

School of Computing

PhD Qualifying Examination Policy

USA Graduate School Degree Requirement

- 1.5 “Each student will be evaluated to ensure achievement of program outcomes. This evaluation may be in the form of a comprehensive exam or other measurement tools. If unsatisfactory, after corrective action, the evaluation may be repeated once. The comprehensive exam committee must be comprised of at least 3 graduate faculty members. For details see specific programs.”

<http://www.southalabama.edu/bulletin/current/colleges-schools/graduate-school/index.html>

All School of Computing PhD students, after the completion of their six (6) core PhD courses, are required to pass a qualifying exam, prior to beginning their dissertation coursework (CIS 799). The policies for the PhD in Computing qualifying exam are specified below. Any exceptions to these policies require prior approval of the School of Computing Director of Graduate Programs.

School of Computing PhD in Computing students will comply with this requirement by achieving a PASSING SCORE on a Qualifying Examination covering the six (6) CORE courses in the PhD in Computing degree program, within the ten-year time limit for completing their degree requirements.

A Written Qualifying Examination, along with an Oral Defense of the Qualifying Exam, is required of all PhD in Computing Students. This exam will be scheduled through the student's dissertation committee chairperson as soon as appropriate after the completion of the program's six (6) core courses.

- The student's dissertation chair will be responsible for compiling the Qualifying Exam containing at least one question focused on the subject area of each of the six (6) core PhD courses.
 - The chair may consult with members of the qualifying exam committee, which is made up of the members of the students' dissertation committee, on the exam questions. If a student does not have a dissertation committee at the time of their qualifying exam, three additional members of the SoC Graduate Faculty may be used to make up the qualifying exam committee.
 - The chair may also consult with the graduate faculty members teaching the core courses on the exam questions.

- The student will have 30 days to compile appropriately researched written responses to these questions.
 - The response to each question should be between 4-6 pages (single spaced) in length. Please do not exceed 10 pages in length for any question.
 - All responses must be appropriately documented and cited.
 - The response will be submitted to the students' dissertation chair in the form of a single document, either Word or PDF.
 - Asking for external help on the Qualifying Exam questions from any source, personal, electronic, or otherwise, is violation of the Academic Conduct Policy, is considered cheating and is cause for dismissal from the PhD program.
 - Any use of generative AI, unless explicitly approved by the dissertation chair, is considered a violation of the Academic Conduct policy and is cause for dismissal from the program.

- Once the responses are returned to the dissertation chair, they will be evaluated by the dissertation chair.
 - The chair may consult with the members of the qualifying exam committee on the appropriateness of the responses.
 - The chair may also consult with the graduate faculty members teaching the core courses on the appropriateness of the responses.

- The student and dissertation chair will then schedule an Oral Defense of the Qualifying Exam meeting with the student and the qualifying exam committee. If a committee has not yet been formed, three members of the SoC Graduate Faculty will need to participate in this meeting.
 - The student or chair will provide all committee members with a copy of the exam questions and student responses.
 - The student will be responsible for orally answering questions related to the Qualifying Exam questions and his/her submitted responses.
 - The oral defense provides an opportunity for the students to demonstrate that they understand the material provided as answers to their written exam questions.
 - This meeting will follow the processes of an oral defense of prospectus / dissertation where the chair and committee members (or Graduate Faculty members) will vote on a passing or failing result of the oral defense.

- Students are required to receive a passing score on all questions of the PhD qualifying exam and the Oral Defense of the exam.

- A student who does not pass all questions of the exam or the Oral Defense, will be allowed, after completing any required corrective action, to retake the qualifying exam one additional time.
- The second attempt will contain only questions related to the subject(s) they did not pass on their first attempt, as well as an oral defense meeting related to these questions.
- A student who fails to pass all areas of the qualifying exam, including the oral defense of the qualifying exam, within the two (2) attempts will be dismissed from the program.
- A student who fails to pass the qualifying exam, including the oral defense of the qualifying exam, within a ten (10) year period will be dismissed from the program.