

**Implementation Guidelines for the Ph.D. Candidacy Examination (CE) Computer and Information Engineering (CIE)**  
**School of Science and Engineering (SSE)**  
**The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen (CUHK(SZ))**

According to the Principles of the Ph.D. Candidacy Examination approved by the Graduate Panel, the following guidelines are proposed for implementation of the CE.

The candidacy examination contains a written component of one or more papers, and an oral examination.

### **1. The Written Examination**

The Written Examination should be taken before the Oral Examination, and is scheduled twice a year:

- The first examination is held in March.
- The second examination is held in August.

### **2. Evaluation of Written Examination**

The written examination covers the basic disciplinary knowledge expected of a PhD student. The subject coverage is not specific to each student, but is the same for a broad subject category within each discipline. The written examination will be managed by an Examination Committee set up by the Graduate Panel. This Committee will be responsible for the setting of papers, marking, and decision on Pass/Fail. The supervisor of any particular student shall not be involved in the decision on Pass/Fail. Each student is allowed only two attempts.

2.1 The student should choose 2 courses from the course list released before the CE examination. The passing mark for each designated area is 5 and the passing mark for the Written Examination is 13 with a full mark of 20 (the full mark is 10 for each course).

2.2 However, the Graduate Panel may specify that certain papers can be replaced by passing relevant courses at specified grades. The student can apply for the exemption subject to fulfill any of the following condition.

2.2.1 If the student gets grade B+ or above in any two lecture courses, the written examination can be exempted.

2.2.2 If the student gets grade B+ or above in only one lecture course, he/she needs to select one course from the course list mentioned in 2.1. The passing mark for the course is 6 out of 10.

### **3. The Oral Examination**

The oral examination should be arranged two months before the student's pre-candidacy

due date. The oral examination should normally be taken within six months of passing the written examination, but in any case, as one part of the candidacy examination, **MUST NOT** exceed the maximum period of pre-candidacy, which is 24 months of full-time study for students entering the programme with a research master's degree, and 36 months for those without, as stated in clause 5.5 of the Code of Practice.

The maximum period **CANNOT** be exceeded unless extraordinary circumstances occurred, e.g., medical or family emergencies. In such cases, the maximum period can be further prolonged, but an approval must be obtained from Board of Graduate Studies (BGS) **WITHIN** the pre-candidacy period. If otherwise, the student will receive a Fail for the Oral Examination. The Oral Examination can only be taken once.

The student needs to first prepare a Thesis Proposal and then give a presentation on the Thesis Proposal, the Thesis Proposal is required to be written in at least 3,000 words in English (as dictated by the nature and requirement of the programme), with reference not included, and monitored by Graduate Panel, and may additionally include questions on general topics similar to the written examination but conducted in an oral format. The Thesis Proposal should contain at least the purpose of the Thesis and a survey of the related research field, and can also contain other contents, such as the research plan and possible research outcome.

The Oral Examination is examined by an Examination Committee which should be nominated by the student's supervisor(s) and approved by the Graduate Panel. The Examination Committee must consist of the supervisor and at least 2 faculty members. The supervisor cannot be the Chair of the Examination Committee and the 2 faculty members are suggested to be members of the Thesis Defense Committee. All members of the oral examination committee must hold the rank of Assistant Professor (AP) or higher. The chair of the committee is responsible for organizing the CE oral exam, coordinating the schedule, collecting evaluation forms, and rescheduling exams if necessary.

The Oral Examination consists of the following 4 parts:

- (1) A 30-minute presentation (with a minimum of 20 minutes)
- (2) A 10-minute question/answer session regarding the presentation
- (3) A 10-minute question/answer session regarding the thesis proposal
- (4) A 10-minute close-door panel discussion to make a recommendation

The first 3 parts of the oral examination are open to everyone. The first 2 parts can be merged and carried out in a flexible manner. The third part is mandatory: the panel members should check the quality of thesis proposal carefully and provide comments and suggestions to improve.

#### **4. Evaluation of Oral Examination**

For the Oral Examination, the Examination Committee should evaluate the student's performance based on the oral presentation, the written thesis proposal, and the performance in the question/answer session. After discussions, the Examination Committee makes a recommendation for the student: Pass (no revisions required or minor revisions within two weeks), Conditional Pass (requires resubmission of the proposal and retaking the oral exam within one month, depending on the committee's decision), transfer to MPhil, or Fail (Discontinue).

If the student failed the Oral Examination, the student will not be allowed to take a second attempt.

## **5. Declaration to Take CE and Withdrawal from CE**

5.1 The student must declare his/her intention to take the CE 30 days before the CE written exams (After received the official notification from the School).

5.2 The student who is qualified to exempt the written exam or exempt one lecture course, s/he must submit the application 30 days before the CE written exams (After received the official notification from the School).

5.3 For the Written Examination, the student must fill in the "CIE Candidacy Examination-Written Examination Application Form". In the form:

- The student must declare 1/2 designated areas choosing from the given course list (in the case of no course can be exempted).
- The student must declare the exempted course codes and attach the transcripts (in the case of any courses can be exempted)
- The form has to be signed by the student's supervisor(s).

5.4 For the Oral Examination, the student must fill in the "Candidacy Examination-Oral Examination Application Form", and submit a Thesis Proposal two weeks before the Oral Examination. Otherwise, the student will be automatically withdrawn from the Oral Examination. Once the Thesis Proposal is submitted, the student CANNOT withdraw from the Oral Examination unless extraordinary circumstances occurred that prevent them from taking the examination, e.g., medical or family emergencies. In such cases, an approval must be obtained from the Chair of the Graduate Panel. Otherwise, the student will receive a Fail grade for the Oral Examination.

5.5 If the student passes both the Written Examination and the Oral Examination, then the Examination Committee makes a recommendation for the student to pass the CE.

\*The Graduate Panel of the SSE holds the final right to interpret the policies in this document.

THE END

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