

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
CONCERNING THE PHD, MS, AND MA PROGRAMS
DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

1. What is the availability of teaching assistantships for AY 2017-2018?

We anticipate awarding 10 to 12 teaching assistantships for AY 2017-18. In AY 2016-17, the stipends were \$17,500 for students who have not passed the qualifying exam yet; \$18,000 for students who passed the qualifying exam but have not passed the comprehensive exam; \$18,500 for students who have passed the comprehensive exam. The department also provides 100% tuition abatement for TAs.

We also have limited summer support for TAs (between \$3,350 and \$4,400 depending on what course the TA teaches). First and second year students have the highest priority. In the last few years we have been able to provide summer support to all first and second year students who requested it, so their stipend for the year was in the \$ 20,850 - \$ 22,900 range. Most of the third, fourth, and fifth year students are supported in the summer by research grants, do internships, or find employment outside campus.

When comparing stipends, keep in mind that the cost of living in Columbia, SC is relatively low (housing is inexpensive).

2. Is there availability of assistantships for spring 2017?

No. All assistantships are allocated to students who start in the fall. Also, most graduate courses offered in the spring are the continuation of courses offered in the fall, so it is hard to have a reasonable program of studies for PhD students who start in the spring.

3. How do I apply to USC?

Through the Graduate School portal, see

<http://gradschool.sc.edu/prospective/bya.asp?page=b4>

and

<http://gradschool.sc.edu/prospective/apply.asp?page=apply>

The Graduate School will authenticate your transcripts and letters of recommendation, check whether you meet the general university requirements (GPA of 3.0 and certain minimum GRE scores), and will upload your materials in the application system. Please contact our Graduate School Coordinator Ms. Barbara Dingle bdingle@sc.edu if you have any questions concerning the initial part of the application process.

4. What are the deadlines to apply for AY 2017-2018?

The deadline of the graduate school is July 1, 2017. However, most of our assistantship offers are out in March, so to receive full consideration for assistantship, we need your application no later than January 31, 2017. This is not a hard deadline, we send assistantship offers until our class is complete.

We will start evaluating applications in January, and will start mailing out assistantship offers in late January. Most years our incoming class is complete or almost complete on April 15.

5. I received assistantship offer from USC. Can I visit the department?

Most definitely. We strongly encourage all US applicants to visit us - see the campus, meet faculty in areas of math they are interested in, talk to our graduate students, see Columbia, sit on classes, go to a seminar, explore ... We provide limited travel support for applicants who received assistantship offers from us.

6. Is GRE subject test required for admission?

No, it is optional. If you score above 600, include your test score in your application, it will strengthen it. On the other hand, a weak GRE Subject score (below 400) weakens your application considerably.

7. What are the TOEFL requirements?

The University requires an Internet based TOEFL score of 80 or better (or equivalent according to concordance tables) for admission. For teaching assistantship, our Department requires an Internet based TOEFL score of 100 or better. If you completed a degree from an institution of higher education in the US or Canada, the university waives the TOEFL requirement.

8. What are your minimum required GRE scores?

The Department has no minimum requirement. The majority of our entering PhD students have Verbal GRE in the range 150-165, Quantitative GRE in the range 155-165, V+Q GRE in the range 310-330, GRE Mathematics Subject in the range 580-760 (about one-half of the students reported their GRE Mathematics Subject score), and a GPA in the 3.7 - 3.9 range.

Note: If you are an excellent US student (GPA above 3.8, and have a strong math background), do not take the verbal GRE lightly. You may be nominated for the Presidential Fellowships for Doctoral and MFA Students, see

<http://app.gradschool.sc.edu/faaw/view.asp?fellowshipid=2>

and you will compete with applicants in other disciplines. Combined GRE score is very important. In the last four years ten applicants to our PhD program received Presidential Fellowship offers.

9. How important is having a strong math background? What courses should I have taken?

The strength of the applicant's math background is **the** most important factor when making admission decisions. Ideally, PhD applicants should have taken a variety of math courses (at least 5-6 higher level math courses), including two semesters of analysis (and two semesters of abstract algebra if you will be doing a PhD in traditional math), and passed those courses with good grades. If you used a very advanced book in your analysis or algebra book and got a good grade, by all means, include the title of the textbook(s) in your personal statement. *If you applied before the end of the fall 2016 semester, please e-mail me in January 2017 at graddir@math.sc.edu an updated transcript reflecting the courses you took in the fall.*

10. What are the areas of strength of your department?

The research groups in Applied Mathematics, Commutative Algebra and Algebraic Geometry, Functional Analysis, Discrete Mathematics, and Number Theory have national and international recognition. For more detailed information see:

<http://www.math.sc.edu/graduate/faculty-research/>

You can also check the seminars and colloquia at

http://www.math.sc.edu/seminar_colloquia/

We encourage you to e-mail the faculty in whose research you are interested.

11. How many Mathematics PhD degrees does your University award each year? What are the job placement statistics of your graduates?

USC awards about 5 or 7 Mathematics PhD degrees every year, on average. Typically about 3 of these graduates find teaching jobs in liberal arts schools and similar institutions of higher education, 1 or 2 find post-doc or tenure-track positions in research universities or research centers, and the rest find industry jobs.

12. Are there any research assistantships available?

Every year we have 4 to 6 students supported by research assistantships. Usually these are students in their third, fourth, or fifth year.

13. What are the teaching duties of teaching assistants?

The Math Department TAs teach one course a semester. Most first-year TAs teach Calculus recitations and labs. After their first year, most TAs teach a stand-alone course. Our graduates have shared that having teaching experience has been very beneficial for them to find a job.

14. What is the time line to graduate?

With two exception, in the past four years all graduate students who passed the comprehensive exam graduated in five years (and about one third of them in four). The expectation is that successful PhD students graduate in five years (or in four, depending on area of research, type of job - industry, government, liberal arts colleges). In rare cases (mostly for health or family reasons) we support students a sixth year.

15. How would you characterize the atmosphere in the department?

The atmosphere is very cooperative; students help one another, and so do faculty. We are open-minded, multicultural department.

16. Does USC require health insurance?

All graduate assistants are required to have health insurance. See

<http://gradschool.sc.edu/students/healthins.asp?page=todo&sub=hi>

and

<https://www.sa.sc.edu/shs/billing/insurance/>

for details.

17. How would you characterize living in Columbia, SC?

I find it great. Our campus is beautiful - lots of green space, nice architecture, and the campus is located in the middle of the city. Except in July and August, the climate is mild, Myrtle Beach, Charleston, and Blue Ridge mountains are not far from us. There are many State and National parks nearby.

In fact, we are ranked third among the best college towns in the USA by livability.com

<http://livability.com/top-10/college/10-best-college-towns/2016/sc/columbia>