Ph.D. Qualifying Exam

As soon as possible after passing the preliminary exam, students should find a dissertation adviser. A dissertation topic should be chosen under the advisor’s direction and a dissertation committee formed. It is the responsibility of the student’s dissertation committee to administer the Ph.D. qualifying exam which consists of a written and an oral part.

Written part: The purpose of written part of the exam is to test the student’s comprehensive background in the chosen dissertation area. The student will prepare a comprehensive report consisting of background (theoretical and/or experimental), literature survey, definition of the problem, and description of the proposed research. The report must also address any other issues related to the student’s major and minor areas that the dissertation committee deems appropriate. The report will be presented to the student’s dissertation committee and serve as the written part of the prospectus exam. The report is meant to be a writing experience as well as a technical experience. In addition to the technical content the dissertation committee will evaluate the report for its organization, clarity, and conciseness. The ECE Graduate Committee will be notified of the outcome of the written part. If the dissertation committee does not recommend that the student proceed to the oral part, the Graduate Committee will require the student to rework the written part. The resubmission of the written part to the dissertation committee must be done within one semester of the first attempt. Under no circumstance, will a student be allowed to rework the written part of the exam more than once. Once a student passes the written part of the exam, the Graduate Committee shall notify the Graduate School of the arrangements for the oral part of the exam. The oral part of the qualifying exam shall be conducted within thirty calendar days after the written part of the exam.

Oral part: The purpose of the oral part of the exam is to orally test the student’s comprehensive background in the chosen dissertation area and to give the student the opportunity to defend the written part of the exam. The dissertation committee will conduct the oral exam. If the oral exam is failed, the dissertation committee may recommend that the student retake the oral exam a second time. The second attempt may not be held until at least one semester has elapsed, but must be held within one calendar year following the first attempt. No student will be permitted to take the oral exam more than twice.

Based upon the results of the written and oral parts of the qualifying exam, and the student’s past performance in the Ph.D. program, the dissertation committee will make a recommendation to the ECE Graduate Committee regarding advancement of the student to the rank of Ph.D. Candidate.