Getting Ready for Generals

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**What to do after your quals…**

General information about CEE Ph.D. – <https://www.ce.washington.edu/current/phd>

**Set up your supervisory committee**

It’s at least 3 people, 1 who is your advisor, who will most likely eventually become your reading committee. Members can include those who may not be faculty, such as a consultant or agency staff, but at least two must be faculty. In addition to those 3, there must also be a Graduate School Representative (GSR) who is a faculty member who has nothing to do with you, your research, your adviser, or your department. They are there to ensure the process is fair and by-the-book. Generally you find someone who might be interested in your work but isn’t related to it and cold-call them. Talk with your advisor about who you would like and then provide the names to CEE Graduate Program Advisor (Melissa Pritchard - [chaelan@uw.edu](mailto:chaelan@uw.edu)) about 4 months in advance of the exam.

**What the exam is**

You will give a roughly 40 minute public presentation with about 20 minutes for public questions at the end. This presentation should introduce the topic of your dissertation, lay out your anticipated chapters with appropriate methods sections and hypothesis, and then lay out your plans for getting from where you are now to finishing your dissertation. Once anyone not on your committee has finished asking questions they will be asked to leave the room and the committee will grill you in private for another hour before letting you go drink beer. Then a few weeks later you’ll find out you got a pay raise, and drink more beer. Don’t be shocked if your committee passes you but also asks for a supplemental report to be turned in a few weeks/months later. This happens sometimes if, for example, they think you are doing strong research but have not conducted enough of a literature search to put your results in context. The General Exam will change your status formally from “PhD Student” to “PhD Candidate”.

**Getting ready**

* Obtain agreement from your advisor that you are ready and want to take the exam.
* Check that you have completed coursework requirements: 18 credits at the 500 level, 18 credits numerically graded from CEE at the 400 or 500 level (these can overlap), and a total of at least 60 credits. Details on things like using Masters degrees can be found on the [PhD Procedures form](http://pergammon.ce.washington.edu/students/PhD_Procedures.pdf)
* You must be enrolled the quarter you take the exam
* Survey your committee members for possible times to schedule your exam data/time, such as <http://whenisgood.net/>.
* The only member that has to be present is your GSR, others including your advisor can remote in; however, ensure that you won’t lose connection. For more about video conferencing: <https://www.ce.washington.edu/current/phd/milestones/video>
* When date/time confirmed, schedule a general exam via [MyGrad – Student View](http://grad.uw.edu/for-students-and-post-docs/mygrad-program/).
* Locate a room to present in. Make sure it has the chairs and audio-visual setup you need. For room EEB 303: use room event request that you can make yourself at: <https://www2.ee.washington.edu/operations/calendars/index.html>
* Provide a copy of your dissertation proposal to your full committee **2 week prior** to the exam date.
* Provide CEE Graduate Program Advisor an abstract announcement of your dissertation proposal **1 to 2 weeks before** your exam, including the date/time/room, Chair of your committee (advisor), dissertation title, and abstract.
* Test run your presentation in the room you have reserved and with a small audience if possible.

**Preparing your dissertation proposal document**

* Decide what you want the title of your dissertation proposal to be, get buyoff from advisor.
* This proposal should include: a thorough literature review; an introduction, methods section, and expected results for each chapter; a publication plan; and a timeline from your general exam to your dissertation defense.
  + If any of your chapters are already published, you might be able to use the paper itself as that chapter of your dissertation proposal. Talk to your adviser about what he or she would like.
* These proposal documents are generally 30-40 pages long. Start working on this well in advance.
* Think about your acknowledgements, including funding agencies.
* Set up a table of contents (use heading styles in Word)

**Taking the Exam**

* Think about what you want to do afterwards for a celebration and have it pre-planned.
* Eat something beforehand, but not too much and have some water (not cold) during your presentation.
* Bring a copy of your dissertation proposal for use during the discussion after your presentation.
* Stand to the left of your presentation…so audience ‘reads’ the presentation from left (you) to right (slide) like a book.
* Try not to read your slides and have a pointer to guide audience through your slides.
* Have joke ready in case you have technical difficulties.
* Have someone take notes on the questions that come up at end, so you can follow-up if necessary (you’ll forget them).
* Put extra slides of figures you might want to use during Q&A session at the end.
* Takes note on what is discussed during the ‘closed-door’ session as you may have follow-up work to do.

NOW GO CELEBRATE!