Mechanical Engineering Department  
PhD Qualifying Exam Process – Effective Fall 2015

Ph.D. Qualifying Exam: Students enrolled in the Mechanical Engineering Ph.D. program will be required to pass a Qualifying Exam. The Ph.D. qualifying exam will be administered at a specific date during every semester by each research division independently. Each research division will appoint a Qualifying Exam chair, who oversees the process and ensures that the exam is administered fairly. Students must take the exam by no later than the end of their third semester in the Mechanical Engineering Ph.D. program. If the student fails the exam on their first attempt, they must retake the exam in the following semester with a maximum of two attempts to pass. One-semester extensions may be granted upon request to students who are enrolled as part-time or with non-ME backgrounds.

The purpose of the Qualifying Exam is to assess some of the attributes expected of a successful Ph.D. student, including:

- to determine the student's ability to review, synthesize and apply fundamental concepts;
- to determine the creative and technical potential of the student to solve open-ended and challenging problems;
- to determine the student's technical communication skills.

A written exam not to exceed 4.5 hours will be administered which will be divided into no more than five topical areas related to the division, with topics announced in advance of the exam. The students will choose three topical areas to answer. Research divisions are encouraged to choose topical areas that relate to foundational undergraduate material linked to material in the core graduate courses required by that research division. Upon completion of the written exam, students will choose one paper out of a list of papers established by the division faculty. Students will be given two weeks to write a two-page critical review of the paper which discusses possible extensions of the research.

Students, with a satisfactory performance on the written exam, will participate in an oral exam not to exceed two hours. The oral exam will be conducted by qualifying exam committee and student’s advisor. The division will specify the format of the exam in advance of the exam.

Exam results of Pass, Conditional Pass or Fail will be provided to the student in a timely manner by the exam committee. A Conditional Pass will require the student to take a remedial plan.