

for informational purposes only – please refer to the University Bulletin for official program requirements.

1) **Application Requirements** – to ensure student’s preparedness to successfully complete the program of study.

a. A statement of purpose indicating the student’s personal goals and research interests. Because prospective students are matched with a faculty mentor through an interview process, competitive applications align with the research areas of School of Computing graduate faculty. Three letters of recommendation from persons able to speak

applicant’s ability to engage in advanced discovery and contribute new knowledge to the discipline.

c. Curriculum vita.

d. An official transcript from each college or university attended.

e. A baccalaureate or graduate degree in Computer Science, Information Systems, Information Technology or a closely related field. A graduate degree is not required for admission.

f. A minimum GPA of 3.3 (4.0 scale) for all completed post-secondary coursework or a 3.5 overall (4.0 scale) for a completed graduate program.

g. Official scores for the Graduate Records Examination (GRE) including the AW portion. Applicants whose highest degree is a graduate degree from an accredited institution of higher education will not be required to provide GRE scores since these applicants may qualify for Regular Admission based upon their previous graduate work.

h. For international students, an official TOEFL, IELTS, ITEP, or PET score. See the policy of the Graduate School: <https://bulletin.southalabama.edu/graduate-school/>

i. A completed application for admission to the Graduate School.

2) **Coursework** – Minimum of 72 semester hours

a. **Core Courses** – 18 semester hours of core courses are required. You should expect a lot of reading and writing of academic material in each of these courses. The purpose of the core courses is to provide you with a broad view of the relevant academic literature in computing and to prepare you to become an independent

- ii. With the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies and under the supervision of your Dissertation Committee Chair, directed study (CIS 694) hours may be taken to complete preliminary preparation for the dissertation study. These hours may be substituted for CIS 799.
- iii. Students should work out a schedule and estimated timeline with their Dissertation Committee Chair to appropriately schedule the number of hours of CIS 799 to take each semester.
- iv. The grading mode for CIS 799 is S/U (Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory). These hours are not counted in a student's cumulative GPA.

Guidelines for Grading in CIS 799:

In order to receive a "S" grade in CIS 799 the student is expected to:

- o Have monthly check-ins/meetings with their dissertation chair. These can be face-to-face, video conference, e-mail, or another approved format. Dissertation chairs, at their discretion, may set different intervals for these meetings.
- o Meet deadlines set by the dissertation chair or members of the dissertation committee.
- o Make satisfactory progress on their dissertation research, as determined by the dissertation chair.
- o The **minimum** amount of time a student is expected to spend on research and work related to their dissertation is 3 hours per week per credit hour registered. For example, a student registered for 3 credit hours of CIS 799 is expected to spend a minimum of 9 hours per week.

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- used to support students who are presenting their accepted papers at the conference.
- b. Students working on funded research grants may also have limited travel funding available as part of the grant budget.
3. Seek out opportunities to collaborate with faculty on research projects.
 4. Volunteer to help in a research lab.
 5. Identify their own areas of research and develop dissertation topic.
- h. **Academic Advisor** – Upon entry into the PhD program, the Director of Graduate Studies will serve as your initial academic advisor. As you discover a research interest and develop relationships with our researchers, you will identify a SoC researcher who can help guide your research and serve as the Chair of your Dissertation Committee. At that time, your Dissertation Committee Chair will take over as your primary academic advisor.
 - i. You must ask the researcher if they are willing to serve as your Dissertation Committee Chair. They can say no – it is a voluntary position.
- 3) **Dissertation Work** – A primary educational objective of the PhD program is for students to develop the ability to conduct advanced research and contribute new knowledge to the discipline. Your thesis or dissertation is a significant and time-consuming undertaking that must reflect a mastery of your field, contribute to the existing body of knowledge of your field and demonstrate the level of high quality expected by the Graduate School and USA. A dissertation can take several years to complete. You, as the independent researcher, with the support and direction of the SoC graduate faculty, are responsible for identifying your dissertation topic, Dissertation Committee and Committee Chair. Your Dissertation Committee Chair can assist you in identifying appropriate committee members.
- a. **Dissertation Committee** – Your dissertation committee must consist of a minimum of 4 members:
 - i. One-half of the committee must be members of the USA Graduate Faculty (members are listed here - <https://www.southalabama.edu/colleges/graduateschool/faculty.html> but consist of most of the tenured or tenure-track assistant, associate, or full professors).
 - ii. The Dissertation Committee Chair must be a full member of the USA Graduate Faculty.
 - iii. One committee member must be from outside the SoC.
 - iv.

process will be iterative and cyclical – be sure you allocate sufficient time in your schedule for the entire review process.

1. Chair Review - You will write portions or chapters of it at a time, submit it to your Committee Chair for review and feedback (this may take 1-2 weeks), make corrections, and submit again for additional review and feedback.
 - a. The chair is responsible for ensuring that the dissertation has been checked for plagiarism through TurnItIn.com, or another similar program.
2. Committee Review - Once the document has the approval of your Committee Chair, it will be sent to the entire committee for their review and feedback (this may take 1-2 weeks), make corrections,

1. Once your dissertation has been successfully defended, the members of your committee and the Director of Graduate Studies must sign your approved signature page. This may be done electronically.
 2. The finalized copy of dissertation must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies for final review and approval.
 3. The members of your committee and the Director of Graduate Studies must also sign your [Dissertation Submission form](#). This may be done electronically or in person.
 - a. The Director of Graduate Studies will not sign the submission form until the finalized copy of the dissertation has been submitted to them and approved.
 4. The student will electronically submit the signed signature page, the dissertation document (as a searchable pdf or word document), and the signed Dissertation Submission Form to the USA Graduate School. Scanned pdf's and paper copies will not be accepted. Be sure to be aware of the submission deadline dates as indicated on the [USA Graduate School](#) website.
- 4) **Individual Development Plan** – PhD students are required to create and maintain an **individual research development plan (IDP)**. The Individual Development Plan (IDP) is designed to help you break down your journey through the SoC PhD program into clear short- and long-term goals as well as steps towards achieving these goals.

A well-crafted IDP is both a plan that identifies your academic and career goals and a communication tool that allows you to have productive conversations with your advisors and mentors about your goals and what support, advice, and direction you will need in the upcoming year(s).

The IDP is intended to help you reflect and plan for the coming year. The IDP is not a contract, so don't worry about setting ambitious goals and feel free to revise your IDP as your goals change.

- a. Access the IDP site at <https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/>
- b. Learn more about the value of IDPs and how to build, update, and

- 5) **Graduation** – PhD students must apply for graduation for the term they submit their finalized and approved dissertation to the USA Graduate School. For specific information see the [Registrar's Website](#).
- a. Due to the cyclical review process and the graduate school submission deadlines, it may not be possible to know which semester you are going to graduate until after the posted graduation application deadline.
 - b. Many PhD students complete a [Late Graduation Application](#) to avoid having to apply for graduation multiple times, as the graduation fee is required to be paid every time you apply for graduation. This does incur a small late fee.
 - c. PhD students who participate in the USA Graduation ceremony will be hooded on stage by their Dissertation Committee Chair, or other committee member if the Chair is not available.