

Graduate program in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science

PhD qualifying examination policy

In their second year, PhD students are expected to have mastered a general understanding of the area in which they plan to complete their dissertation. Students are encouraged to complete their qualifying examination in their fourth term. This examination should be taken at the latest in the fifth term. This examination can be taken at most twice.

Under the supervision of their supervisory committee, the student prepares a written report summarizing the literature in the candidates chosen research area. Students should discuss the expected content of the written report with their supervisory committee. Normally, the written report consists of an introductory/motivation section, a survey of relevant literature with a critical analysis, and an open questions/promising directions section. Normally, the written report consists of 20-60 pages. The supervisory committee will provide the students with samples of written reports. It is the responsibility of the student's supervisory committee to ensure that the report covers the chosen research area in sufficient depth and breadth.

In order to demonstrate the student's understanding of their chosen research area, the student gives an oral presentation based on their report to their supervisory committee. Other members of the graduate program are invited to attend this presentation. The student is examined orally by their supervisory committee. Other members of the graduate program can ask questions as well.

Upon completion of the oral examination the supervisory committee will determine the outcome:

1. Pass: candidate is permitted to continue on towards their dissertational proposal
2. Conditional pass: candidate must either
 - a. take additional courses at the next offering before proceeding towards their dissertation proposal or
 - b. complete additional readings before proceeding towards their dissertation proposal or
 - c. complete remediation, as determined by the supervisory committee, in addition to retake the qualifying examination within six months.
3. Fail: candidate has not passed the qualifying examination and is required to withdraw from the program.