

MASTER'S DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Master's Degree Programs

The University of South Carolina offers the Master of Arts and the Master of Science in many disciplines. The University also offers several professional master's degrees, such as the Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.), the Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.), the Interdisciplinary Master of Arts in Art Education (I.M.A.), the Master's in Library and Information Science (M.L.I.S), the Master's in Social Work (M.S.W.), the Master's of Business Administration (M.B.A.), and the Professional Science Master (P.S.M.).

A complete listing of Master's degree programs at the University of South Carolina is available at:

- Programs A-Z (<https://academicbulletins.sc.edu/graduate/programs/>)

All students enrolled in Master's degree programs must follow the academic policies of The Graduate School. Academic programs may have additional or exceptional requirements.

Master of Arts and Master of Science

For Master of Arts and Master of Science degrees, the minimum requirement is 30 semester hours of graduate credit, but programs may require additional hours. A thesis or special project is required in most programs. Not more than 9 hours of 799 (thesis preparation) may be used on a master's program of study. The department may require master's students to make up deficiencies or may have additional requirements. At least half of the credit hours on the Program of Study, exclusive of thesis preparation (799), must be earned in courses numbered 700 and above. Master's students must have a completed and approved Master's Program of Study (M-POS (http://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/graduate_school/forms_library/)) form on file within 12 months of initial enrollment in the program. Students enrolled in a Master's degree program have six years from the first term of enrollment in which to complete the degree.

Professional Master's Degrees

Unless requirements are specifically waived by The Graduate School, the general requirements for the Master of Arts and Master of Science degrees apply to all master's degrees offered by the University, but programs may have additional or exceptional requirements. A professional Master's degree program must be at least 30 semester hours of graduate credit and at least half of the credit hours on the Master's Program of Study, exclusive of thesis preparation (799), must be earned in courses numbered 700 and above. Students enrolled in a professional master's degree program must have a completed and approved Master's Program of Study (M-POS) form on file within 12 months of initial enrollment in the program.

A Second Master's Degree from USC

When a student applies for a second master's degree from USC, e.g., Master of Arts following a Master of Science, or a Master of Arts following a Master of Education, the candidate must meet the requirements of the second degree in full. However, with approval of the program and the dean of the Graduate Studies, up to 12 semester hours

from the program of study of a previous USC graduate degree may be applied toward the second USC degree. Students are advised to seek approval for the inclusion of hours from the previous degree before applying to a second master's degree program.

Course Enrollment Load

A graduate student may enroll for a term load not to exceed 15 graduate hours. Some programs limit their students to a 9 or 12 hour maximum term course load. A student with a term course load of 9 or more hours during a fall or spring term is classified as full-time for academic purposes. The maximum course load in any summer session is 6 hours. A student must be enrolled for at least 1 graduate credit hour during any semester in which thesis progress is made and such University resources as the library, computer facilities, or faculty time are used. Students must be enrolled in at least 1 graduate credit during the term of graduation.

Special Enrollment (Z-status)

Under-Enrollment Exception (Z-status)

The dean of The Graduate School, under certain circumstances, may certify that a student's full-time enrollment is less than the normal requirement of 9 hours for graduate students or 6 hours for students serving as graduate assistants. Students seeking exceptions to minimum enrollment requirements should submit written requests to the dean of The Graduate School with acceptable justification in a memo from the student's academic advisor or the graduate director of the academic program. International students must also submit the approved Exemption from Full-time Enrollment form (http://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/international_student_services/?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=550&Itemid=) from International Programs for Students.

For a student whose need for under-enrollment results from an internship, practicum, or field experience required by the graduate program, a justification indicating the term requested and the nature of the experience should be submitted in a written memo to the dean of The Graduate School by the student's academic advisor or the program's graduate director.

Students nearing completion of a doctoral degree requiring a dissertation may be granted special enrollment status and certified as half-time or full-time if the student has completed course work required for the degree except dissertation preparation (899). Eligibility requires verification of three conditions by the student's academic advisor or program graduate director. The memo requesting Z-status must indicate that:

1. all course work on the program of study has been completed except for dissertation preparation (899);
2. the student is working on the dissertation full-time, or if applicable, at least half-time; and
3. the student is not employed outside their graduate assistantship or, if applicable, employed no more than half-time if not on a graduate assistantship.

A Z-status request for under-enrollment privilege must be term-specific and is limited to two terms. Z-status for under-enrollment privilege may be extended beyond two terms with the approval of and justification from the academic unit and with the approval of the dean of The Graduate School.

Students who request exemption from full-time enrollment for financial aid purposes must submit the Special Academic Enrollment Release form (F 6.2) from the Office of Financial Aid.

Family Leave (Z-status)

A graduate student who is the primary child-care provider is eligible to take a one major term of family leave from graduate study the major term during or following the event for the birth of a child or adoption of a child less than 6 years old. The graduate student taking family leave will receive a one year extension of all academic responsibilities, including time to degree, removal of incomplete grades, and course in-date time. During family leave, the graduate student will be on special enrollment (Z-status) status and must have health coverage. The student may waive out of University-sponsored health insurance if covered by other insurance or may elect to continue enrollment in the University-sponsored student health insurance plan. The student is responsible for submitting required waivers and/or for contacting the student health insurance contractor directly to enroll in the health insurance program and for paying premiums by the deadline. Students should be aware that a graduate assistantship position or other financial support may not be available upon return from family leave.

Note: While this policy does not mandate that programs continue financial support during family leave and/or guarantee student support or resumption of an assistantship after returning from family leave, programs are strongly encouraged to do so whenever possible.

Students contemplating family leave must advise their academic unit of the intention to take family leave and begin the family leave planning process at least six (6) weeks before the leave start date. Once planning has been completed at the unit level, a written petition for family leave with required supporting documentation and signatures must be submitted as a single packet to the dean of The Graduate School for approval at least three (3) weeks before the start of the leave. The petition must contain evidence of consultation and planning with the student's academic advisor(s) and a memo of support from the academic unit signed by the program's graduate director, a leave timeline, and appropriate documentation. Appropriate documentation for a female student for childbirth includes written certification from the student's health care provider confirming the pregnancy and anticipated due date or the baby's birth certificate and for a male student either certification confirming the anticipated due date or the baby's birth certificate. For adoption of a child less than 6 years old, a written certification of adoption from a certifying individual or agency specifying the date of adoption and the age of the child is the appropriate documentation.

This planning process with the academic unit should also be used to determine if any additional length of time beyond the one year extension of academic responsibilities period will be needed for the student opting for family leave to complete degree requirements. While a one year extension of academic responsibilities will be granted to any student on approved family leave, academic units often have specific timelines for exams, fieldwork, course sequences, etc., which may necessitate extension beyond the one year period. Graduate students with such circumstances may petition The Graduate School for extension of leave time. Academic unit requirements or limitations are a valid justification to petition for the extension. Petitions for extension of time beyond the one year family leave should be supported by the student's academic unit and will be reviewed by The Graduate School on an individual basis.

Note: Medical complications or other extenuating circumstances are not included in this policy. Such situations are more appropriately covered

by the University's current policies regarding course incompletes and withdrawal and/or leave of absence due to extenuating circumstances.

The family leave policy is also intended to allow an international student to be coded as a "special enrollment" student and not affect current visa status. However, immigration regulations might dictate a different definition of enrollment than that defined as "special enrollment" for this policy. The Office of International Student Services is the authority on campus for interpreting current enrollment regulations for international students, so international students contemplating family leave must consult the Office of International Student Services to address proactively any individual or unique visa issues and/or to consider how the latest applicable regulations would affect eligibility for family leave. International students applying for family leave must discuss the intended leave period with the Office of International Student Services at the beginning of the six (6) week planning period and must include a signed memo from the Office of International Student Services detailing immigration status and any consequences of taking family leave in the written petition packet submitted to the student's program graduate director for signature and to the dean of The Graduate School for approval.

Once the family leave has been approved, a memo will be placed by The Graduate School in the student's academic file indicating the leave dates and the extension date for academic responsibilities. It is the student's responsibility to communicate with their academic unit while on leave. It is also the student's responsibility to work with faculty and program administrators on arrangements for course completion, achievement of degree requirements, and for continuation of research and/or teaching activities before and following the period of the leave.

Right to an Advisor

Every graduate student admitted to a degree program is entitled to an advisor. The academic program graduate director is the default academic advisor for graduate students until another academic advisor is assigned or an advisory committee is formed. Students are urged to consult with an advisor prior to enrollment.

Master's Program of Study

Every degree student must file a Master's program of study (M-POS (<http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/Mastersprogramofstudy.pdf>)) in The Graduate School for approval by the dean of The Graduate School. A program of study is a list of courses that satisfy degree requirements, and it must be approved by the student's advisor, the graduate director, and the dean of The Graduate School. This formal agreement serves a number of purposes that benefit both the student and the University. It allows the student and the advisor to engage in early planning of course work, explore research interests, and discuss requirements for progress toward degree; facilitates subsequent advisement; and protects the student in the event of unexpected curriculum or faculty changes. The student must file a completed Master's Program of Study form (M-POS (<http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/Mastersprogramofstudy.pdf>)) within the first 12 months of course work. If necessary, an approved program of study can be modified with a Program Adjustment form (<http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/POSAform.pdf>).

Concurrent and Dual Enrollment Programs of Study

For dual degree and concurrent degree enrollment, students are required to submit an individual program of study for each degree program. With

approval of the program and the dean of the Graduate School, students concurrently enrolled may use no more than 12 credit hours that are common to all programs of study. However, if a student is concurrently enrolled in a master's and a doctoral program in the same discipline, the number of credit hours applicable from the master's program toward the doctoral program is limited to 9 hours. Programs may allow fewer than 12 shared hours or the 9 shared hours for the same discipline concurrent enrollment.

Transfer Credit

Course work not part of a completed certificate program or graduate degree from USC or another institution may be transferred for credit toward a master's degree. No more than 12 semester hours of graduate credit may be transferred into a master's program that requires 30-36 hours; no more than 15 semester hours of graduate credit may be transferred into a master's program that requires 37-45 hours; and no more than 18 semester hours of graduate credit may be transferred into a master's program that requires 46 or more semester hours. Only credits with grades of B or better (equivalent to 3.0 on a 4.0 grading scale) may be transferred from another institution into a Master's degree program. Course work transferred for credit toward a Master's degree must be from an accredited institution and must be no more than six years old at the time of graduation.

Course work transferred from another institution must be relevant to the program and have course content and a level of instruction equivalent to that offered by the University's own graduate programs. Approval for acceptance of transfer credit to a student's program of study must be approved and justified by the student's academic program and submitted to the dean of the Graduate School for final approval on the Request for Transfer of Academic Credit (G-RTC (<http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/G-RTC.pdf>)) form.

Transient Enrollment Privilege

A USC graduate student in a Master's program seeking transient enrollment privilege at another institution should complete and submit the Special Enrollment Request (AS-30 (<http://registrar.sc.edu/pdf/AS-30e.pdf>)) form available on the Office of the University Registrar's website to dean of The Graduate School for approval. Before enrolling in graduate courses at another institution, contact the graduate director of the Master's program for permission to enroll and to ensure that the credits from the other institution will be approved for inclusion in the student's USC Master's program of study.

Revalidation of Out-of-Date Courses

Students enrolled in a Master's program at the University of South Carolina may, with permission of the academic program, request revalidation of USC graduate courses over six years old for inclusion on the Master's program of study. Each academic unit will determine whether a course is appropriate for revalidation. All instructions for revalidation (<http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/pre.pdf>) must be followed and the Permit for Revalidation Examination (PRE (<http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/pre.pdf>)) form must be completed and submitted to the dean of The Graduate School for approval prior to revalidation. Proof of payment of revalidation fees must be submitted with the Permit for Revalidation Examination form.

Note: Coursework taken at other institutions may not be revalidated.

Independent Study

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 structure. Therefore, an independent study course cannot be used to fulfill a core requirement.

Prior to enrolling in a graduate independent study course, a student must complete a graduate Independent Study Contract form (G-ISC (<http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/G-ISC.independent.study.contract.GS50.pdf>)). The approval of the instructor, advisor, and the graduate director of the program is required. Students send an approved copy of the G-ISC (<http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/G-ISC.independent.study.contract.GS50.pdf>) to the Office of the University Registrar before registering for the course.

Note: Not more than 6 hours of independent study may be used on a master's program of study.

Professional Development Course Work

Professional development course work is designated on the academic record by a professional development designator. A maximum of 6 hours of professional development graduate course work may be included on a Master's program of study. The academic program and the dean of The Graduate School must approve the inclusion of professional development graduate course work on a program of study.

Reduced Tuition Course Work

Course work taken with reduced tuition, usually a contract course, is designated on the academic record by a reduced tuition designation. A maximum of 6 hours of reduced tuition rate course work may be included on a graduate program of study. The academic program and the dean of The Graduate School must approve the inclusion of reduced tuition rate graduate course work on the program of study.

Foreign Language and/or Research Methods

Language and research methods requirements for the Master's degree vary from program to program and must be approved by the academic program's graduate director and the dean of The Graduate School. Programs which directly involve language study may have additional language requirements. Satisfying the requirement may entail one or more of the following: successful completion of an intensive reading course in a language approved by The Graduate School (e.g., SPAN 615), successful completion of a course at the intermediate level of language proficiency within six years previous of the award of the degree, or a passing grade on a language reading proficiency examination administered by the USC Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures (<http://www.cas.sc.edu/dllc/>) (DLLC). Students should contact DLLC for language course and testing information. Programs which directly involve language study may have additional language requirements.

Students have three opportunities to pass the language course or satisfy the reading proficiency examination. The Graduate School must be notified by the academic program of a student's successful completion of the language requirement.

In some programs a student is allowed to substitute competency in computer science, statistics, or another research method or competency for a reading knowledge of a foreign language. The requirement may be satisfied by the appropriate course work or examination. Permission for

substitution must be approved by the dean of The Graduate School. As with successful completion of the language requirement, The Graduate School must also be notified of a student's successful completion of a substitution for the language requirement.

With approval of the program and the dean of The Graduate School, English may be accepted as a foreign language for students whose native language is not English and such students should submit the Certification of English as a Foreign Language (G-CIE (<http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/G-CIE.certification.in.english.pdf>)) form. In cases where it is relevant to a student's research, American Sign Language may be used to satisfy the language requirement.

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

Comprehensive Assessment

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. A comprehensive assessment is one that requires a student to synthesize and integrate knowledge acquired in coursework and other learning experiences and to apply theory and principles in a situation that approximates some aspect of professional practice or research in the discipline. It must be used as a means by which faculty judge whether the student has mastered the body of knowledge and can demonstrate proficiency in the required competencies. Many different models are possible, including written and oral comprehensive examinations, portfolios, supervised practice placements with comprehensive evaluation, a major written paper such as a thesis or an applied research project, or development of case studies.

Each degree program must require a comprehensive assessment. Completion of course requirements or satisfaction of a specified GPA does not satisfy the comprehensive assessment requirement. The Graduate School must be notified by the graduate director of the student's academic program of successful completion of the comprehensive assessment. Completion remains valid for two years after which the assessment must be repeated.

Thesis or Research Project

A thesis or research project is a requirement of most Master of Arts or Master of Science degree programs and some professional Master's programs. The thesis is the ultimate requirement of the Master's program and becomes a permanent record of the student's independent research or creative effort. The best academic tradition and professional practice require The Graduate School to preserve and share graduate student work with other scholars. To do that successfully means maintaining high standards concerning the form and appearance of the thesis. Thesis formatting and organization guidelines (<http://gradschool.sc.edu/students/thesisdiss.asp?page=acad&sub=etd>) are available on the website of The Graduate School.

No more than 9 hours of thesis preparation (799) may be included on the Masters program of study, but some programs may allow less hours. Completion or satisfactory progress in thesis preparation will be indicated by the grade of T; unsatisfactory progress in thesis preparation will be indicated by the grade of U, but thesis preparation grades are not calculated into the graduate cumulative grade point average. Programs may establish policies regarding eligibility for continued enrollment. Any

student who uses University facilities or confers with faculty on thesis work in any semester must be officially enrolled for at least one hour of graduate credit. It is recommended that the one hour or credit be in thesis preparation (799).

Note: With approval of the Graduate Council and dean of The Graduate School, some programs elect to have students complete a project in lieu of a thesis or offer a nonthesis option which requires additional course work instead of a thesis.

Thesis Committee

The Thesis Committee is a program faculty committee approved by the department or school. The Thesis Committee should be composed only of faculty from the Columbia campus. Regular and Associate graduate faculty of any rank who hold the doctorate or the discipline's terminal degree and tenured faculty at the rank of full professor who do not hold the terminal degree may serve on or chair thesis committees. Research, clinical, and adjunct faculty at any rank who hold the terminal degree may serve on and chair a thesis committee with approval of the program and the dean of The Graduate School. Instructors and lecturers who do not hold the terminal degree may serve as members of thesis committees with justification from the program and approval of the dean of The Graduate School. Emeritus or emeriti faculty may continue to chair the thesis committee of a student under their direction at retirement and may be appointed as a member or a thesis committee with the approval of the program and the dean of The Graduate School.

When the written thesis is completed, most programs require a thesis defense. Please consult the graduate director of the academic program for departmental, school, or college specific approval processes and submission deadlines. Completion of the thesis must be approved by the Thesis Committee and the signatures of the committee members must be obtained on the Thesis Signature Approval (G-TSF (<http://gradschool.sc.edu/forms/G-TSF.pdf>)) form. The electronic submission of the thesis will not have title page signatures; this is to prevent theft and unauthorized use of signatures that otherwise might occur. The graduate director of the academic program will also be asked to sign the G-TSF form to affirm that your thesis follows The Chicago Manual of Style or another style manual endorsed by your program.

The G-TSF with signatures must be delivered to The Graduate School program coordinator who oversees the degree program. The G-TSF is to be submitted to the coordinator in an envelope marked "Confidential." Student may hand-deliver the form to The Graduate School program coordinator (http://gradschool.sc.edu/graduate_programs.asp) or may send it through the mail. The G-TSF must be received by the final-submission deadline in order for the student to be cleared for graduation.

Thesis Submission

The thesis is submitted to The Graduate School through the electronic thesis and dissertation (ETD) submission process. Instructions for submission (<http://gradschool.sc.edu/students/thesisdiss.asp?page=acad&sub=etd>) should be read thoroughly and followed explicitly, including deadlines for format check and final submission. The preliminary thesis document will need to be submitted electronically to The Graduate School for a format check not later than five weeks before graduation through the ProQuest/UMI ETD portal. The Graduate School coordinator (<http://gradschool.sc.edu/facstaff/gfd.asp?page=gf&sub=gfd>) for the academic program will respond with any needed corrections or revisions. At least 20 days prior to graduation, the candidate must submit the final revision of the dissertation through

the ETD process. Students will receive notification of receipt of the final dissertation submission from The Graduate School program coordinator.

The thesis must be reproduced by ProQuest/UMI for archival purposes as per the laws of the State of South Carolina and must be archived by the University library. Additional information on publication and copyright options is available on the website of The Graduate School.

No paper copies of the thesis are required by The Graduate School. If the academic program requires students to submit a bound copy of the thesis, the department and student are responsible for obtaining the copy. The website of The Graduate School provides several options for thesis binding and/or obtaining paper copies.

Application for Graduation and Degree Audit

All students enrolled in a Master's degree program must file the application for degree/graduation (<http://registrar.sc.edu/pdf/DegreeAppUpdated.pdf>) available on the website of the Office of the University Registrar (<http://registrar.sc.edu/>) with The Graduate School within the first 15 class days of the fall or spring semester in which the degree is to be awarded, or within the first 10 class days of Summer Session if the degree is to be awarded at the end of the summer.

Although some departments do not require students to provide the academic program with copies of the application for graduation, The Graduate School recommends that students do provide a copy to the academic program to facilitate assessment of degree requirements. Applicants are encouraged to consult with the academic program to confirm that all requirements for graduation have been met.

Deadlines are posted for each term on the official academic calendar (<http://registrar.sc.edu/html/calendar5yr/5YrCalendar3.stm>) of the University found on the website of the Office of the University Registrar. Late applications will be processed for the following term.

The Graduate School forwards the application for degree/graduation form to the Office of the University Registrar to start the degree audit process. In my.sc.edu (<https://my.sc.edu>), students should view their Graduation Degree Application to confirm the accuracy of the information submitted and to correct any errors so the diploma is printed correctly. It is also important to inspect the graduation degree application information to determine if there are any holds that will prevent issue of an official transcript or mailing of the diploma. At the end of the semester, the degree program and The Graduate School both assess for degree audit whether all requirements have been completed, and then forward a recommendation to the Registrar to approve or disapprove award of the degree.

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

Degree Conferral

Upon confirmation of a clear degree audit, the degree will be posted by the Office of the University Registrar to the student's official academic record. The degree award is posted to the student's transcript within 6 weeks after the commencement ceremony. Diplomas will be mailed to the address recorded on the application for graduation via first class mail to U.S. addresses and via registered airmail to international addresses.

Graduates may expect to receive the diploma within three months after the commencement exercises. Degrees cannot be awarded retroactively.

Note: To pursue further graduate study after completion of a graduate degree, a student must submit a new application to The Graduate School.

Academic Regalia

A special doctoral hooding ceremony and commencement is held three times a year for graduating doctoral students. Attendance at graduation ceremonies is optional. Information on commencement exercises (<http://gradschool.sc.edu/current/commencement.asp>) is posted to The Graduate School webpage.

Academic regalia worn for the commencement ceremony is sold by the University Bookstore in the Russell House located on Greene Street in Columbia. To place an order for academic regalia to wear for graduation, please telephone the University Bookstore at 803-777-4160 or visit their website (<https://usc.shopoakhalli.com/purchasewizard/Welcome/>).