

# CSE Qualifying Examination

for Ph.D. students starting in Fall 2023 or later

## Overview

The Ph.D. Qualifying Exam intends to determine if students are prepared for Ph.D. research activities. The exam consists of a written part and an oral part. Students are strongly encouraged to take the exam during their first year, but must attempt the Qualifying Exam no later than the third semester of the Ph.D. program.

The candidate student forms an examination committee consisting of at least 3 faculty members, all of whom must be either CSE or CSE affiliated graduate faculty members. This committee must include

- At least two graduate faculty members; these committee members may be invited by the student but must include the student's Ph.D. advisor(s); and
- At least one graduate faculty member from the annual qualifying exam committee (assigned by department).

## Timeline and exam mechanics:

- The student submits a request to the examination committee and, in consultation with their advisor, indicates a preferred research area for the exam;
- The advisory committee assigns the student 4 articles; three of these must be from CSrankings conferences.
  - One article is determined by the student;
  - The remaining three are determined by the committee.
  - The intention is that the articles cover a few parallel lines of research in a common area, though other approaches could be adopted by the committee. In principle, the papers could include one authored by the student.
- By a deadline set by the committee, but no sooner than 4 weeks after the papers have been assigned, the student submits a written report (6-pages excluding references, IEEE conference format) and gives a presentation;
- Presentations are public and expected to be 30 minutes long; they are followed by a private 30-minute Q&A session.
- The student's committee is responsible for determining and communicating the focus and scope of the written report and the presentation. Regardless, students are expected to demonstrate detailed mastery of the 4 selected papers.
- The advisory committee makes a final pass/fail decision for the Ph.D. Qualifying Examination based on this presentation, Q&A session, and written report.

The committee completes a report which is filed with the annual qualifying exam committee.

## Failed Qualifying Exam

Students who fail the Ph.D. Qualifying Exam can retake the exam once; the second exam must take place before the end of the student's fourth semester. If the Qualifying Exam is not passed after two attempts, students may not continue in the Ph.D. program; students may switch to the M.S. program.

## Administrative Authority

General authority over the exam, including management of unusual circumstances such as transfer students, is assigned to the Graduate C&C Committee.

Version history:

- This version of the policy was approved by the graduate faculty during a meeting on February 15, 2023.