

Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering PhD Qualifying Exam Process

Version 1, Nov 2023

The qualifying exam is usually given after one year of graduate study beyond the M.S. degree. For students entering the PhD program without an M.S. Degree, the qualifying exam may be administered after two years of graduate study. However, the student must consult with their faculty advisor and/or the exam coordinator in the major area of study for the schedule and specific procedures. A letter and/or signature form verifying that a student passed the qualifying exam must be signed by the student's advisor/committee and returned to the Graduate Student Services Coordinator. [Qualifying Exam Completion Form](#)

	CEE Area					
	Construction Engineering Management	Environmental Science & Engineering	Geotechnical Engineering	Structural Engineering	Transportation Engineering	Water Resources Engineering
Lead Administrator	Professor Awad Hanna	Organized by faculty advisor	Organized by faculty advisor	Professor Jose Pincheira	Professor Sikai (Sky) Chen	Organized by faculty advisor
Timeframe	First semester after finishes MS, tries to group students during same week	Ad hoc, offered once per semester	Ad hoc, offered once per semester (most often in summer)	Ad hoc, students are encouraged to take exam no later than one year after being admitted to the program	Ad hoc, usually over the summer or fall	Ad hoc, but usually try to group students together each semester
Exam Format	Written and oral exam	Written and oral exam	Written exam, followed by oral exam, if necessary	Written and oral exam (oral 1-2 weeks after passing written)	Oral exam	Written and oral exam
Exam Content	Used to test undergraduate knowledge. Give 5 working days to complete written part, then oral presentation asking about written part, in front of 4 to 5 person committee	Exam topic chosen by faculty coordinating the exam, have 1 week to write an NSF-style proposal on a topic outside of their research focus (15 page, not timed); prepare a 30-45 min presentation in front of committee (present and get asked questions)	Choose 5 questions from a list of 12-13 questions. Closed book exam, given half day (3-6 hrs) to complete.	4-6 questions for written exam, complete in ~5 hours (open book); oral starts with questions from written exam	3 high level questions. Given 2 weeks to put together a response; 30-40 min presentation in front of committee followed by 20-30 min discussion.	Questions from three professors. Provided Monday morning and due Friday afternoon (open book). Can confer with faculty. Oral exam the following week as follow up to questions.