

ADVANCED STANDING

Review the [Handbook](#) for detailed information and regulations.

COURSE REGISTRATION: 794 SERIES

As a PhD candidate, you need to enroll in NSCI 794 Doctoral Dissertation (A, B, C, D, Z) each fall and spring.

- You need at least 2 semesters (A & B) to graduate
- A - D are 2 units, and Z is 0 units. All grant full-time status
- 794 units will appear “In Progress” until you defend

*You can take additional courses, but they must be directly related to your PhD. Tuition remission does not cover Auditing courses.

	Fall	Spring	Summer
Year 4	NSCI 794 A	NSCI 794 B	GRSC 802 or NSCI 790
Year 5	NSCI 794 C	NSCI 794 D	GRSC 802 or NSCI 790
Year 6	NSCI 794 Z	NSCI 794 Z	GRSC 802 or NSCI 790

APPOINTING YOUR DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

3 - 5 members, at least 3 USC faculty:

- **Member 1 (Chair):** NGP faculty; cannot be NGP Associate Member; cannot be your Mentor
- **Member 2 (Mentor):** NGP faculty
- **Member 3 (Optional):** NGP or non-NGP
- **Member 4 (Optional):** NGP, non-NGP, or External faculty
- **Member 5 (Outside Member):** USC faculty; If NGP faculty, must be in a different department than your Mentor. If non-NGP faculty, may be in the same department as your Mentor.

A non-USC faculty member from another university can serve as an **External Member** (Member 4). They *cannot* serve as or replace the *Outside Member*, and they require approval from the NGP Director.

Your Dissertation Committee will oversee your dissertation research, writing, and defense.

Work closely with your mentor on your committee composition. You can include faculty from your Guidance Committee, change members, or potentially have a smaller committee.

Tip: If you’ve had difficulty scheduling your APR meetings, it may be easier to schedule your defense with a smaller committee.

Within 6 months of passing Qualifying Exam:
[Submit the Appointment of Dissertation Committee form](#)

WRITING YOUR DISSERTATION

The dissertation typically includes a general introduction and summary chapters, which report your original research. The chapters will comprise the bulk of the dissertation and should be written in the form of a manuscript suitable for publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

- First or co-first author manuscripts can serve as chapters. NGP encourages at least one first-author publication, but a publication is not required in order to graduate.
- NGP doesn’t have a formatting requirement, but use one format consistently across all your chapters.
- Confirm the content and organization with your Mentor/Dissertation Committee well in advance!

PLANNING YOUR DEFENSE

Review the [Dissertation and Defense Checklist](#).

Your dissertation must be fully written before your defense. Confirm the deadline with your committee, usually 2-3 weeks in advance.

Email NGP Admin 3 weeks in advance so we can create your defense announcement.

You, your Chair, and your Mentor must be in person for the defense. Let Dawn know at least 3 weeks in advance if one of them can't be so we can petition the Graduate School. Other members can be remote or in-person.

Semester before defense: Meet with Dawn to review the submission process, deadlines, and that you've met all requirements to ensure your degree is conferred in the correct semester.

THESIS CENTER OVERVIEW

Step 1 - Create profile

Submit forms, enter committee info, and send the "Approval to Submit" form to committee.

Step 2 - Defend!

Make minor revisions your committee requires. Committee signs the "Approval to Submit."

Step 3 - Upload your manuscript**

Once your checklist is complete, the Thesis Center will notify you to submit your manuscript.

Step 4 - Thesis Center Review

Make any required formatting changes.

Step 5 - Finalize publishing info

****Manuscript must be submitted by the deadline for your degree to be conferred in that semester.**

YEARLY REQUIREMENTS

Individual Development Plan (IDP)

Work with your mentor to set goals for the upcoming year. Include concrete milestones for publishing your work, specific career goals, and you should have at least a rough idea of the "shape" of your dissertation.

Use the [IDP Template](#) or [My IDP Science Careers](#).

September 15: Submit IDP

Student Support Forms

Students must report their funding source to NGP for each upcoming semester for data reporting.

Oct. 15

Spring form due

March 15

Summer form due

May 15

Fall form due

This is separate from setting up your funding award! Your mentor's department sets up your funding, then they'll send you an **Award Letter** outlining the terms of your financial award for that semester.

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT MEETING & APR FORM

Students must meet with their entire committee once per academic year. Review your dissertation progress, planned chapters, and address any concerns. Discuss your expected defense timeline and make sure the committee is in agreement. **The date must be set by May 15, and the meeting must be held by August 15.**

NOTE ON DUAL ENROLLMENT

The Graduate School rarely permits students to enroll concurrently in NGP and in another graduate or certificate program. NGP students must first obtain approval from the NGP Director and provide evidence of the research mentor's approval to petition enrollment in another program. Failure to follow these procedures is considered a basis for dismissal from NGP. Students will be solely responsible for tuition fees, and the final decision is made by the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies.