EECS PhD Qualifying Exam

Evaluation

Four types of **evidence** will be used to evaluate the PhD student.

1. **Advisor recommendation** – the student's advisor will provide a frank but **confidential assessment** of the student's ability to conduct PhD-level scholarship.

2. **Academic performance** – the **KU** classroom performance of the student will be assessed.

3. **Research ability** – each student will submit written evidence of their research ability.

4. **Oral exam** – A committee of **3 faculty members** will interview the student, discussing and probing topics associated with items 2 and 3 above.

Evidence of research ability

Each student must **submit a statement** describing some aspect of their past or current research.

❖ This statement may be condensed from a **published** paper, but it must be written by the student.

❖ The topic of this statement need **not** be that of the student's PhD research.

❖ This statement could **just** be a description of a research problem and possible solution, with **limited** or preliminary results.

❖ This statement will be limited to **2 pages**.

The paper will provide some insight into the student's ability to **understand research**, and their ability to **communicate** effectively.

Student's exam committee

A committee of **3 faculty members** will conduct an **oral exam** of the PhD student.

❖ This committee must be **qualified** to discuss/evaluate the student's research and coursework.

❖ The committee will **not** include the student's advisor.

❖ The committee will receive the student's **research statement** and **course transcripts** prior to this oral interview.

❖ The committee will **not** have seen the advisor's assessment.

Two hours will be scheduled for this interview, but need not last that long.

Oral Exam

The committee may use the student's **research description** statement as a starting point for this interview.

❖ Likewise, material associated with their graduate **transcript** should be queried and discussed.

❖ This includes any **prerequisite** material to the courses, including **undergraduate** classes.

❖ Committee members might ask the student to solve a **specific problem**, or read some technical prose and provide **comments**.

❖ The goal is to discern the student's fundamental technical **understanding**, as opposed to their depth of knowledge.

It is not **how much** they know, it is **how well** they understand.

Grading

❖ Using the student's **KU transcript**, research **statement**, and the **oral exam**, the student's exam committee will make a pass/fail recommendation.

❖ The student's exam committee will **not** know the **advisor's** evaluation when making its decision.

❖ The **department's** qualifying exam committee will then review both the advisor's and the exam committee recommendations, and render a **grade** for the exam.

Grades

The student will receive one of **three grades**:

1. Pass

2. Fail, but recommend retake(feedback provided)

3. Fail, retake **not** recommended

The department's **Graduate Committee** will review all "failed" decisions.

Eligibility

❖ A student becomes eligible to take the qualifying exam after **both:**

    a) completing **24 hours** of graduate coursework, **and**

    b) being formally **accepted** into the PhD program.

❖ The student must **also** complete 6 hours of **KU** graduate coursework before taking the exam.

Schedule

❖ PhD students that complete 24 graduate hours during the **Fall** semester must **submit their application** (with research document) by **September 15** of the next academic year.

❖ PhD students that complete 24 graduate hours during the **Spring** semester must **submit their application** (with research document) by **February 15** of the next academic year.

Schedule

❖ **New** PhD students with 24 graduate hours who first enroll in the **Fall** semester must **submit their application** (with research document) by **September 15** of the next academic year.

❖ **New** PhD students with 24 graduate hours who first enroll in the Spring semester must **submit their application** (with research document) by **February 15** of the next academic year.

Schedule

❖ The oral exam must be held within **30 days** after the student's oral exam committee is **assigned**.

❖ This 30 day clock will run **only** during the **academic year**.

❖ In other words, there will be a **"pause"** in the 30 day clock during the **summer**.

❖ As a result, students should have **no expectation** that the oral exam be administered **during the summer**.

❖ However, the exam **can** be administered in the summer if **all** parties are amenable.

Retakes

- ❖ A student may **retake** the exam between **6 to 12 months** after receiving a failing grade.

- ❖ A **majority** (i.e., at least 2) of the student's exam committee should be **new**.

- ❖ A **new research paper** must be submitted.

- ❖ The grade will either be a pass or fail (**no** further retakes allowed).

Procedure

❖ A student will declare themselves ready to take the exam via a form; they will **submit** their research document **at this time**.

❖ The EECS **department** qualifying exam committee will then:

1. Solicit a recommendation from the student's **advisor**.

2. Assign the **student's exam committee** of 3 qualified faculty members.

3. Send the student's transcript and research document to the **committee members**.

❖ The **student** will be responsible for organizing a time and place (similar to other exams).

❖ The exam must be held **within one month**.