

## **PHD.CSCI Regulation on the Qualifying Examination**

*(Approved by SoCS Council online poll that ended August 30, 2016)*

### **Qualifying Exam**

The PhD Qualifying Examination (QE) is intended to assess the candidate's knowledge and preparation to perform the research necessary for their studies. All candidates will be required to participate in an Oral Component related to their research Proposal. Candidates who were required to take one or more Learning Modules will have a Written Component based upon the material from the Modules.

*The QE should normally be completed by the end of the student's third registered semester and must be completed no later than semester five.*

The QE can only be held after the student has successfully completed the first seminar and any required coursework specified by the Advisory Committee. Arrangement for the QE should be made at least 4 weeks prior to the anticipated date of the QE oral presentation. The QE Request Form should include a recommendation from the Advisory Committee that the student's potential as a researcher and research performance to date are satisfactory.

The Chair is selected by the Graduate Progress Committee, approved by the Director. In addition to the Chair, the QE Committee will consist of four faculty members. Two of these must be from SoCS, and at least one from the application discipline.

Furthermore, two of the four must not be members of the Advisory Committee. The Co-Advisors are responsible for recommending the four members of the QE Committee and the date of QE oral presentation, for approval by the Graduate Progress Committee.

### **Qualifying Exam – Written Component**

In the case where a student has been required by the Advisory Committee to take one or more Learning Modules, the QE will include a Written Component. It consists of questions related specifically to the Learning Modules, and serves to ensure that the student has the necessary computational skills to successfully perform the proposed research.

For each required module, there will be one written test which will be a maximum of 2 hours. The QE Committee is responsible for setting the test(s) two weeks prior to the Oral Component. All tests must be completed one week before the Oral Component. The outcome of the Written Component can be one of the following: the student passes the component or the student fails the component. If the student fails, they may be required to retake one or more modules and the corresponding tests.

### **Qualifying Exam – Oral Component**

The Oral Component consists of a 30 minutes oral presentation by the candidate followed by questions (maximum 90 minutes) from the QE Committee. A Proposal must be submitted to the

QE Committee two weeks prior to the oral presentation. The Proposal must contain the following items:

- A survey of appropriate background literature.
- A description of the proposed research.
- A statement describing the merits and scholarly value of the proposed research.
- A schedule of the research program that the candidate will follow which includes a sequence of milestones and objectives.

It is encouraged that thought be given to risks associated with the Proposal, and considerations of backup plans and fallback positions be included to protect against worst-case scenarios. The Proposal should have a maximum of 50 pages, excluding references and appendices. It should be formatted with 12 point font, 1.5 spacing, and 1 inch margins on all sides.

Questions during the Oral Component will be based upon the Proposal. They are designed to test the candidate's general knowledge of their broader research area and to test their specific knowledge related to the Proposal. The oral presentation is announced publicly and is open to any attendees, but the questioning period is closed.

## **Qualifying Exam Outcomes**

Failure of either component of the QE will constitute failing the entire QE. The QE Committee will assign either pass or fail to the Oral Component, and assign a separate pass or fail to the Written Component if the component is required. If the candidate receives a passing grade for all required components, they will receive a rating of satisfactory for the QE.

If the candidate receives a failing grade on either required component, this will constitute a rating of unsatisfactory for the entire QE. In this case the QE Committee will determine if one or both of the Written and Oral components (which may require revision of the Proposal) must be retaken as per the rules of QE in the [Graduate Calendar](#).