

RESEARCH PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION

Every Ph.D. student is required to take the Research Proficiency Exam (RPE) by the end of their second year at PSU. This will satisfy the comprehensive exam requirement, which measures a Ph.D. student's knowledge within their domain of research.

- Years are counted from the term in which the student enters the Ph.D. program.
- Extensions to the two-year period may be granted by a Ph.D. student's advisory committee in consultation with the CS director of graduate studies.
- Part-time students may routinely obtain an extension to three years. Note, the university limit is 5 years if entering with a MS degree and 7 years otherwise.
- Students must be registered for a minimum of 1 graduate credit in each term they are taking or working on the RPE.

The RPE exam consists of a written research paper and an oral presentation:

- With the approval of the CS director of graduate studies, a Ph.D. student is assigned to a 3-person committee created by the student's faculty advisor.
- The committee members must be knowledgeable in the research area. If appropriate, one member of the committee may be a faculty member from a different department or institution.
- The Ph.D. student conducts research on a problem and writes a paper that is in a form appropriate for publication at a conference or workshop in that research area. Standard formatting can be used as appropriate for that area.
- The student schedules the RPE presentation with the RPE committee.
- Presentations can take place at any time during the academic year, and do not need to be coordinated with each other.
- The presentation is open to all and the paper must be circulated to the faculty a week before the presentation.
- The presentation is 45 minutes for the talk followed by 15 minutes for questions. The format is that of a typical technical talk that first motivates the problem, then describes related work, followed by the research contributions.

The RPE committee decides on a Pass/Fail/Retake:

- A pass needs to be agreed upon unanimously by the RPE committee.
- In case of a retake, the student needs to address the committee's feedback and retake the exam within six months.
- The exam can only be taken twice.

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- [RPE Checklist](#) - To be filled out at the time of applying to take the RPE.
- [RPE Result Report](#) - Used by an RPE committee to report the result of the exam.

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