

SOU Computer Science Graduate Program FAQ

1. What are the prerequisites to enter the program?

Three classes: CS 258 Computer Science III, CS 336 Networking I, and CS 360 Databases

2. How firm is the requirement for the final draft of the project or thesis to be submitted by the first week of the quarter of graduation?

The requirement is firm, except for extenuating circumstances. Students should only register for one credit of thesis/project in that quarter. The purpose of this registration is for final editing. Students should already have advisor approval by this time.

3. Is the defense restricted to questions about the thesis/project?

No. Defense questions normally focus more on the thesis/project. However, it is customary that at least twenty percent of the questions will relate to any topic covered in the student's coursework.

4. Does the project/thesis have to relate to the supporting area?

No. There must be an advisor from the supporting area, but there is not a requirement for the project to relate to that area. However, students often choose projects that do have some relationship.

5. When can I register for the project or thesis?

Before you can register for the project or thesis, you must have an advising committee in place, and have your committee approve your project or thesis. You must also complete your mid-term evaluation before registration.

6. How do I register for project or thesis credits?

The project course number is CS 501 and the thesis course number is CS 503. You will fill out an Irregular Registration form with your advisor. Your advisor, the department chair, and the dean must sign this form. After you get all appropriate signatures, complete the process by taking the completed form to the registrar.

7. What is the format for the oral defense?

The student will first present his project publicly. This presentation will be for at most forty-five minutes. Following this presentation, there will be a fifteen minute break. An hour-and-a-half to two-hour comprehensive oral exam follows. The oral exam will be a private session between the student and his advisors. The questions might, and usually do, go beyond the project and thesis, and relate to the student's coursework. The question session can be up to two hours in length, but may be shorter. Following the defense, the advisors meet to determine if the student's defense is acceptable, or if more work must be done.

8. Can I switch from an oral defense to a written exam? What is the procedure?

You can switch from an oral defense to a written exam if it is agreeable to your advisor and the department chair. It takes considerable time for faculty to prepare a written exam, so this change could delay your graduation. The written exam will cover all of the coursework completed as part of your graduate program. There is no extra paperwork; you will be given a grade for your final irregular registration for CS 501 or CS 503.

9. Does the graduate representative need to sign the project approval page?

No! The School Area Masters Handbook is incorrect. Refer to the online Computer Science Style

and Policy Manual for the most up-to-date directions.

10. Is there a special form for the project proposal?

No, it is a free form typed document of about a page or two in length. It doesn't need signing, but must be stapled to the Mid-Program Evaluation Form.

11. Where do we get the report of the examining committee?

The graduate representative brings the report to the oral exam, and returns it to the dean's office. All committee members and the graduate representative sign this form.

12. Do the graduate only classes need to be all from the major department?

No, they must be graduate only (500 level) but can be from the supporting department.

13. How do I change my graduate advisor?

Make sure that your new advisor is up to speed and accepts your project proposal. The new advisor and committee members must re-sign the forms associated with the Program Plan and the Mid-Term Evaluation. Submit copies of the re-signed documents to the Computer Science department coordinator before submitting the originals to the School of Science.

14. What is the department policy concerning incomplete grades for thesis and project courses?

The principle advisor must give a letter grade before the students can enroll again for either CS 501 or CS 503. This policy forces students, with help from faculty, to break up their project or thesis into manageable pieces; our experience shows that this policy leads to faster progress.

15. Can students enroll in CS 501 or CS 503 using the pass/no pass criteria?

Enrollment for projects that will continue to additional quarters can be pass/no pass, if this is agreeable to the student and the advisor. The final quarter cannot be pass/no pass; it must result in a letter grade.

Thesis credits cannot be pass/no pass. However, students can register for CS 501 for the initial research portion of their thesis and then register for CS 503 thesis in the subsequent quarters.

16. How many credits are necessary to complete a thesis or project?

A thesis or project can have a maximum of nine credit hours. A thesis must have a minimum of six credits. A project has no minimum, but requires approval from the chair and dean if the total is less than six credits.

17. Which 400/500 level classes can graduate students take?

Graduate students can take any of the 400/500 classes that they didn't take as an undergraduate student.

18. What happens if I get a grade under a C?

If a student takes a course for which a grade is earned that is lower than a C, that course will not count for graduate credit. The student must retake the class if it was on his/her program plan.

19. How do I get off of probation status?

Students on probation status have twelve credits to raise their grade point average to 3.00. If this is not possible, it will take special permission from the dean to prevent the student from being dropped from the program. Students cannot graduate with a grade point average under 3.00.

20. What is the makeup of a graduate student's committee of advisors?

The student chooses who serves on this committee. Two advisors must come from Computer Science faculty. The third advisor comes from a support area, and is a professor from which the student has taken at least one graduate level class.

21. Can a graduate student's committee have more than three advisors?

A fourth community advisor is optional, but should be closely familiar with the student's project. This advisor participates in the evaluation process, but does not vote or attend the meeting to vote on whether the student's defense is acceptable. All advisors, including the community advisor, sign the thesis page.

22. How do I apply for an assistantship?

Make your interest known to the graduate coordinator and e-mail your resume to him. Assistantships will be awarded as they are available to the students that the department considers to be the most deserving. Decisions on assistantship awards occur after students complete the admission process.

23. What are the graduate assistant responsibilities?

Graduate assistants must provide six hours per week of department related work. The graduate coordinator and graduate assistants mutually agree on the times when this work is to be done. Graduate assistants must leave flexibility in their schedule so an agreeable work schedule is possible. Graduate assistants must also attend, and be on time, to all meetings called for by the graduate coordinator. This will normally be one meeting sometime during the first week of each quarter.

24. What is the procedure for establishing graduate assistant contracts?

After the graduate assistant agrees to the work schedule to assist the department, the graduate coordinator fills out the necessary paperwork. The first time that a student becomes graduate assistant, they need to go to the payroll department and fill out the necessary forms. This process requires a valid id and driver's license. Graduate assistants should also have a resume on file in the School of Science.

Graduate assistants should monitor their SOU e-mail account for notice that their contract is ready. When it is, they need to sign it and return it to the appropriate department.

SOU pays graduate students once per month. The first paycheck will be at the end of October.

25. How many quarters can a graduate student be a graduate assistant?

Normally, there is a three quarter limit. The department can hire a graduate student separately for additional quarters if funds allow.

26. Is the graduate assistant tuition remission or the stipend taxable?

The tuition remission is not taxable. The stipend is taxable. The graduate assistant will receive a w-2 at the end of the year.

27. Are there limitations on the number of credits that graduate assistants can take?

Graduate assistants must enroll for between eight and twelve credits. They must successfully complete all courses for which they are enrolled.

28. Can graduate assistants drop a class?

Graduate assistants may NOT get any incompletes or withdraw from their classes. They must also get a grade of B or better in each class to remain a graduate assistant.