



Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

May 2025

Dear Fall 2025 Graduate Student Class:

Congratulations on your acceptance into the Chemistry and Biochemistry Ph.D. program at the University of South Carolina (USC)! We are very excited you have chosen to join our department.

Upon arriving at the university this fall, you will start your education by participating in training/orientation to prepare you for teaching and research before classes start. The training will include legal and educational information on being a Graduate Teaching Assistant at USC, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) health and safety regulations, and information on the graduate program in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. Below are important arrival dates.

- International students taking the spoken microlesson English language test need to be here by Thursday, July 31, 2025 beginning at 10 am for group practice.
- All students need to attend the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry orientation on Wednesday, Aug. 6, 2025.
- Classes begin on Tuesday, August 19, 2025.

The class registration process is relatively straightforward. During orientation, we will provide information about the courses that we offer and recommendations on what courses you should register for. We will then help you register on August 6. However, your registration could be significantly delayed if you forget some essential steps **before** you arrive. Some of these steps will require you to log in to your Self Service Carolina account. The information for setting up this account was sent to you by the USC Graduate School and can also be found here: [Network Username and Email Setup](#)

Therefore, you must complete the following:

1. Set up your email account using the link above.
2. Register for [GTA/IA Orientation/Training](#). You have four parts to complete, Parts A, B, C, and D. Parts C and D you will do on your own asynchronously (on your own) **before the start of classes**. You will find information on where to complete these parts on the GTA/IA Orientation/Training link above. The training will be available after July 28. For Parts A and B, those will be In Person and Synchronously. We have held a space for you on August 7 for both Parts A and B, but you need to register yourself using your USC email/Username at this [link](#). **You need to register for Part B on August 7 at 9:30 am, and Part A on August 7 at 1 pm.** Please do this ASAP. You will still have to put down a second choice, but you should get the first choice. If you cannot register for August 7, please contact Dr. Wiskur or Ms. Merkel.
3. You must provide **immunization data** before you are able to register. If you have not had all the vaccinations, your family physician or local health department should be able to provide them, or you can receive shots from the USC Center for Health and Well-Being after August 1. You can schedule appointments here: [MyHealthSpace](#)

4. You must complete the **Citizenship Verification Form**. The state of South Carolina requires students attending a public university in the state to provide confirmation that they are a citizen or national of the US or an alien lawfully present in the United States. Information on completing the form and the link to the form can be found [here](#). Non-US citizens should contact International Student and Scholar Support (ISSS) at iss@sc.edu.
5. If the transcript you provided USC for your application was sent before you graduated, you must send an **official final transcript indicating that you completed your degree** to the Graduate School, USC, 1705 College St, Suite 552, Columbia, SC 29208. An official transcript from every institution where you have received college credit must also be sent. Transcripts can also be sent electronically. See this [link](#) for more information.
6. If your Graduate School admissions letter requests English language proficiency exams scores, please have the scores sent from the respective testing service that you used. Please look at this [link](#) for specifics on how to send the scores. Look at the section labeled “How do I submit English language proficiency exam scores?”.

The admittance email you received from the Graduate School states which requirements are still outstanding. They will send you a new email once all the required conditions are met. Please try to have all these steps completed by August 1, 2025, to ensure that you will be cleared to register for courses. If you graduate in May or this summer, you will have one semester to get an official transcript to the Graduate School, otherwise you will not be allowed to register for the Spring 2026 term.

During orientation, you will take two Qualifying Examinations. You will be allowed to choose two tests from the Analytical, Biochemistry, Inorganic, Organic, and Physical ACS examinations. These are undergraduate level tests. Passing two of these exams is the quickest way to qualify for our Ph.D. program. Since these tests are undergraduate level, your undergraduate textbooks and class notes in these areas will help you to prepare for these exams. If you do not qualify by passing two exams, you will need to make a grade of “B” or better in one core course in two different areas by the end of your second semester. Please do not stress over these exams. We encourage you to study and pass the exams, but there are no negative repercussions for not passing.

At the beginning of the semester, you will be required to pay some university fees. We wanted you to be aware of what these fees will be. This is not a bill, just an estimate, so do not pay anything now. Your bill this fall will reflect the accurate amount. There are payment plans, and more information will be given when you arrive.

<i>Fees Student is Responsible For:</i>	<i>Domestic Students</i>	<i>International Students</i>
Technology Fee (\$17/credit hr, 9 credits)	\$153	\$153
Matriculation Fee (one time charge)	\$80	\$80
Health Center Fee – Fall Semester	\$190	\$190
International Fee (per semester charge)	----	\$200
Total	\$423	\$623

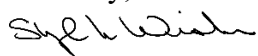
If you are an international student from a country whose first and primary language is not English, you will need to complete testing which evaluates your spoken and written English when you arrive here at USC. The most important portion is the spoken examination, also called the microlesson. The exam is in the form of a 5-7 minute presentation that you are required to give on a topic of your choice. We have included a sheet with more information on the examination on page four of this letter. This summer you are required to formulate a presentation on a very simple topic in your subject area. The simplest presentations often work best (lab safety, states of matter, etc.). You should prepare a presentation that even someone with no knowledge of chemistry could understand. We will contact you by email very soon to help you get started. **Beginning in June and**

continuing throughout the summer, you are required to practice this presentation with a USC linguistic tutor via virtual meetings. There will also be several practice sessions during the first-week orientation process (beginning July 31 at USC) for additional practice and feedback on your presentation. Please note that I-20 regulations allow you to travel to the U.S. up to 30 days before the start date indicated on your I-20. We also urge you to practice your English in your home country whenever possible to help you prepare. Note: If your **speaking subscore** on the iBT speaking test is 26 and above, 7.0 or higher on the IELTS speaking test, or a score of 130 on the Duolingo English test with subscores of 120 on Conversation and Production, then you do not need to participate in the spoken English practice or take the spoken English examination. This is the only way to exempt this requirement.

You will find all pertinent departmental **information for all entering first year graduate students** at this [link](#).

If your contact information (e-mail, phone, etc.) changes this summer, **please immediately** contact our graduate office via phone at 800-868-7588 or e-mail chemgrad@mailbox.sc.edu **to update your information**. This is likely to happen since e-mail accounts at undergraduate institutions are usually inactivated after a student graduates. Keep in touch over the summer! We look forward to meeting you this August!

Sincerely,



Sheryl Wiskur, PhD, Director of Graduate Studies



Jennifer Merkel, Graduate Student Program Coordinator

University of South Carolina
The Graduate School
International Teaching Assistant Assessment
coordinated by The Graduate School & English Programs for Internationals
Microlesson Assignment

Candidates are to prepare a "microlesson" to teach to their group. (For this activity, each candidate will be assigned to one of several groups, determined by discipline as much as possible.) This is a very important activity. Please prepare for it accordingly.

TOPIC:

The topic of your microlesson should be related to your field, something you would ordinarily teach to a group of undergraduates at or near the beginning of a course offered by your department. (One possibility could be to present an introduction to a concept or a review of a homework problem. You should choose to teach a small teaching point, something that could be addressed in 5 minutes. Remember that your targeted audience is undergraduates, so be sure to define any technical terms in your presentation.) Make certain that your topic is focused enough to be done within the time limit.

LENGTH: 5-7 minutes (Your presentation will be timed. This time length includes questions from your "class" and your responses to these questions. Your presentation should allow for at least 2 minutes of questions from your "class" and your answers. **Expect for your "class" to ask you questions both during and after your lesson, just as any American student would.**)

AUDIENCE:

Your audience will be composed of your International Teaching Assistant colleagues and instructors from the English Programs for Internationals (EPI). Your linguistic performance will be assessed by two EPI instructors who will also consider input from the assessment team.

You will be evaluated according to the following:

- pronunciation (50%)
- grammar (10%)
- vocabulary (10%)
- general fluency (10%)
- organization (10%)
- cross-linguistic awareness (5%)
- extra-linguistic communicative strategies (5%)

TEACHING MATERIALS:

You may use the whiteboard and markers, and/or handouts. **No power point technology is available.**

Your Graduate Director will be notified in writing about your results on the assessment. Please check with your Graduate Director about your assessment, which will be either “satisfactory” (85% – 100%) or “marginal” (75% – 84%) or “at risk” (74% and below). If your assessment is “at risk,” you will not be permitted to teach in a USC undergraduate setting.

Your lesson will be recorded and kept on file for one year for review.