Doctoral Preliminary and Final Examination Guidelines

The Preliminary Examination

The Preliminary Examination is essentially an oral examination on a proposed dissertation topic and the student’s academic preparation. The examination is taken upon completion of all required coursework for the PhD degree, or the semester in which the final unit of coursework is taken, but no sooner, and is administered by a committee which is appointed by the Graduate College in accordance with department requests. A student must be registered for the entire semester in which they take the Preliminary Examination.

The Dissertation Proposal

The written dissertation proposal shall be no more than 20 double spaced pages in length including introductory pages, figures, etc. It should include: statement of proposed research, its objectives and significance; a brief review of previous work on related research; and a short discussion of tentative methods of analysis and/or experimentation. There are no specific format requirements for the proposal. Individual advisor requirements override.

The Final Examination

The Final Examination consists of an oral defense of the dissertation and is administered by the doctoral committee. This examination is open to the public. The Graduate College does require that all doctoral candidates be registered for the entire academic term during which they take the final examination, regardless of when the thesis will be deposited or when the degree will be conferred. For this purpose only, "academic term" is defined as extending to and including the day before the first day of the following academic term. If enough thesis credits have been accumulated, registration for zero hours is acceptable.

The Dissertation

Detailed instructions for the preparation and completion of the dissertation are found online at the Graduate College Thesis Office website: http://www.grad.illinois.edu/thesis-dissertation. The dissertation must be reviewed by the Graduate Programs Coordinator prior to submission to the Graduate College. Please submit your dissertation to the Graduate Programs Coordinator as a pdf at least one week prior to the Graduate College deadline. Check with the Graduate Coordinator, 111 TB, for other forms that must accompany the thesis and procedures.

The Thesis/Dissertation Approval form is available online in PDF format at http://www.grad.illinois.edu/forms/tda.
The Examination Committee

This committee shall have a minimum of four faculty members from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with at least one member not from the home department of the candidate. Committee members from outside the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign are welcome, but would serve in addition to the four University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign committee members.

Three of the committee members must be listed as Graduate Faculty members and two must be tenured. The committee should include faculty members from more than one area of specialization and at least two from the ISE Department. The Chair must be a member of the Graduate Faculty and may also be the Director of Dissertation Research. The Chair is responsible for convening the committee, conducting the examination, and submitting the Preliminary/Final Exam Result form to the department in which the student is enrolled.

A Contingent Chair, if designated, must be a member of the Graduate Faculty. The Contingent Chair serves if the original chair is unable to serve for any reason. The Committee Chair, defending student, and at least one additional voting member of the committee must be physically present for the entire duration of the examination. If the committee has more than one chair, all chairs must be physically present; in these cases, no additional voting member is required to be physically present.

The Director of Dissertation Research is responsible for guiding/advising the student in their thesis research as part of an ongoing research project. He/she may also discuss a tentative course of study or recommend a sequence of courses the student can take reflecting the interest of the student.

A Departmental Affiliate cannot serve as a chair or a contingent chair of a preliminary or final examination. Only faculty members of the Industrial and Enterprise Systems Engineering Department may serve in that capacity.

If a proposed voting member is not on the Graduate Faculty, a letter of justification from the Committee Chair and a CV from the proposed member needs to accompany the Request for Appointment of Doctoral Examination Committee. This justification letter should include information about the proposed member’s expertise in the area of research and association to the candidate. Non-voting members, such as an external reader, a member of the faculty who is off campus, or others who can make a significant contribution to the research, may be appointed. A letter of justification is not needed for a non-voting member.

Both voting and non-voting committee members may sign the Thesis/Dissertation Approval form that becomes a part of the dissertation document. Only the voting members of the dissertation committee sign the Preliminary/Final Exam Result Form.

If, for some reason, your examination committee has to be changed (committee member dropped or added, etc.), please inform the Graduate Programs Office immediately. A new Examination Committee Membership form must be submitted to the Graduate College before the exam takes place.
Scheduling and Timing
Of the Preliminary and Final Examinations

1. At least three (3) weeks prior to the proposed PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION date, the candidate must provide the Graduate Programs Coordinator with the Request for Appointment of Doctoral Examination Committee (ise.illinois.edu/graduate/ise-graduate-forms).

2. At least one (1) week prior to the proposed PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION date, the candidate must provide the Graduate Programs Coordinator with the dissertation proposal. *(To arrange a conference room for the PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION, see the Main Office 117 TB.)*

3. At least three (3) weeks prior to the proposed FINAL EXAMINATION date, the candidate must provide the Graduate Programs Coordinator with the Request for Appointment of Doctoral Examination Committee (ise.illinois.edu/graduate/ise-graduate-forms).

4. At least two (2) weeks prior to the FINAL EXAMINATION date, the candidate must submit his/her dissertation to the committee. *(To arrange a room for the FINAL EXAMINATION, see the Main Office 117 TB.)*

*THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL AND ENTERPRISE SYSTEMS ENGINEERING REQUIRES A MINIMUM OF SIX MONTHS BETWEEN THE PRELIMINARY AND FINAL EXAMINATIONS*

Following the Examinations

After completion of the examination, the Preliminary/Final Exam Result form, must be signed by each committee member and returned to the Graduate Programs Coordinator, 111 TB, by the advisor, for processing.

To obtain the department head's signature on the Thesis/Dissertation Approval form, please submit the form to the Graduate Programs Coordinator in 111 TB. The form will be electronically submitted by the Graduate Programs Coordinator.