Hello Katie,

Attached is an informational item from the Department of Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) in the College of Engineering. CSE is requesting to revise the policy around their Qualifying Exam in their Ph.D. program. The Graduate School reviewed this request and raised no concerns. Will you please add this to an upcoming CAA meeting agenda?

Best,

Graduate School Curriculum Services

The Ohio State University
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Curriculum Services
The Ohio State University
Graduate School
University Hall
230 North Oval Mall, Columbus, OH 43210
Grad-schoolcurriculum@osu.edu
614-688-0230 Office
To: The Graduate School and the Office of Academic Affairs  
Cc: Dr. Anthony, Anika, Grad School Associate Dean of Academic Affairs,  
    Ms. Quinzon-Bonello, Rosario, COE Assistant Dean for Curriculum and  
    Assessment  

Re: The New Ph.D. Qualifying Process Policy at Computer Science and Engineering  

May 2nd, 2022  

Dear Graduate School and Office of Academic Affairs,  

The Department of Computer Science and Engineering is filing an informational  
letter about our new Ph.D. Qualifying Process that have been recently approved by  
the graduate studies committee and the entire faculty group in the Department. This  
new policy will be effective starting from Autumn Semester of 2022. The main  
motivation is to broaden the set of courses that the students can take to be competent  
and knowledgeable on fundamental principles of computer science and engineering.  

The main changes in the new policy include (1) removing the written exam of three  
core courses; (2) requiring an average GPA of 3.3 or above of four core courses from  
the extended categories of CSE courses, which are mostly aligned with the  
major/minor courses required by the Candidacy Exam; and (3) asking the students to  
file a report on the courses they have taken and their efforts in identifying research  
advisors and in conducting research, by the end of their first year.  

For more detailed information about the policies, please refer to the Exhibit A (pages  
2-4) for the new policy of the Ph.D. Qualifying Process, and the Exhibit B (page 5)  
for our current policy of the Ph.D. Qualifying Process.  

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at qin.34@osu.edu.  

Sincerely,  

Feng Qin  
Associate Professor  
Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee  
Department of Computer Science and Engineering  
The Ohio State University
Exhibit A: New Policy of the Ph.D. Qualifying Process at CSE (Will be effective in Autumn, 2022)

Overall Requirements
The CSE Ph.D. Qualifying Process consists of two components: one is coursework, and the other is research. To pass the Qualifying Process, a student needs to demonstrate satisfactory performance on both components: (1) Be competent and knowledgeable on fundamental principles of computer science and engineering, and (2) show promise for conducting original research in the areas of computer science and engineering.

For the coursework component, a student needs to achieve the average GPA of 3.3 or above on four CSE courses that include a required Algorithms course (CSE 6331) and three other courses chosen by the student in consultation with the designated faculty advisor. The three courses can be chosen from the seven categories listed below with at most one course from a single category. For the research component, a student is required to work with their faculty advisor and demonstrate satisfactory research progress.

Course Categories
The seven categories of CSE courses include:
(1) Artificial Intelligence and Data Mining (CSE 6521, CSE 5523, CSE 5526, CSE 5243, CSE 5245)
(2) Graphics and Visualization (CSE 5542, CSE 5543, CSE 5544, CSE 5545, CSE 5546)
(3) Computer Networking (CSE 5462, CSE 5463)
(4) Security and Privacy (CSE 5471, CSE 5473, CSE 5474)
(5) Computer Systems (CSE 6431, CSE 6421, CSE 6333, CSE 5242, CSE 5441)
(6) Software Engineering and Programming Languages (CSE 6341, CSE 5343)
(7) Computer Theory (CSE 6321, CSE 6332, CSE 5351)

Procedures and Timeline
A Qualifying Process has two checkpoints: the first is by the end of Year 1 and the second is by the end of Year 2. In the first checkpoint, a student reports the grades of the Qualifying courses that have been taken. The student will comment on their progress towards identifying a research advisor and making research progress.

Early in the program, a student should identify research advisor(s) for the Ph.D. study. This may be the same as the initial assigned academic advisor, or a different faculty member. The research advisor must be a member of the graduate faculty with “P” advising status in CSE. A student should declare the research advisor, even if she or he is the same as the initial academic advisor, by filing a “Change of Advisor Form” available in 395 Dreese. The research advisor will provide academic and research advice once the change of advisor form is submitted.

In the second checkpoint, a student reports the grades of the Qualifying courses that have been taken. The student’s faculty advisor will be contacted subsequently to provide input on the student’s research progress. Based on the student’s course work performance and the advisor’s research assessment, the Grad Studies Committee will notify the student of the
Qualifying Process result at the second checkpoint. Both checkpoint forms can be found at the CSE Portal.

If a student does not achieve the GPA requirement with the first four courses, a student may (a) retake the same course (required for Algorithms), (b) take a different course in the same course category, or (c) take a course in another course category. This should be done in consultation with the faculty advisor. Students may file the second checkpoint form once they have achieved satisfactory performance on both coursework and research components, which could be earlier than the end of Year 2. Students should consult with their research advisor before submitting the second checkpoint form.

To maintain the status of “Good Standing” in CSE, a Ph.D. student is expected to pass the Qualifying Process by the end of Year 2. Otherwise, a student who is not in good standing will not have a guaranteed appointment as a graduate teaching associate. A student who continues to not return to good standing in a timely way (e.g., by the end of the third year) may be dismissed from the Ph.D. program in Computer Science and Engineering after a conversation among the student, advisor, and graduate studies committee.

**Implementation**

This new Ph.D. Qualifying Process will be effective starting from Autumn 2022. Specifically, a student who is enrolled in the Ph.D. program of CSE in Autumn 2022 or after can only take this new Ph.D. Qualifying Process. For a smooth transition, a student who was enrolled prior to Autumn 2022 may choose to take this new Qualifying Process or the old Qualifying Exam.

**Definitions and Criteria**

1. Faculty advisor: A student’s initial academic advisor assigned by the Department or the research advisor chosen by the student.
2. The criteria of satisfactory research performance: The most common way of satisfying this requirement is for the student to be a leading or significant contributor on a paper published, accepted, submitted, or in preparation to submit to a venue in Computer Science. Faculty advisors may provide evidence that the student has satisfied this requirement in other ways, such as making a significant contribution in research artifacts such as released software packages.
3. The end of Year x: Two weeks after the end of 2*x non-summer terms since a student’s initial enrollment in the Ph.D. program of Computer Science and Engineering at Ohio State University.
4. Good Standing in CSE: In addition to the requirements from the Grad School, a Ph.D. student in CSE is required to pass the Qualifying Process by the end of Year 2. Students must also demonstrate English proficiency through one of the approved mechanisms listed on the “English as a Second Language” website by the end of Year 1.

**Additional Notes**
1. While there is no accelerated option in the new policy of the PhD Qualifying Process, the accelerated option is still applicable to a student who was enrolled prior to Autumn 2022 if the student chooses to take the Qualifying Exam in the old policy.

2. A student cannot transfer the credits of a Qualifying course from their prior institutes. If a student took a Qualifying course in the undergraduate program at Ohio State, the course can be counted towards the requirement of the Qualifying Process. However, the course credits cannot be counted towards their Ph.D. degree requirement except for the situations (such as the BS/MS program) allowed by the Graduate School.
**Exhibit B: Existing Policy of the Ph.D. Qualifying Process at CSE**

The Qualifying Examination is administered Autumn and Spring semesters. Satisfactory performance on this examination, or qualification through the acceleration option listed below, is necessary for admission to the first stage of study towards the Doctoral degree.

The Qualifying Examination is based on the material covered in the graduate core areas. Specifically, students need to take the exam in algorithms (CSE 6331), either computability and unsolvability (CSE 6321) or programming languages (CSE 6341), and either operating systems (CSE 6431) or computer architecture (CSE 6421). Students who have previously studied this material are not required to take the corresponding core courses(s) in the CSE Department; they need only demonstrate their competence in these areas by satisfactory performance on the Qualifying Examination.

At the time students take the examination, they must have been admitted to the CSE Department and not be on probation. A student whose enrollment eligibility has been deactivated by the Graduate School may, if subsequently reactivated, be required to re-take the Qualifying Examination.

A student who fails the qualifying examination for the first time must retake the examination the next semester that it is offered. Students must petition the Graduate Studies Committee to retake the examination in any other semester or to retake the examination more than once.

**Acceleration Option for Qualifying Exams:** Students who complete the three graduate core classes (algorithms, either computability and unsolvability or programming languages, and either operating systems or computer architecture) with a GPA of 3.6 or better will be automatically granted a "conditional pass" in the qualifying examination. These students will need to demonstrate substantial research progress during their second year spring evaluation to remove the condition. One clear mechanism for demonstrating such progress is to have an accepted or submitted paper as a significant contributor, working on a project with their advisor.

**Fill out the online form in the CSE Portal to apply for the Accelerate option. Advisor must approve it online.**