

Proposed PhD EXSC Milestones for Progress to Graduation

Milestone	Item	Description	Estimated Time	Benchmark	Requirement	Remediation
No graduate degree on entrance	Masters of Science	Students that enter the PhD. Program without a completed graduate degree (e.g., MS, MPH, DPT) must complete all required Masters of Science core courses (i.e., electives not required) prior to proposal of their dissertation (Milestone 3)	End of 2 nd or 3 rd year	Completion of all required courses for Masters of Science	Students must take and pass all required courses for Masters of Science with a cumulative 3.0 GPA or higher in those courses	
1	Annual IDP	Completion of IDP document outlining completed (within the academic year) and to be accomplished (in following academic year) research/scholarship, teaching, and service related activities	<p>Establish goals within IDP in 30d after starting 1st semester (and 1st semester of every academic year thereafter)</p> <p>Submit completed accomplishments by last day of classes of spring academic calendar of 1st year</p> <p>Completed and reviewed by Program of Study Committee and full doctoral EXSC faculty every year</p> <p>Orally presented to full doctoral EXSC faculty every other year (1st, 3rd, 5th, ...)</p>	Satisfactory performance towards degree as indicated by Mentor and identified faculty serving as program of study committee (minimum two other faculty)	<p>Student completes IDP document and presents an oral summary to faculty regarding annual progress from IDP</p> <p>Student receives letter of progress from department indicating rating of progress towards degree</p>	<p>Additional course work or scholarship as deemed necessary by Mentor and program of study committee or possible exam to determine ability to stay in program.</p> <p>Potential to lose GA/TA with unsatisfactory performance</p>
2	Qualifying Exam	Produce a written product and orally defend to Qualifying Exam Committee (see details below)	Typically end of course work – usually end of 2 nd or start of 3 rd year	<p>Pass, Conditional Pass, Fail</p> <p>Must Pass prior to move to comps/proposal in Milestone 3</p>	See Qualifying Exam Format section below	<p>Allowed no more than one fail to continue in program</p> <p>Fail/Conditional pass – retake/rewrite/revise all or portion of same or new written product</p> <p>Potential to lose GA/TA with unsatisfactory performance</p>

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3	Dissertation Proposal (Comps)	Student develops written dissertation proposal document and presents the research orally to faculty/students	End of course work – typically start or end of third year	Satisfactory performance as indicated by Mentor and identified faculty serving on dissertation committee (minimum three other faculty, two in EXSC) Must satisfactorily pass prior to move on to Milestone 4	Student provides written document and presents orally. Oral presentation advertised 2-weeks in advance for attendance by EXSC faculty/students	Revisions of written document, specific aims, analysis plan, and/or study design per dissertation committee's recommendations
4	Dissertation Defense	Student develops written manuscripts and presents the results orally to faculty/students	Typically end of 4 th year	Satisfactory performance as indicated by Mentor and dissertation committee (minimum three other faculty, two in EXSC)	Student provides written document and presents orally. Oral presentation advertised 2-weeks in advance for attendance by EXSC faculty/students	Revisions of written document per dissertation committee's recommendations

Committee Membership Composition

Milestone	Committee	Composition
1	Program of Study Committee	Minimum 3 faculty: Mentor plus 2 other EXSC faculty
2	Qualifying Exam Committee	Minimum 3 faculty: Mentor plus 2 other faculty (can be faculty at USC or outside the university) <i>NOTE: Committee can include members from Program of Study Committee, but this is not required</i>
3	Dissertation Committee	Minimum 4 faculty: Mentor plus 2 additional EXSC faculty (other members can be faculty at USC or outside the university) <i>NOTE: Committee can include members from Program of Study or Qualifying Exam Committee, but this is not required</i>

Milestone 2: Qualifying Exam Format

- Topic and Format are Mentor/Qualifying Exam Committee Determined
- Timeframe to Respond: 1 to 4 weeks (Mentor/Qualifying Exam Committee Determined)
- Written product(s) could encompass one or more of the following:
 - Data analysis (data set provided) with manuscript as written product to defend
 - Paper (e.g., Position Paper, Methods Paper, Systematic Review)
 - Small Grant (e.g., R03/R21 style)
 - Scholarly Analysis or Discourse related to Questions in the Field
 - Other – as determined by Mentor/Qualifying Exam Committee
- The topic and product can be aligned with the student's dissertation, but cannot be the entire dissertation
- Student independently competes written product – honor code
- Following a successful or conditional pass on the written product, student will orally present/defend the product with the Mentor/Qualifying Exam Committee (within 30d, as determined by Committee)
- Following the oral defense, Mentor/Qualifying Exam Committee determines if student is ready to progress to their dissertation
- Grading Options: Pass, Conditional Pass, or Fail:
 - Pass-admission to candidacy
 - Fail/Conditional Pass – must have retaken exam, as specified by Committee, within 30d of decision.

USC Grad School Requirements:

- Qualification Exam: at least one year prior to graduation, signifies “Admissions to Doctoral Candidacy”
- Comprehensive Exam (aka Dissertation Proposal): Must be administered no later than 60 days prior to graduation. Written and Oral required.
- Defense: submit needed forms to graduate school