

iSCHOOL DOCTORAL PROGRAM HANDBOOK



School of Information Science
College of Information and Communications
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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Davis College

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Welcome to the iSchool Doctoral Program¹

The iSchool doctoral program strives to enable students to become innovative thinkers, researchers, teachers, and leaders in library and information science. We seek students who:

- Are committed to a life of research, scholarly inquiry, teaching, and service.
- Possess the discipline and will to be independent investigators and the vision and communication skills to be influential leaders in the field.
- Are attracted to information and library science as a field that incorporates diverse theories, scholars, and methodologies as it strives to support people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs.
- Enable evidence-based practice via the transmission of theoretical and research findings through teaching and service activities.
- Provide leadership in the field of information and library science.

The doctoral program has three learning outcomes. These are:

- Students will exhibit an understanding and mastery of theory development and research methods and an ability to adapt and apply them in the library and information science field.
- Students will demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of relevant theoretical concepts by identifying, describing, and analyzing major theories, problems, and practices in seminal and contemporary scholarship in the field of library and information science.
- Students will identify, adapt, and apply key elements of the theory, practice, resources, and technologies of college-level instruction specific to library and information science pedagogy.

Milestones of PhD Journey

Faculty members regularly review the progress of doctoral students using the milestones indicated below. Students are expected to move through these milestones at the pace described for each. If a student is making progress but more slowly than expected, that student will be asked to work with the graduate student services on a plan for completing the degree within the Graduate School limit of 10 years. If a student's performance is unsatisfactory at any of the checkpoints, financial aid will not be granted, and the student will not be invited back to the doctoral program.

Milestones with Summer Course Work

Phases	Timeframe with summer
1. Core Courses	Years 1 and 2
2. Cognate	Finish by Year 2-Spring
3. First Annual Review	Year 1 Spring
4. Qualifying Exam	Year 2- Spring
5. Comprehensive Exam Preparation	Year 2- Summer
6. Second Annual Review	Year 2 Spring
7. Comprehensive Exam- written and oral	Year 3-Fall
8. Doctoral Committee Appointment	Year 3-Spring
9. Dissertation Proposal Preparation	Year 3-Spring

¹ The Policies and Procedures of the Graduate School as expressed in the Graduate Bulletin, which was in effect at the time of the student's admission, will supersede statements within this document, though a student may agree to be covered by an updated version of the iSchool doctoral program requirements.

10. Dissertation Proposal Defense	Year 3-Spring
11. Dissertation Writing	Year 3- Summer
12.Thrid Annual Review	Year 3 Spring
13.Dissertation Finished	Year 4-Spring
14. Dissertation Defended	Year 4-Spring
15. Graduation	

Milestones without Summer Course Work

Phases	Timeframe without summer
1. Core Courses	Years 1 and 2
2. Cognate	Finish by Spring year 3
3. First Annual Review	Year 1 Spring
4. Second Annual Review	Year 2-Spring
5. Qualifying Exam	Year 3-Fall
6. Comprehensive Exam Preparation	Year 3-Spring
7. Third Annual Review	Year 3-Spring
8. Comprehensive Exam- written and oral	Year 4-Fall
9. Fourth Annual review	Year 4-Spring
10. Doctoral Committee Appointment	Year 4-Spring
9. Dissertation Proposal Preparation	Year 4-Spring
11. Dissertation Proposal Defense	Year 5-Fall
12. Dissertation Writing	Year 5-Spring
13. Fifth Annual Review	Year 5-Spring
14.Dissertation Finished	Year 6-Fall
15.Dissertation Defended	Year 6-Spring
16. Graduation	

MILESTONES

Milestones with Summer course work

YEAR 1	<i>Spring</i>	First annual review
YEAR 2	<i>Spring</i>	Qualifying exam Second annual review Complete cognate
	<i>Summer</i>	Comprehensive exam preparation Complete core courses
YEAR 3	<i>Fall</i>	Comprehensive exam-written and oral
	<i>Spring</i>	Doctoral committee appointment Dissertation proposal preparation & defense
	<i>Summer</i>	Third annual review Dissertation writing
YEAR 4	<i>Spring</i>	Dissertation finished & defended Graduation

Milestones without Summer course work

YEAR 1	<i>Spring</i>	First annual review
YEAR 2	<i>Spring</i>	Second annual review Complete core courses
YEAR 3	<i>Fall</i>	Qualifying exam
	<i>Spring</i>	Comprehensive exam preparation Third annual review Complete cognate
YEAR 4	<i>Fall</i>	Comprehensive exam-written and oral
	<i>Spring</i>	Fourth annual review Doctoral committee appointment Dissertation proposal preparation
YEAR 5	<i>Fall</i>	Dissertation proposal defense
	<i>Spring</i>	Dissertation writing Fifth annual review
YEAR 6	<i>Fall</i>	Dissertation finished
	<i>Spring</i>	Dissertation defended Graduation



Program Format

The iSchool PhD program is an in-person program. All Core Courses in the program are in-person and there is no virtual option for Core Courses. Students may take online courses during the program through cognate and research courses. Students are expected to participate in course work, colloquia, and other iSchool student engagement opportunities during coursework. Students are not required to live in Columbia, SC.

Academic Background and Knowledge Expected

A student is expected to have the following foundation before entering the program. These are:

- Knowledge of basic research methods and their use in library and information science or related fields.
- During the admissions process, the Research and Doctoral Committee members will evaluate the student's transcript, and the student will be informed if additional coursework is required as conditional to their admission.
- The basic research methods requirement may be met by completing ISCI 705 Research Design and Evaluation or a similar course, which broadly introduces social science research methods.
- In some cases, the student may be asked to submit evidence of course content and to discuss the courses and their content with their initial faculty advisor/mentor prior to identifying any knowledge gaps that need to be filled. If the student believes that the evaluation of prior coursework was incomplete or additional information should have been considered, the student should schedule a meeting to discuss the additional coursework requirements with their advisor and the iSchool Director.

Academic Advising

Upon admission, each doctoral student will be assigned an academic advisor from the iSchool Graduate Student Services Office and an initial faculty advisor who has endorsed the student's admission to the program.

Role of the Academic Advisor

The academic advisor will support the student with registration, forms, and other logistical components of the degree throughout the course of the degree. It is unlikely that a student's academic advisor will change. The academic advisor will reach out to first-year students prior to the start of their first fall semester to provide guidance on enrolling in fall courses. Following the first semester, students will discuss their program of study with their faculty advisor to determine cognate and elective courses and develop a course plan.

Role of the Faculty Advisor

From the second semester onwards, students need to find a faculty advisor who has expertise in an area closely aligned with the student's career trajectories and dissertation path. Students must have an academic advisor no later than the beginning of the third semester. Conversations between the student and the faculty advisor might include course plans, shaping the student's dissertation research and studies leading up to that work, and planning for meeting the program's milestones (outlined in the Milestones: Expectations, Evidence of Progress, and Procedures section below). The faculty advisor will support the students in discussing elective and cognate courses and research.

How the faculty advisor might support a student will vary from student to student and from advisor to advisor, but generally:

- the advisor and student will meet one-on-one several times each semester;
- the advisor will respond promptly to a student's request for additional meetings; and
- the student and advisor will, together, set realistic goals for the timing of the submission of documents for feedback and the return of that feedback.

The student and initial faculty advisor should communicate before the beginning of the semester and meet early during the first semester to mutually set their expectations for the advising support to be provided during the program's first year. Annual meetings, in conjunction with the student's submission of the annual progress report, will allow the advisor to provide guidance as the student's needs and plans evolve. The advisor(s) and the student are encouraged to seek further advice from other faculty members (particularly those who might be potential committee members) in planning the student's program of study. As the student's research interests evolve in preparation for a particular dissertation topic, the advisor is expected to recommend courses or experiences in addition to the remedial ones identified at the time of admission.

In the case where the advisor is an assistant professor, a secondary advisor who has tenure will be appointed. This secondary advisor provides stability for the student and also support for the untenured faculty advisor. Co-advisors are also appropriate in the case where a student has research interests that cut across faculty members – either within or outside of the iSchool.

Faculty Research Advisor

A student selects a permanent faculty research advisor in their third year, prior to taking comprehensive exams. The faculty research advisor can be the same faculty advisor with whom the student has previously worked. Students will need to meet with potential research advisors throughout their time in the iSchool to determine an advisor with similar research interests and the ability of the advisor and student to work well together.

Changing Advisors

A change of advisor(s) may be undertaken at any point prior to the proposal defense. If co-advisors are appointed, they should clearly establish their relationship with each other (i.e., as equal partners in advising the student or with one taking the lead).

The student or the faculty member may terminate an advisor/advisee relationship upon notice to the iSchool Director. The iSchool Change of Advisor form must be completed upon advisor change. A student who is unable to locate a new advisor prior to the end of the academic year in which the termination of the advisor/advisee relationship occurs is subject to dismissal from the program.

If an advisor leaves the iSchool through retirement or a job change, that person should ensure a smooth transition to another advisor.

Doctoral Course Work

While the doctoral program of study is rooted in the core themes and principles of library and information science, it is also customized to the needs and interests of individual students and the research strengths of the iSchool faculty. Well-prepared students will take a minimum of 42 hours of formal courses, independent study courses, or internship courses exclusive of the dissertation (i.e., exclusive of credits in ISCI 899).

The student will develop a program of study in cooperation with their faculty advisor. All courses offered for credit toward the degree must be at the graduate level. An initial program of study is submitted to the academic advisor in Student Services by the end of the student's first semester.

Courses numbered below 500 do not count for graduate credit. For courses numbered between 500 and below 799, the student should consult with the course instructor to ascertain whether the standard course assignments will be sufficient for the course to count for doctoral credit or whether substitutions or additions to the normal assignments will be in order.

Coursework Completion and Pre-Comprehensive Examination Requirements

A full-time student who enters with a master's degree in library and information science (LIS), will complete coursework within three years. It is considered unsatisfactory progress if a full-time student has not completed coursework by the end of the third academic year in the program. Part-time students are expected to progress at a comparable rate based on their individual circumstances. Students already holding an MLIS degree will not repeat MLIS courses as their electives.

The PhD program curriculum consists of doctoral core courses, research methods courses, and elective/cognate courses.

Core Courses

There are five required core courses for the doctoral degree that present a foundation for doctoral study in library and information science and, in doing so, expose students to a wide range of research issues and questions. Waivers and/or substitutions for these courses are not permitted. They also examine multiple methods of investigation commonly employed in the information field in the context of content areas of interest to enrolled students and the faculty member offering the class. Finally, as a package, these courses are designed to socialize students to doctoral study and academic life.

- ISCI 801 Research Issues in Library and Information Science
- ISCI 802 Theory and Research Methods in Library and Information Science
- ISCI 804 Preparation for Academic Careers in Library and Information Science
- ISCI 803 Information and Society
- ISCI 805 Information Policy and Ethics in Society

Students will take Core courses with their cohort. Core courses will be completed in the first three semesters of the program:

- Fall: ISCI 801, 802
- Spring: ISCI 803, 804
- Fall: ISCI 805

Students should move to research and cognate courses in their second year.

Research Method & Design Courses

Doctoral students are required to take a minimum of six (6) hours of research method and design courses. At least three (3) hours must be in Qualitative Methods, and at least three (3) hours must be in Quantitative Methods. Research methods and design courses can come from any discipline; students must consult with their faculty advisor for approval.

Examples of research method and design courses at USC (this is not an exhaustive list).

- EDFI 731 Qualitative Inquiry;
- ANTH 719 Field Problems in Ethnology;
- CRJU 817 Qualitative Research Methods and Data Analysis;
- HPEB 715 Qualitative Research Methods in Public Health;
- POLI 709 Qualitative Methods of Political Analysis;
- SOWK 811 Qualitative Methods of Inquiry for Social Work Research;
- ANTH 780 Ethnography of Communication.
- EDRM 710 Educational Statistics;
- STAT 700 Applied Statistics;
- STAT 702 Introduction to Statistical Theory.

Cognate Courses

The cognate is a secondary concentration or specialization area. Students will shape their cognate based on their research objectives. The cognate is developed in consultation with a student's advisor.

Courses must be taken at the graduate level. Additional research methods courses can be included as part of a cognate. A cognate will be different for each student. For example, a student may create a cognate with 12-credits of advanced research methods courses and 9 credits of health-related courses if health analytics is their research focus. The cognate provides students with the opportunity to take advanced courses in research methods, statistical methods, theory development, and expand their domain knowledge in areas beyond information science that align with their research interests and dissertation plans. Cognate hours can be used to earn a graduate certificate in any area at USC. Note that 500-level courses taken as part of a certificate do not count as credits for the doctoral program.

Twenty-One (21) hours of cognate courses are required. These may be chosen from advisor-approved 700 or 800 level courses. The outputs for these courses must lead to products that are designed for scholarly publication or presentation. Students are allowed to take up to six (6) credits of Independent Study or internship courses.

Dissertation Course

Twelve (12) hours of dissertation preparation (ISCI 899) are required to account for research time related to the dissertation and these hours are beyond the 42-hour minimum of course work for the degree. ISCI 899 hours are signed off by the iSchool director and supervised by the student's advisor.

Courses	Credit hours
Core Courses	15
Research Methods & Design Courses	6
Elective/Cognate courses	21
Dissertation Course	12
Total	54

Grades

A graduate student who earns grades of C or below on more than six hours of coursework, or a grade of F, WF, on six hours of coursework will be suspended from the iSchool. Students whose GPA drops below a 3.0 for two consecutive semesters will be suspended from the iSchool. Students suspended from the iSchool will not be allowed to enroll in any further iSchool courses for at least one year.

Students who earn a grade below C in a course cannot apply the course toward graduation. These courses must be retaken, and the student must earn at least a B. A course may be retaken only once. The original course grade still counts towards the total credits below a C for dismissal from the program.

A student's cumulative grade point average on all courses attempted for graduate credit must be at least 3.00 (B) for the student to graduate from a graduate program in the iSchool. A student must complete all courses listed on the approved Program of Study with an average of at least B (3.0). The average on all graduate-level courses must also be B or above. All courses taken for graduate credit at USC within the time period for the degree, whether listed on the Program of Study or not, must average B or above. Graduate credits approved for transfer from other institutions are not included in calculating USC GPA. Students who are funded through a GA position will have one semester to raise their GPA to at least a 3.0; otherwise, they will lose funding.

Transfer Credit

Students may transfer credits into the doctoral program as electives. No credits may be transferred in as a core course. Transfer of academic credit from other institutions is governed by the requirements and policies of the Graduate School.

Annual Evaluation of Student Progress

Students participate in annual evaluations so that the faculty can monitor their academic and scholarly progress. The annual evaluation is used to monitor student progress in the doctoral program. Annual evaluation materials are due by **April 1st** each year. If a student has a poor evaluation, they will be put on an improvement plan; they will have two semesters to improve their progress. If their progress does not improve, they will be dismissed from the program.

The evaluation includes the following:

Year 1 Evaluation

- Doctoral Student Annual Report
- Student Services Report: GPA/academic progress, early alert issues
- GA Supervisor Report (if applicable)
- Instructor report on academic progress

Year 2-4 Evaluations

- Doctoral Student Annual Report
- Student Services Report: GPA/academic progress, early alert issues
- GA Supervisor Report (if applicable)
- Research advisor report on learning outcome progress and milestones

Year 5 + (passed dissertation proposal)

- Once a student has passed the dissertation proposal, they are not required to complete the Doctoral Student Annual Report. The research advisor will submit a report on the student's dissertation progress.

Evaluation Process

- All evaluations are completed via the appropriate form. Evaluation forms can be found online through [this link](#).
- Evaluation materials are **due by April 1**.
 - If a student is on an improvement plan, evaluation materials are due by March 1.
- Graduate Student Services will collect all the evaluation material and compile a file for each student in SharePoint within 7 days.
- The committee will review each file by May 1 and send a recommendation to the Graduate Director about the students' progress.
- The Graduate Director will send an evaluation letter to each student indicating if they are invited back to the program, are being placed on an improvement plan, or are being dismissed from the program.
 - Continuing students will receive a letter by May 15
 - Students being placed on an improvement plan will receive a letter on May 15
 - Students on an improvement plan will receive a letter by April 1

The Research and Doctoral committee will assess these forms using an assessment rubric evaluating how each student has met the program learning objectives. They will also assess the student for the

following (all contingent upon student progress in the program):

- Quality and focus of coursework, including grades and other dimensions of professionalism:
- Minimal number of incompletes, which are taken care of quickly
- Selection of and contact with a primary advisor
- Formation of committees for comps, proposal, and dissertation
- Timeliness in completion of requirements (for coursework, comps, proposal, and dissertation research)
- Involvement in scholarly activities (e.g., conference submissions/presentations, journal papers)
- Professional engagement (e.g., service in the School/College/University; services in professional organizations)
- Additional expectations for GAs as set by Student Services

Qualifying Exam/Research Competency

Doctoral students are expected to develop research competence during their doctoral studies through the completion of the Qualifying Exam. Research competence is manifested by outcomes of research efforts with student colleagues and/or faculty mentors and the publication and/or presentation of such outcomes in venues outside the school (e.g., conference presentations).

The qualifying exam/research competency requirement is met with the acceptance of an article to a peer-reviewed journal, a full proceeding accepted for a conference, or a full paper presented at a national conference.

The student's faculty advisor must approve the publication and/or presentation venue(s). The research competency requirement must be met prior to taking the comprehensive exams. These works may be co-authored with other students or with faculty, but the student submitting the item for research competency should be the lead author.

After successfully completing the research competency, students will Submit the Qualifying Exam Form.

Comprehensive Exam

A student must complete the Qualifying Exam and complete all coursework requirements prior to or during the semester of the Comprehensive Exam. The Comprehensive Exam has both a written and oral component. The fundamental purposes of the comprehensive examination are to determine a student's fitness to continue work toward the doctorate and to challenge the student to consider issues that the examination committee considers to be critical to the student's plans for the dissertation.

Timeline

Students must complete their Comprehensive Exam no more than one year after completing coursework. Students who have completed coursework but fail to take their comprehensive exams within one year of completing coursework will be dismissed from the program.

Comprehensive Exam Committee

The Comprehensive Exam Committee will be constituted no later than three (3) months before the oral examination. This Committee will consist of the research advisor and three additional members who are selected by the student in consultation with the advisor(s). This committee will also serve as the Doctoral Committee unless an adjustment is agreed upon by the student and Committee members after the Comprehensive Exam is completed.

A majority of the members must be full-time tenure-track or tenured faculty of the iSchool. There must be one outside (non-iSchool) member of the committee. A list of the Doctoral Committee members, signed by the Advisor(s), will be provided to the iSchool Director prior to the Comprehensive Examination. The student must complete the Doctoral Committee Appointment Form to establish their committee. Note that the outside member must be listed on the comprehensive exam committee form even if that person does not participate in grading the comprehensive exam.

Preparing for the Comprehensive Exam

The student will work with the chair of this committee to outline the initial research questions that will guide the dissertation. This provides the committee with a framework for developing exam questions. Though flexible, the student's dissertation topics should not differ significantly from those submitted to the Comprehensive Exam committee. As part of this, the chair and student will negotiate the three (3) content areas of the exam. This will typically include:

- LIS Theory related to the stated research questions.
- Theory from an outside area related to the student's stated research questions.
- Methods. This section will primarily address the method the student expects to utilize in the dissertation (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, or mixed). However, the student will be expected to know how to approach their study utilizing a variety of methods.

The committee members will meet to discuss the research questions and agree on the three areas for the exam. Committee members will then work together to write the exam questions. These questions should elicit responses from the student that show comprehension of each area and its specific application to their research questions. The test will consist of two (2) questions for each of the three areas, for a total of six (6) questions.

Written Exam

The student will write a response to each question not to exceed 10 pages for a total of at least 30 pages and at most 60 pages. **Page lengths exclude references.** The student must include a full reference list of all sources consulted to be added to the end of the exam and include parenthetical citations throughout the responses. It is expected that the student will utilize existing work they have done, as well as engage in a review of additional relevant literature to help fully answer these questions. The student will have one (1) month after receiving the questions to submit responses to the committee chair.

Students oversee setting their own timetable within the month to complete the Comprehensive Exam. Students can consult their reading list as well as any outside readings to assist them in writing the exam. Students are also able to email their committees with any questions. However, these questions should be for clarification rather than content related.

The committee chair will forward responses to committee members. Two (2) weeks after submission, the committee and student will meet for an oral examination covering the written material.

Oral Exam

The oral component will not be made public. The oral examination will test the extent to which the student has internalized the literature covered in the written examination package. It will also assess the candidate's ability to discuss their research area with colleagues. It will explore the candidate's readiness to pursue scholarship in the areas defined by the written examination package. The questions will challenge the student to consider the use of subject matter knowledge, theories, concepts, research methods, and analytical strategies related to the research areas addressed in the written examination package. The oral exam may also explore the motivation, research design, results, and/or implications of the dissertation. The oral examination should not exceed two hours.

At the end of the oral examination, the Committee will determine whether the student has passed the comprehensive examination. At this point, the student may be asked to leave to allow the Committee to

discuss general satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the exam. Then, the student will be invited to return to the room, and the chair will give the decision.

Unsatisfactory Comprehensive Exam

If the student's performance on part or all of the examination is unsatisfactory, the student's Doctoral Committee may choose to have the student revise unsatisfactory sections and resubmit or resubmit the entire comprehensive exam. The doctoral committee can also require students to audit courses in theory or methods as necessary to prepare for the retake. At any point in the revision process, the doctoral committee may decide that a student has not made satisfactory progress and may recommend the student for dismissal.

If the student retakes the comprehensive exam and their second performance is again deemed unsatisfactory, they will be dismissed from the program.

Satisfactory Comprehensive Exam

When the student passes the comprehensive exam, their committee must complete the Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Verification Form. This form is sent to the graduate student services manager for signature and submission to the Graduate School. The form is added to the students' advising file.

Moving to Candidacy

Once the student passes the comprehensive exam, they are admitted to doctoral candidacy and can begin preparing for the dissertation proposal. In order to move into candidacy, the student must have both the Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Form and the Doctoral Program of Study forms signed and submitted to Graduate Student Services.

Dissertation proposal

A student should complete and defend the dissertation proposal, or make substantial progress toward that point, within six months after completion of the comprehensive exam. Students who do not complete and defend their dissertation proposal within a year of completing their comprehensive exams will be placed on probation for one semester and will be permitted this period to remedy the issue by completing the proposal and either defending or scheduling the defense by the end of the probationary semester. Failure to do so will result in dismissal from the program.

Dissertation Committee

While typically the Dissertation Committee does not change from the Comprehensive Exam Committee, membership changes are allowed. The candidates are not required to resubmit the appointment request form if their committee has not changed, the graduate school does not require this form twice.

Preparing Proposal Process

The candidate prepares a draft dissertation proposal, which, once approved by the chair(s) of the student's Doctoral Committee, is provided to all members of that Committee **at least two weeks before the oral defense** to allow Committee members to review and prepare questions for the oral defense.

In consultation with the student, the student's Doctoral Committee sets the date for the defense of the dissertation proposal, again, at least two weeks after the proposal has been distributed. The dissertation proposal defense will begin with the student briefly (15-20 minutes) presenting the proposed research. Following the presentation, committee members will be given an opportunity to ask clarifying questions and provide the student with guidance on their proposed research (90 minutes maximum). At this point, the student may be asked to leave to allow the Committee to discuss general satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the proposal. Then, the student will be invited to return to the room and hear the decision given by the chair.

Examination outcomes can fall into one of the following categories:

- Pass: Students who pass can progress to establish their doctoral committee and draft their program of study for approval.
- Conditional pass: Students who receive a conditional pass must revise and resubmit specific sections within a specified time frame.
- Fail: Students who fail must retake the section(s) at the next examination administration.

Dissertation Writing & Defense

Writing the Dissertation

The student and the committee will agree on a plan for progress reports and the reading of early drafts. The dissertation advisor will oversee the performance of the plan. Each doctoral student is expected to consult with members of the committee as necessary through the progress of the research; progress reports are required at least once a year unless the committee requests more frequent reporting.

The student must register for a minimum of 12 hours of ISCI 899—Dissertation Preparation—over the period of writing the dissertation. Students may fill out the [Dissertation Fellowship](#) form to receive a fellowship of up to \$500 to support their dissertation research.

The student will prepare a draft of the dissertation for review by the doctoral committee chair and other members of the student's Doctoral Committee as the student and advisor deem appropriate. This could be drafts sent chapter-by-chapter or a complete dissertation draft. This is up to the committee and the student.

The dissertation advisor is responsible to members of the student's committee for determining that the draft or draft chapter is in appropriate form for their evaluation. The student must engage in all suggested revisions made by their advisor and these revisions must be made to the advisor's satisfaction prior to the draft being approved by the advisor to be sent to other committee members.

Upon approval by the advisor, the final draft or draft chapters will be provided to the student's Doctoral Committee members. This draft must conform to the rules in The Graduate School's *Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Formatting Guide*. ([Formatting Guide](#)) While the Graduate School prefers the *Chicago Manual of Style*, use of other style guides is allowed in recognition that different fields have different style traditions. **As use of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA) is a more prevalent style guide in the information field, it is, therefore, recommended.**

The dissertation advisor, student, and committee members will identify a date by which the student can expect feedback on the dissertation draft or draft chapters. The student must engage in all suggested committee revisions to their advisor's satisfaction prior to the scheduling of a dissertation defense.

The student distributes copies of the final complete dissertation draft, incorporating all suggested committee revisions, to committee members **at least one month** before the date of the final oral examination to give them time to review the document and point out any additional issues that need to be attended to prior to the defense.

Dissertation Defense

The Dissertation Defense will be scheduled only after all members of the committee have had an adequate opportunity to review a final draft of the dissertation. The final oral examination is a defense of the dissertation; it is open to the University community. The student is responsible for working with the iSchool Office Coordinator to reserve a room for the defense. They are also responsible for entering the defense announcement in the Graduate School's Graduate Management System (GMS) at least **14 days in advance** of the defense. ([Graduate Management System](#)) In addition, the student's advisor will announce the time and place of the dissertation defense to the iSchool community including the title and an abstract for the dissertation.

Similar to the dissertation proposal defense, **the dissertation defense will begin with an open portion, where the student will briefly (15-20 minutes) present the proposed research.** Following the presentation, committee members and visitors will be given an opportunity to ask clarifying questions (**30 minutes maximum**). After open questioning, the visitors will be asked to leave and a closed session follows, where the committee members may ask additional questions of the student. At this point, the student may be asked to leave to allow the Committee to discuss general satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the dissertation. Then the student will be invited to return to the room and hear the decision given by the chair.

After the questions and discussion, the student will once more be requested to leave the room to allow the committee to discuss. The chair will facilitate the committee's decision-making regarding the outcomes of the proposal defense.

- A successful defense involves either no changes or minor revisions that the chair can oversee without requiring further committee review before the student progresses with their work.
- In the case of a conditional successful defense, there are changes to be examined by committee members before the student can proceed with their work.
- If the defense is unsuccessful, it requires changes, further review, and another presentation or meeting with committee members before the student can proceed with their work.

Depending on the outcome of the proposal, the following actions will occur:

- The student and chair will collaborate to create a memorandum outlining raised issues, which will then be circulated to other committee members for their approval. This process applies to all defense outcomes. During the defense, the committee and the student will agree on a date for circulating the memo.
- The committee will provide feedback on and approve the memo in a timely manner.
- In the case of conditional and unsuccessful defenses, the student and chair will collaborate to resolve issues, following a revise-and-resubmit approach. Changes will be made to the proposal document in response to each issue, with precise indications of where modifications are made (e.g., page(s) and lines), along with explanations of how the changes address the issues. The revised document will then be presented to committee members for approval. Both the committee and the student will establish a deadline for submitting the revised document, either during the defense or via email.

Successful Defense of the Dissertation

Successful defense of the dissertation will be recognized by completion and submission of the *Dissertation Signature and Approval Form* to the Graduate School. This form must be submitted (with all original, wet signatures –) after the student successfully passes their dissertation defense. It must be signed by all dissertation committee members, including the outside member.

The Graduate School currently maintains a Doctoral Progress to Degree web page with current information from the point of appointing a student's Doctoral Committee. ([*Doctoral Degree Progress*](#)) The student is responsible for making any committee specified revisions to the dissertation prior to this form being submitted.

The student is responsible for following all requirements, deadlines, and formatting guidelines for defending and submitting their dissertation. Students must schedule their dissertation defense to take place prior to the defense deadline for the term in which they wish to graduate (or a prior term); they must also ensure that they submit their dissertation for a required format check by the deadline listed for the semester in which they plan to graduate. Students can find all relevant dates, formatting

guidelines/templates, and formatting workshops on the Graduate School's ["Thesis and Dissertation"](#) page.

Required Forms

The Graduate School at USC requires several forms of PhD students at various times throughout their degree. Here in the iSchool, all forms will be collected through the Graduate Student Services Office and sent to the Graduate School for processing.

Students should submit all forms via the [iSchool Doctoral Student Form Upload JotForm](#) for processing. Upload forms without the signature of the director; the director's signature will be added before sending them to the Graduate School.

Required Forms:

- [Doctoral Program of Study](#)
This form needs to be submitted after coursework is complete, in your first semester of ISCI 899. If you need assistance in filling out the form, reach out to the Graduate Student Services Manager
- [Doctoral Committee Appointment Request](#)
This form needs to be submitted prior to your Comprehensive Examination
- [Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Verification](#)
This form is required to be submitted following the completion of written and oral comps.
- [Dissertation Signature and Approval Form](#)
This form needs to be submitted after successfully defending your dissertation.
- [Doctoral Qualifying Exam Verification](#)
The doctoral program's "Qualifying Exam" includes the acceptance of an article to a peer-reviewed journal. Please submit this form upon successful acceptance to a peer-reviewed journal.

Student Conduct, Professionalism, & Decorum

The School of Information Science is dedicated to learning, research, and the advancement of knowledge and to developing ethically sensitive and responsible persons. The iSchool seeks to achieve these goals through a sound educational program and policies governing individual conduct that encourages independence and maturity. By accepting membership in this school, an individual joins a community characterized by free expression, free inquiry, intellectual honesty, respect for others, and participation in constructive change. All rights and responsibilities exercised within this academic environment shall be compatible with these principles.

Members of the iSchool community are expected to ask and answer questions respectfully and non-argumentatively and refrain from engaging in abusive, aggressive, or disruptive behavior. Students are expected to maintain the highest professional and academic decorum. This means that students are expected to maintain etiquette in their actions. The classroom is a safe space for students to gain instruction, express ideas, and fully engage in learning. Any form of disruptive behavior, harassment, or violence can lead to immediate dismissal from the program. Instructors within the program reserve the right to have a disruptive student removed from the classroom.

The stressful situations experienced in graduate school occasionally result in personal friction between students or between students and faculty. In most cases, these incidents can and should be worked out between the individuals involved on the basis of common courtesy, mutual respect, and common sense. Individual incidents or trends that cannot be resolved at the personal level or which are serious violations of civil, student, or professional codes should be documented in writing and reported to the appropriate authority. Such reports are initiated with the iSchool Director as appropriate. If conflicts cannot be resolved within the school, other options for addressing conflicts include the University's Office of Student Advocacy.

In their coursework, students are expected to adhere to appropriate student conduct, professionalism, and decorum. ISCI courses rely on the following professionalism rubric to ensure that our values are upheld in the classroom.

Professionalism Rubric

(Adapted from the University of Alberta's Centre for Teaching and Learning)

	Proficient	Competent	Needs Work
Punctuality	<p>Student arrives before class start time, and/or seldom leaves before class ends without previous arrangement with instructor.</p> <p>Up to 1 late arrival or early departures.</p>	<p>Between 2 - 3 late arrivals or early departures.</p>	<p>Late arrival or early departures to 5 or more class sessions.</p>
Conduct in class	<p>Student consistently contributes insightful information to course discussions.</p> <p>Student demonstrate preparedness for class and is familiar with assigned readings.</p> <p>Student takes care not to dominate</p>	<p>Student provides insightful contributions to discussions on occasion.</p> <p>Student mostly demonstrates preparedness for class, and most of the time is familiar with assigned readings.</p> <p>Student is careful not to dominate discussions and is</p>	<p>Student either does not contribute to discussions, or contributions are superficial, anecdotal, or banal in nature.</p> <p>Student seldom demonstrates preparedness for class or is consistently</p>

	<p>discussions and invites others to participate.</p> <p>Student pays attention to the class discussions and does not use class time to complete tasks related to other classes or employment.</p>	<p>mindful of others' time participating.</p> <p>Student mostly pays attention to class discussions and is not obvious when using class time to complete tasks related to other classes or employment.</p>	<p>unfamiliar with assigned readings.</p> <p>Student either dominates or ignores discussions in open disregard for others' arguments or participation.</p> <p>Student's uses class time to openly work on tasks unrelated to class and/or does not pay attention to discussions.</p>
Respect for others	<p>Student respectfully addresses and acknowledges both classmates and the instructor.</p> <p>Student brings up personal requests or class performance inquiries to the instructor in a private forum, and in a respectful manner.</p> <p>Student keeps side conversations to a minimum during class discussions.</p>	<p>Student respectfully addresses and acknowledges both classmates and the instructor.</p> <p>Student brings personal requests or class performance inquiries to the instructor in a private forum, and in a respectful manner.</p> <p>Student engages in side conversations sparingly during class discussions.</p>	<p>Student is openly disrespectful of classmates or the instructor.</p> <p>Student is often engaged in side conversations with disregard of class discussion.</p> <p>Student uses time in the classroom or in class to bring up personal requests or class performance issues to the instructor, or does so in a disrespectful, challenging, or aggressive manner.</p>
Feedback reception	<p>Student accepts constructive feedback and works towards improving their work based on it.</p> <p>Written assignments demonstrate an effort to receive and integrate feedback.</p>	<p>Student feedback reception is unclear, but work and manner demonstrate attention to feedback provided.</p> <p>Written assignments demonstrate some integration of previous feedback.</p>	<p>Student is openly resistant to feedback in either comments or attitude.</p> <p>Written assignments demonstrate disregard or lack of attention to previous feedback.</p>
Use of electronic devices	<p>Student use of electronic devices is clearly limited to taking notes or corroborating</p>	<p>Student constantly uses electronic devices in class and at times it is hard to determine if they are paying attention to class discussions.</p>	<p>Student uses electronic devices in class in a way which is distracting to others, or in a manner which makes it clear that they are not</p>

	<p>information related to class.</p> <p>Use of mobile technologies is kept to a minimum and it is done in an unobtrusive manner.</p>	<p>Student uses mobile technologies in class, openly and occasionally in a mostly unobtrusive manner.</p>	<p>paying attention in class.</p> <p>Student's use of mobile technologies is disruptive, invasive of other's space, or distracting.</p>
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Additionally, all students enrolled in the doctoral program in the iSchool must submit a signed Professionalism Agreement, indicating their commitment to uphold professional behaviors and conduct as representatives of the school.

Professionalism Agreement

(Adapted from Purdue University's Teacher Education Program)

As a student in the University of South Carolina's School of Information Science doctoral program, I agree to uphold and maintain the standards and professional behaviors expected of me.

As a member of the iSchool community, I understand that my task is to learn so that I can become a more effective educational professional. I agree to abide by specific institutional values and policies as well as the highest standards of professionalism at all times.

Legal and Ethical Conduct: I agree to maintain professional, legal, and ethical conduct at all times. I will respect the privacy of others and protect the confidentiality of academic or personal information that I encounter. I will demonstrate academic integrity and not engage in academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism).

Commitment to the Profession: I agree to demonstrate my commitment to excellence in library and information science (LIS) by being prepared for all activities. I will demonstrate commitment to my field of study, my students, and the LIS profession.

Commitment to Growth: I agree to positively receive, and professionally act upon, feedback provided by faculty, instructional staff, and my supervisors. In doing so, I will remain committed to improving my own learning and professional practice. I will remain flexible and open to feedback from others.

Professional Behavior: I agree to maintain a professional demeanor. I will convey a positive message about my discipline and the profession and be dependable, punctual, and well prepared for my work. I also will complete my assigned tasks, duties and responsibilities on time.

Commitment to Safety: I agree to act in a safe and responsible manner, avoiding any action that might put others at physical or emotional risk.

Professional Communication: I agree to interact and communicate in a positive and professional manner with students, peers, school and university personnel, and others. This includes interactions in person and on social media. My communication will be free of bias, prejudice, or lack of fairness toward individuals or groups of people.

Collaboration: I agree to collaborate with others, demonstrate a positive rapport, contribute to group efforts, and show respect for others and their ideas.

Commitment to All Learners: I agree to act and communicate in an effective manner that enhances the educational opportunities for all members of the iSchool community. I will demonstrate my commitment to valuing student diversity in all its forms. I will positively encourage students in their learning efforts and maintain high expectations for ALL students. I

will educate myself and adjust my approach and practices when necessary to meet the cultural, academic, social-emotional and other needs of community members.

I understand that failure to comply with this agreement may result in the execution of an early alert form. The accumulation of three alert forms will result in a disciplinary review that may result in removal from the iSchool doctoral program.

Dismissal from the Program

A student who fails to make satisfactory progress toward completing coursework after their first year in the program will be placed on probation and given **one additional semester** in which to demonstrate satisfactory progress. If the student fails to make progress during the probationary period, they will be subject to dismissal from the program. Satisfactory progress is determined during the annual review process.

A student must complete their comprehensive exam **within one year of completing course work**. If a student fails to do this, they will be placed on probation and given one additional semester to complete and pass the exam. If the student does not pass the exam during the probationary period, they will be dismissed from the program.

Students who do not complete and defend their dissertation proposal **within a year of completing their comprehensive exams** will be placed on probation for one semester and given one additional semester to complete the proposal and schedule and/or defend the proposal by the end of the probationary semester. Failure to do so will result in dismissal from the program.

Teaching Opportunities

Students may have teaching opportunities in the iSchool. Students who are funded through a GA position may be assigned to teach courses as part of their funded position. Students teaching through their GA position must complete a two-part Graduate TA (GTA) / Graduate Instructional Assistant (GIA) Orientation workshop series at the beginning of their first semester as a GTA or GIA (i.e., before they start working in the classroom). This training is required for all graduate students who will be working in some kind of instructional role regardless of their department/program. These workshops are held at the beginning of each fall and spring semester, and students are not permitted to be hired as GTAs or GIAs if they have not completed both Workshop A and Workshop B.

Students who are not funded, but who would like to teach in any capacity (e.g., as a course assistant, as an adjunct instructor) have a few options. If they are experienced instructors, they can apply to adjunct for iSchool courses through the Committee on Instructional Quality. If they are not experienced instructors, they can seek out opportunities to serve as a Course or Graduate Assistant for an experienced faculty member, which might include assisting with the teaching in a variety of ways (e.g., guest lecturing, pre-marking of assignments, course organization). Based on further demonstration of effective teaching skills, the student may then progress to teaching as the Instructor of Record in an undergraduate class, or, in some cases, in a graduate class under the supervision of an experienced faculty member. Compensation varies as the student progresses from the level of Teaching Assistant to Instructor of Record.

Students interested in teaching should discuss their plans with their advisors and the iSchool Director.

Financial Support

GA Positions

The program offers financial support to students. The most common form of support is a Graduate Assistantship (GAship). GAships are for full-time students and provide a 9-month stipend, partial tuition abatement, and health insurance coverage. These stipends are renewable on an annual basis. Students will be assigned to a faculty member for a GAship their first year. These assignments are based on the needs of the iSchool and iSchool faculty. Failure to make satisfactory progress for a period of two or more consecutive semesters will result in a reduction or cancellation of the student's GA support (as assistantships are dependent upon satisfactory progression

Scholarships & Fellowships

Additional funding for students both within and outside of the department may be available. For additional resources, see links below:

- [Spectrum Scholarships](#)
- [Presidential Fellowship](#)
- [Grace Jordan McFadden Professors Program](#)
- [ALA Scholarship Program](#)
- [LITA Scholarships](#)
- [CLIR Fellowships](#)
- [Trustee Fellowships \(UofSC Graduate School\)](#)
- [UofSC National Fellowships and Scholar Programs](#) office also offers support (including writing tips) for students applying for fellowships.

Travel Funding

School of Information Science PhD students are allocated \$500.00 per fiscal year (July 1 – June 1) for travel to a conference in the continental United States. This funding can be used even if a student is not presenting at the conference.

There is limited international travel funding; it is restricted to students presenting research. A student may be provided \$1000.00 for international travel if they are presenting at a conference and there is no virtual presentation/attendance option available.

Process:

- Complete the [Travel Request Form](#)
- This must be done prior to purchasing anything related to travel.
 - Select direct payment for flights and registration. USC will make these purchases for you.
 - This must be done even if you are traveling on grant funds.
 - Upon receiving your Travel Authorization, meet with the iSchool Office Coordinator to purchase registration and flights.

iSchool Director Travel Grant

The Director Travel Grant provides \$1000.00 for domestic or international conference travel. Awardees must be presenting at the conference. The grant can be combined with the \$500 guaranteed funds for travel in the continental United States for a conference in the U.S. Two grants will be awarded each year for travel taking place in spring or summer for students presenting at a conference. Summer travel must be completed by July 15. There are two application deadlines: December 1 and April 1. Confirmation of presentation must be submitted with your application.

Student Support Services and Opportunities

Mental Health Resources & Support

[University Health Services](#) provides essential therapy and emotional wellness services for University of South Carolina students. Services include counseling, psychiatry, emotional and mental wellness, and online support. Consultations, walk-in sessions, and emergency & after-hours crisis services are available.

Writing Center and Career Services

[The University Writing Center](#) now offers more services for graduate students. In fact, twenty-five percent of appointments are grad students. All tutors are grad students themselves, though, so check out the [Graduate Student Resources Hub](#), which opened in Spring 2022 and provides space and services for graduate students, with two dedicated staff members to help. The Hub also offers non-English as first language (EPI) support.

Office of Student Advocacy

Student advocate serves as a resource for students to assist in resolving university-related problems and concerns in an informal manner.

Phone: 803-777-4872 (4USC)
Email: studentadvocacy@sc.edu
Russell House West Wing
Suite 115, 1400 Greene Street
Columbia, SC 29208



Have any questions?

Contact the Graduate Student Services
Manager at 803-777-0270 or [visit the website.](#)