



participate in research with faculty and in the community. The practicum may be taken while working as a Graduate Research Assistant or as a stand-alone experience; in either case the student must complete a learning contract for the practicum with a supervising faculty member (per course syllabus) and demonstrate mastery of new knowledge and skills aimed at advancing their development as a scholar. The supervising faculty member may be from the CoSW or another academic unit. The faculty member who supervises the practicum works with the student to develop a learning contract that defines the learning objectives, the activities designed to meet the objectives, and learning outcomes and criteria for establishing that learning objectives have been met. The final learning contract must be approved in advance of the practicum by the PhD Program Director. The PhD Program Director is the instructor of record and gives the final grade upon recommendation by the Supervising Faculty Instructor. The guidelines for the research practicum are found on the syllabus for SOWK 889 which is available in **myPhD** in BB.

- **Electives.** Students must complete 3 electives as part of their approved [Doctoral Program of Study](#). The student should work closely with their advisory team (Major Professor/GRA supervisor, academic advisor) to identify electives that will help deepen the student's expertise in their focal area of scholarship, preparing them both for the dissertation project and the longer term program of research that student will embark upon at degree completion.
- **Independent Study Courses.** Students may take up to two independent studies to count toward required elective courses; each must be with a different faculty member. Students complete the [Independent Study Contract](#) with the instructor. The course summary must be delineated in detail, and the form signed by the student, the instructor, the student's advisor (academic advisor or major professor/chair), and the Program Director. The form is then returned to the Student Services office for processing. Students cannot use Independent Studies in lieu of required courses that engage similar content.
- **Foreign Language and/or Research Methods Requirement.** The University of South Carolina Graduate School requires doctoral students to demonstrate mastery of a language or research methods. In the College of Social Work, the requirement is met through demonstrated competence in computer applications and statistics, determined by a student's successful completion of SOWK890 and SOWK891 (or their equivalent if approved by the PhD Program Committee).

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## Progression to Candidacy

**The Qualifying Examination.** The Qualifying Examination is designed to assess students' readiness to proceed to the dissertation phase of study and to provide students with a comprehensive, integrative educational experience. Following the student's successful completion of core coursework, typically at the end of the second year, the exam requires students to draw on knowledge and skills acquired in the core curriculum courses, but it is not a summative examination of what was learned in those courses. Rather, the exam asks students to extend, integrate, apply and critique what they have learned through core coursework. So, while successful completion of the core curriculum is a prerequisite for taking the exam, it does not guarantee success on the exam. Students who fail the exam may re-take

it one time. Students who fail the re-take are not permitted to continue in the PhD Program in the College of Social Work. The exam must be passed before the student appoints their dissertation committee and begins formal work on the dissertation proposal. Upon successful completion of the Qualifying Examination, the student's major professor completes the "Doctoral Qualifying Exam Verification" from found in the Graduate School's [Forms Library](#), and provides this form to the Program Director for approval and submission to the Graduate School.

**The Doctoral Program of Study.** In consultation with their major professor, each student will complete a Doctoral [Program of Study form](#) (DPOS), generally at the end of their second year. The DPOS form can be found in the Graduate School's [Forms Library](#). The DPOS is an agreement signed by the student, their Advisor/Major Professor, the PhD Program Director, and Dean of the Graduate School. It lists all required courses, including electives chosen to develop the student's substantive and methodological expertise directed toward completing the dissertation, and the required number of dissertation preparation (SOWK 899) credits.

This formal agreement serves a number of purposes to benefit the student and the University. It causes the student and their faculty mentors to engage in planning early enough to allow thoughtful choices of electives, and it facilitates subsequent advisement and protects the student in the event of unexpected curriculum changes or faculty changes. Although formal programs are binding, they can be modified or replaced by new programs as needed by submitting a [Program of Study Adjustment Form](#).

**Admission to Candidacy.** The USC Graduate School has three requirements for students to be considered candidates for their respective degrees: 1) full admission to the doctoral degree program; 2) passing a qualifying examination; and 3) submission of Program of Study to the Graduate School. Meeting these criteria qualify a student for admission to candidacy by the Graduate School and the College of Social Work.

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## The Dissertation Stage of the Program

**Overview.** Following successful completion of the Qualifying Examination, the student must present a dissertation based on original research that has been approved by the student's dissertation committee, the Dean of the College of Social Work, and the Dean of the Graduate School. The doctoral dissertation should demonstrate the student's competence in research.

**Appointing the Dissertation Committee.** Prior to embarking on work on the dissertation proposal, the student should appoint their Doctoral Committee, using the [Doctoral Committee Appointment Request form](#). On this form, studies will indicate who will be their Major Professor (Chair), and who will serve as additional members and the outside member. Students should indicate on the form that they are requesting faculty appointment for both their "Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination Committee" and their "Dissertation Committee" (e.g. check both box #1 and #2 on the form).

The USC Graduate Studies Bulletin states who is eligible to serve on [dissertation committees](#). The dissertation committee consists of four persons, including three eligible faculty members in the College of Social Work and

one from outside the College of Social Work who are responsible for the approval of the dissertation proposal and final approval of the written dissertation and dissertation oral defense. The committee member from outside the College of Social Work may be from a college or university outside the University of South Carolina if the person is a full-time member of an accredited college or university and teaches graduate level courses. Students typically form their Dissertation Committee soon after passing the Qualifying Exam. Each student should consult with the PhD Program Director prior to forming the Dissertation Committee. It is the student's responsibility to then seek the agreement from the chosen faculty member to serve as dissertation chair. If the faculty member agrees to chair the Dissertation Committee, other committee members should be identified in consultation with the chair. Student preferences will be given every consideration when dissertation committee appointment assignments are made; however, the PhD Program Committee will also consider other factors such as faculty workload and balance of expertise on the committee when approving committee appointments. As required by the [Doctoral Committee Appointment Request](#) form, the committee members must be approved by both the PhD Program Director and the USC Graduate School Dean.

Once the dissertation committee is approved, it is possible, though unusual, for its membership to change. A faculty member may be unable to carry out committee duties (because of illness or sabbatical leave, for example) or may ask to be removed from the committee; or the committee member may not be able to serve the student's best interests in completing the dissertation. A substitute member would then be obtained in keeping with the procedure for original selection of the committee.

If a dissertation study is changed substantially, the student may, with the approval of the Dean and the PhD Program Director, ask for dissolution of the committee. Under these circumstances, a new committee would be formed and the entire process would resume, beginning with the approval of a dissertation proposal. The student will still be subject to the time frame that started with date of first year enrollment.

**The Dissertation Proposal, Proposal Defense, and Comprehensive Examination.** The dissertation project must be original research that contributes new knowledge and must be independently led by the doctoral student. The topics for doctoral students' dissertations must have relevance broadly to social work or social welfare. After the Qualifying Exam passed and all required coursework is completed, the student may write the Dissertation Proposal with the guidance of his or her dissertation committee. Doctoral candidates must perform their own data analysis for their dissertation. They may consult with faculty and with outside experts as needed, but they must perform and be able to defend the major analytic procedures themselves. So, the student must be able to establish in the proposal development and defense process that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct the study being proposed. All work on a doctoral dissertation must be completed while the student is enrolled in the USC PhD program.

**Dissertation Proposal Guidelines:** Each student must submit a Dissertation Proposal that: states the problem for study; summarizes relevant theoretical and empirical literature; specifies the expected contribution of the study; provides detailed methodology of the study including plans for data analysis and states its relationship to social welfare. The proposal must also include an IRB (Institutional Review Board) proposal that is ready for submission to the IRB and should identify any expected difficulties and explicit plans for solving them in the course of carrying out the dissertation research. Students have two options for the format of their proposal, depending on whether they are proposing a Traditional Dissertation (single, multi-chapter document focusing holistically on the research project) or a Multiple Paper Dissertation (dissertation includes overall introduction

and conclusion chapters, and 3 publishable-quality manuscripts, each focusing on a separate research or scholarly aim). ***See the PhD program space – myPhD -- on BlackBoard for detailed instructions on each format.***

Proposal Defense (Comprehensive Exam): Dissertation Committee approval of the Dissertation Proposal, contingent upon demonstration of mastery of the literature pertaining to the dissertation topic and methods appropriate for investigation of the dissertation questions, as demonstrated in both the written proposal and the student's successful oral defense of that proposal, satisfies the University requirement for graduate students to pass a Comprehensive Exam. Following successful proposal defense, the [Comprehensive Exam Verification form](#) should be completed and submitted.

The Dissertation Chair is responsible for setting the date of the proposal defense. The Chair may set the date only after obtaining written confirmation from all Dissertation Committee members that the dissertation proposal is defensible – but this does not guarantee that the student will pass the defense. After the full Committee gives approval, the student must provide the Chair and all Committee members with a complete proposal at least two weeks prior to the date of the proposal defense.

During the Dissertation Proposal Defense, the research question(s), conceptual rationale guiding those questions, and the proposed methodology for addressing the question(s) will be discussed, along with any other questions or concern from members of the committee. The committee will then decide whether the proposal will be approved as written or, if not, what action(s) should be taken.

The Dissertation Committee should meet no later than two years after the proposal meeting to review the progress of the student's research. It is the student's responsibility to see that the meeting is convened.

**The Dissertation and Dissertation Defense.** Once the dissertation proposal has been successfully defended, the student may begin work on the dissertation project. The student is encouraged to seek ongoing mentorship from committee members, but ultimately the student must conduct the research themselves, including conducting statistical and/or qualitative analyses, interpreting results, and writing the text of the dissertation. The dissertation must conform to [Graduate School specifications](#) and be written in acceptable American Psychological Association (APA) style.

During the preparation of the dissertation, any student who wishes to use University facilities or to confer with faculty on dissertation work must be enrolled officially for dissertation credit. Registration for a minimum of twelve credits in Dissertation Research (SOWK 899) is required of all doctoral candidates.

The Dissertation Committee will conduct an Oral Dissertation Defense no less than thirty days before the date on which a candidate expects to receive the degree. The final draft of the dissertation must be distributed to the members of the dissertation committee at least two weeks prior to the Dissertation Defense. Dissertation Defenses are open to the general public. The student must provide the PhD Program Director with their dissertation title, the names of all committee members, and the time and location of the defense at least 2 weeks prior to the defense. The PhD Program Director will then be responsible for disseminating notice of the time and location of the defense to the general college community.

During the Defense, the candidate first makes a formal presentation of their dissertation project, after which comments and questions are invited from the general audience. Following this, the Dissertation Committee will

have a closed discussion in which committee members examine the candidate. The candidate will then be excused from the room while the committee deliberates and votes. A positive vote by at least three members of the committee is required to pass the Dissertation Defense. If the final draft is not acceptable to the committee, the student must revise the draft in accordance with the recommendations of committee members and resubmit the revisions for final approval. Documentation of successful completion of the Dissertation Defense should be accomplished by completion of the [Dissertation Signature and Approval Form](#). The Chair of the student's Dissertation Committee should give the signed copy of this form to the PhD Program Director. The student is responsible for filing copies of the dissertation and abstract with the Dean of the Graduate School in accordance with USC requirements. One electronic copy of the final dissertation must be submitted to the PhD Program Director at the CoSW.

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## Graduation

Candidates planning to graduate should pay close attention to the scheduled [deadlines and requirements](#) posted by the Graduate School. These deadlines will determine dates for dissertation defenses, submission of the dissertation to the Graduate School, and other important requirements. The Graduate School also provides a comprehensive information on ["Progress to Degree"](#) for doctoral students including links to additional information – students should review this list and all deadlines well in advance of their intended graduation semester to ensure they are on track.

## SUPPORTING AND MONITORING STUDENT PROGRESS

The College of Social Work is committed to supporting each doctoral student's development as an independent scholar and their timely progress through the PhD program. We accomplish this through 1) ongoing and intensive advisement and mentoring processes, 2) the development of an Individual Development Plan (IDP) that supports planning, monitors progress, and guides development to accomplish the student's individual scholarly and career goals, and 3) regular monitoring of student progress with formal reviews to inform planning if a student demonstrates/experiences challenges with academic progress. Throughout the program, the PhD student, as an emerging scholar, is also responsible for ongoing assessment of her or his own development, goals, strengths, and needs, and for effectively using mentoring opportunities to support their development.

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### Advisement and Mentoring Processes

Each incoming student is **assigned both a Graduate Research Assistantship Supervisor and an Academic Advisor** at the beginning of the first academic year. Until the student enters candidacy, the GRA supervisor and academic advisor, with support from the PhD Program Director and, when appropriate, the PhD Program Committee, serve as the student's Advisory Committee. Every effort is made to make advisor/supervisor assignments that will work well given a student's area of scholarship; however, students may request to make changes in either of these assignments, and faculty may request changes in order to best promote the student's development. Once a student is admitted to candidacy they choose a **Dissertation Chair and Dissertation Committee** (for more information see p 9). The dissertation committee takes on the responsibility of mentoring once it is approved. Throughout the program, students are expected to *take the initiative* to meet regularly with their advisors/committee members and to keep them informed about their progress in the program, including any barriers to expected progress (e.g., receiving a grade of less than a "B" in a required course; outstanding incompletes; situations that interfere with agreed upon task completion, work products; plans for leave status).

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### Individual Development Plan

Each PhD student completes an Individual Development Plan (IDP) in which they identify developmental goals, document progress toward those goals, and plan for next steps to support their overall trajectory through the program and into the job market. The IDP is developed in collaboration with the student's Advisor and Research Supervisor during the fall of the first year, and is reviewed and updated at the end of each academic year and at any time when the student changes to a new Advisor or a new GRA assignment. The student is responsible for contacting their Advisor and Research Supervisor to review and get input on the IDP. The final IDP is signed by the student and both advisors, and then submitted to the Program Director by April 15 of each year, and within 1 month of any change in Advisor. The IDP is part of the student file and subject to confidentiality as are all student records. ***The IDP form is available in myPhD on BB, and should be submitted through BB each year.***

## Monitoring Student Progress

**Academic and Non-Academic Standards and Policies.** A student's progress is based on nonacademic as well as academic performance. Some of the related policies are outlined here, but students are expected to be familiar with the USC Policies and Procedures Manual, the Graduate Admission Bulletin, the Graduate Academic Regulations Bulletin, and the Doctoral Degree Requirements Bulletin, as well as the [Student Code of Conduct](#), the University's policy on [Academic Responsibility - The Honor Code, and the Carolinian Creed](#).

**Non-academic factors related to degree progress.** Nonacademic factors that could result in suspension or termination from the College of Social Work, regardless of their academic performance, include violation(s) of University or College regulations and policies, such as the Student Code of Conduct and the Honor Code.

**Monitoring of student academic progress.** Student academic performance is administratively reviewed each semester to ensure that each student is making appropriate progress. If that review identifies areas of serious concern a Faculty Committee Review is initiated by the Program Director as described below.

**Faculty Committee Review.** A 3-member Faculty Review Committee will be appointed by the PhD Program Director to review student performance any time when: 1) a student has received a grade of C+ or below in a course, 2) faculty identify serious concerns or patterns of concern related to the student's performance in courses, research, or teaching responsibilities, or 3) a student requests a review. As part of its review, the Faculty Review Committee will solicit information from the student and from faculty members or other supervisors involved in assessing the student's performance.

In those instances when, after considering this information, the Review Committee concludes that there are serious deficiencies, the Committee may decide on: a) continuation in the program if specific conditions are met (to be outlined in an action plan with specific activities, outcomes, and timelines for completion); b) continuation in the program on probation with additional review at the completion of the probationary period; or, c) termination from the program. A decision to terminate a student from the program will be made only by the faculty members of the PhD Program Committee. All reviews are confidential.

A student who is required to meet specific conditions must submit evidence to the Faculty Review Committee when the conditions are met. Similarly, the student who is placed on probation must submit evidence at the end of the probationary period that identified deficiencies have been successfully addressed. If at the end of the review period, the student's performance has not been remediated or problems with performance have continued, the Faculty Review Committee may revise the remediation plan or decide that the performance is unacceptable. In those instances where the student's overall performance is unacceptable, the student may be permitted to continue for a defined probationary period or may be terminated from the PhD Program by decision of the PhD Program Committee.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This section provides some additional information that may be helpful as students navigate both the college and broader university environments. This information is not intended to be comprehensive, but rather to

describe some key opportunities for involvement, participation and support.

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## Student organizations

The University's [Leadership and Service Center](#) has a wealth of resources and services for the more than 500 student organizations that call the University of South Carolina home. Information about these organizations can be found through [Garnet Gate](#). Two student organizations may be of particular interest:

- **College of Social Work PhD Student Organization.** This organization consists of current PhD students in the College of Social Work. The purpose of this organization is to “promote well-being and increase the sense of community across all cohorts of the doctoral program”. Among other activities, this organization maintains a student wellness fund to assist students with expenses at times of emergency, and it collaborates with the Program Director and PhD Program Committee to plan and implement social events.
  - **University of South Carolina Graduate Student Association.** This organization “is dedicated to the advancement and development of Graduate and Professional Students at USC through various training and self-governing experiences”. It represents graduate and professional students across all units/departments of USC, and “Through connecting with faculty, staff, and university administration, we provide an organizational framework through which our efforts shape a better university experience”.
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## Student Participation on College of Social Work Committees

In addition to the opportunity for active participation through the student organizations, several standing committees for the College of Social Work include student representation. Students selected by the student association attend these meetings as voting members representing the student body.

- **PhD Program Committee:** Each year, PhD students select two PhD students (one taking classes and one in candidacy) as their representatives on the PhD Program Committee. The primary function of the PhD Program Committee is to administer the implementation of course, curriculum, and college objectives for the PhD Program. In consultation with the Dean, the PhD Program Committee is responsible for all elements of the College's PhD program, including objectives, curriculum, admissions, procedures, policies, and evaluation.
  - **Faculty Recruitment Committee:** The Committee is responsible for recruiting, screening, and coordinating campus visits for candidates; convening and facilitating a special faculty meeting to evaluate the candidates; and making recommendations to the Dean. Membership may include one PhD student.
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## Funding Opportunities

The PhD Program provides information about a variety of funding opportunities for students. A list of some external funding sources is posted on **MyPhD** in BB, and some opportunities may also be shared through the



PhD listserv as well. In addition, funding may be available from several internal sources:

- **Graduate School Funding:** The University’s Graduate School offers graduate student [Travel Grants](#) to assist terminal degree-seeking students with travel to conferences to make presentations on behalf of the University. These grant funds are awarded on a rolling basis, with 4 grant cycles each year – students benefit from applying early in the cycle for which they are eligible (depending on the date of travel), so please review the requirements and eligibility criteria well in advance of any planned travel.
  - **PhD Program Travel Support:** PhD students may apply through the PhD Program for partial funding to attend professional conferences. Students who have presentation(s) accepted at regional, national, or international conferences should submit a completed **Request for Financial Expense Authorization form** (see the **MyPhD** space in BB), along with a **brief proposal** that explains how conference attendance will advance their scholarly development, and a **copy of the abstract** of the research they will be presenting and **notification of their acceptance**. They will also be required to simultaneously apply for USC graduate student travel funding (if eligible) and any conference-specific student funding opportunities. A request for travel support should be submitted to the PhD Program Director well ahead of planned travel. Requests will be considered based on merit, availability of funding, and with a goal of distributing opportunities equitably among doctoral students.
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## Honors and Awards

PhD students may be considered for a number of college and university awards, including the following:

- **Annual Doctoral Student Award.** Each year the College of Social Work recognizes one of its PhD students who has exhibited excellence in scholarly, leadership, and service activities with the CoSW Doctoral Student Award. The intent of this award is to honor a PhD student who has not only been an active leader within the college but also has been engaged in research and scholarly activities that support the college’s mission “to promote social well-being and social justice with vulnerable populations through dynamic teaching, research, and service conducted in collaboration with diverse people of South Carolina, the nation, and the international community”. The CoSW Doctoral Student Award consists of a \$250 award and a plaque of recognition. The recipient will be featured on the college website, will be presented to the student, by the PhD Program Director, during the last faculty meeting of the spring semester, and will be added to the CoSW award wall.
- **University awards.** PhD students may be nominated, or in some instances may self-nominate, for a variety of awards, including those listed on the Graduate School’s [Fellowships and Awards page](#).

## STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of all students to be aware of the University of South Carolina's and the College of Social Work's standards regarding both academic and nonacademic expectations of students.

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### Equal Opportunity Statement

The University of South Carolina does not discriminate in educational or employment opportunities on the basis of race, sex, gender, age, color, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, genetics, veteran status, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions.

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### Student Rights and Protections at the University

Below are some key policies that address the rights of protections of students at the University of South Carolina - this is **not** an exhaustive list. The full policies and procedures manual can be found [here](#).

- [Free Speech](#)
- [Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action](#)
- [Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#)
- [Confidentiality of Student Records – Notification of Student Rights under FERPA](#)
- [Student Grievance Policy—Non-Academic](#)
- [Academic Grievance Policy](#)

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### Professional and Academic Responsibility - Student Conduct and Academic Integrity

The [Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity](#) empowers students to be responsible citizens and uphold the core values of our academic community.

Students are expected to adhere to the University's policy on [Student Code of Conduct](#).

- Note that arrests by law enforcement agencies outside of USC's Division of Law Enforcement and Safety must be reported by the student to the Office of Student Conduct within 72 hours of arrest. Penalties for non-compliance to this mandate may include suspension or termination from the MSW Program and/or University.

Students are expected to adhere to the University's policy on [Academic Responsibility - The Honor Code](#).

Every student has a role in maintaining the academic reputation of the university. It is imperative that you refrain from engaging in plagiarism, cheating, falsifying your work and/or assisting other students in violating the Honor Code.

Two important components of the Honor Code:

- Faculty members are required to report potential violations of the Honor Code to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.
- When a student is uncertain as to whether conduct would violate the Honor Code, it is their responsibility to seek clarification from the appropriate faculty member.

The [Carolinian Creed](#) is a complement to the University's conduct code and emphasizes openness and civility.

### **As a Carolinian...**

- I will practice personal and academic integrity;
- I will respect the dignity of all persons;
- I will respect the rights and property of others;
- I will discourage bigotry, while striving to learn from differences in people, ideas and opinions;
- I will demonstrate concern for others, their feelings, and their need for conditions which support their work and development.

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## **College of Social Work Grievances, Petitions, and Appeals**

Please see Appendix B for information about grievances, petitions, and appeals in the College of Social Work.

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## STUDENT SUPPORTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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### Professional Development and Organizations

In addition to formal classroom experiences, students in the College of Social Work are encouraged to advance their professional development in the following ways:

- Attend available College sponsored trainings and colloquiums.
- Join the [National Association of Social Workers](#) (NASW).
- Join the [Council on Social Work Education](#) (CSWE).
- Join the [Society for Social Work and Research\(SSWR\)](#).
- Access resources and get involved in the [Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work](#) (GADE).

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### University of South Carolina Resources

Though not intended to be comprehensive, below is a list of some frequently used resources at USC.

[Financial Assistance and Scholarships](#): May be available for those students who qualify. Students are encouraged to apply as early as possible.

[Information Technology](#): Provides information and support to students for common resources such as Blackboard, email, IDs and security.

[Writing Center](#): Offers free consultations to USC students, faculty, and staff. Through collaborative consultations, the Center provides feedback to help writers accomplish their own goals.

[Student Disability Resource Center](#): Coordinates efforts to ensure that students with disabilities receive reasonable accommodations, and we serve as consultants to faculty, staff and campus partners. To apply for accommodations, students should start the application process as soon as they are admitted to the University.

[Career Center](#): Helps students realize their career goals and locate employment upon graduation. Services include resume writing, job searches, interview preparation, exploration of graduate school, etc.

[University Libraries](#): Contains most of the University library collections on the Columbia campus.

[University Health Services](#): Provides comprehensive physical and mental health care services right on campus to help contribute to students' success and overall well-being.

[Wellness & Prevention](#): Encourages and supports healthy lifestyles for all members of the USC community.

[Counseling & Psychiatry Services and Suicide Prevention](#): Provides essential therapy and emotional wellness

services for students at the University of South Carolina, including 24-hour Suicide Hotline.

[Interpersonal Violence](#): Advocates offer support and a variety of services to students, faculty and staff who are survivors of interpersonal violence (sexual assault, attempted sexual assault, intimate partner violence and/or stalking).

[Gamecock Pantry and Swipe Out Hunger](#): Provides free and confidential access to food and toiletries, and extra meal swipes for students experiencing food insecurity and financial hardships.

[Carolina CommUnity Shop](#): Increases access and provides support and material resources related to a range of basic needs, including food, clothing (casual and professional), toiletries, cleaning supplies, school supplies, home goods.

[Off-Campus Living & Neighborhood Relations](#): Provides information to students about off-campus housing.

[Office of Multicultural Student Affairs](#): Encourages students to work together to create an inclusive learning community at the University of South Carolina.

[Office of Access and Opportunity](#): Supports USC's commitment to creating and sustaining an inclusive learning, living and working environment where all members of the university's community feel that they are welcomed, valued and supported.

[International Student and Scholar Support](#): Provides a wide range of services for international students, including pre-arrival information, orientation programs, immigration advising, personal assistance, and student programs and activities.

[Parking and Transportation Services](#): A variety of parking options for students on the Columbia campus is available.