

Regulations for the Ph.D. Comprehensives Part I

Department of Computing and Software
McMaster University

CAS-2019-05

The PhD Comprehensive exam Part I aims to assess the PhD student's breadth of knowledge and readiness for research in Computer Science and Software engineering related fields.

An examination committee consisting of the supervisory committee and one chair appointed by the department, should be formed and select a topic area that is related to (same general area) but not the same as the student's thesis topic. Students are given 4 weeks to review the relevant literature of the given topic and provide a report of a maximum of 20 pages (not counting references, in a format like LIPICs). In their report, the student should also include 1 - 3 open problems and provide justification. An oral examination will be scheduled two weeks after the submission of the report. The oral examination includes an oral presentation by the student of no more than 20 minutes followed by questions from the committee. The examination should not exceed 2 hours. Outcome of the exam can be 1) passed, 2) passed but with some required course work (with optional minimum grade), 3) retake oral part only, within 2 months, 4) retake comprehensive, within 2 months. Students can at most retake the exam once and should complete the exam successfully within the first two years of the program.

The new format is applicable to students starting their PhD programs after January 2020. Students starting in Sept., 2019 can choose to follow either the old format or the new format. However, once the decision is made and documented, such students cannot switch to the other option.