

RIT Center for Imaging Science
Ph.D. Written Qualifying and Candidacy Exam Process

March 30, 2006

(see accompanying "exam flow chart")

Background information:

- Students normally admitted into either the MS or PhD programs carry similar core course loads during the first year. This facilitates transitions between programs, in either direction.
- Students in the PhD program are allowed to continue after passing the qualifying exam. Students admitted into the PhD program would be changed into the MS program after failing a maximum of two qualifying-exam attempts.
- Students in the MS program may be "promoted" into the PhD program if they take and pass the qualifying exam.
- Returning MS graduates desiring a Ph.D. could take written qualifying exam prior to matriculation.
- Reading list based on core course texts and/or supplementary materials and sample exam questions will be provided on a timely basis (ideally, in the Fall quarter) to those students intending to take the written qualifying exam.

Written Qualifying Exam:

- Written Qualifying Exam covers material from year 1 core courses and stresses "systems" approach
 - for most students, first attempt occurs after core courses are taken in year 1
 - questions (mostly) directed at probing student's ability to integrate core course material
- Written Exam composition and administration:
 - Held approximately June 15 each year
 - Two 3-hour sessions in a single day
 - Students answer 6 of 8 essay-length questions in each session, i.e., each question should take about 30 minutes to answer
- Written Exam to be compiled, administered, and graded by an Exam Committee
 - Committee shall consist of 6 faculty (3 core course instructors, 3 "outside" members of core CIS faculty) plus Graduate Coordinator (who therefore acts as a tie-breaker)
 - Membership of the Exam Committee shall be rotating, with members nominated by Coordinator and approved by faculty
 - All CIS graduate faculty members are strongly encouraged (urged) to submit questions, which the Exam Committee shall revise/edit and include as the Committee deems appropriate
- Written Exam grading and decision-making:
 - Each question shall be graded by two faculty members, the question originator and one committee member, using a consistent numerical grade scale (e.g., 0-10)
 - Exam Committee shall compile results and make pass-fail recommendation based on each student's performance on the exam
 - Pass-fail recommendations shall be submitted to CIS Director, along with appropriate supporting documentation
 - CIS Director finalizes exam pass/fail results, presents results to full faculty, and then communicates pass/fail decisions to students (by a nominal deadline of June 30)
- Ramifications:
 - Upon passing, student may continue in the Ph.D. program (M.S. students transferred into Ph.D. program) and receives first stipend increment; student and advisor proceed to develop PhD dissertation proposal and constitute PhD dissertation research committee
 - If student fails, student has two options:

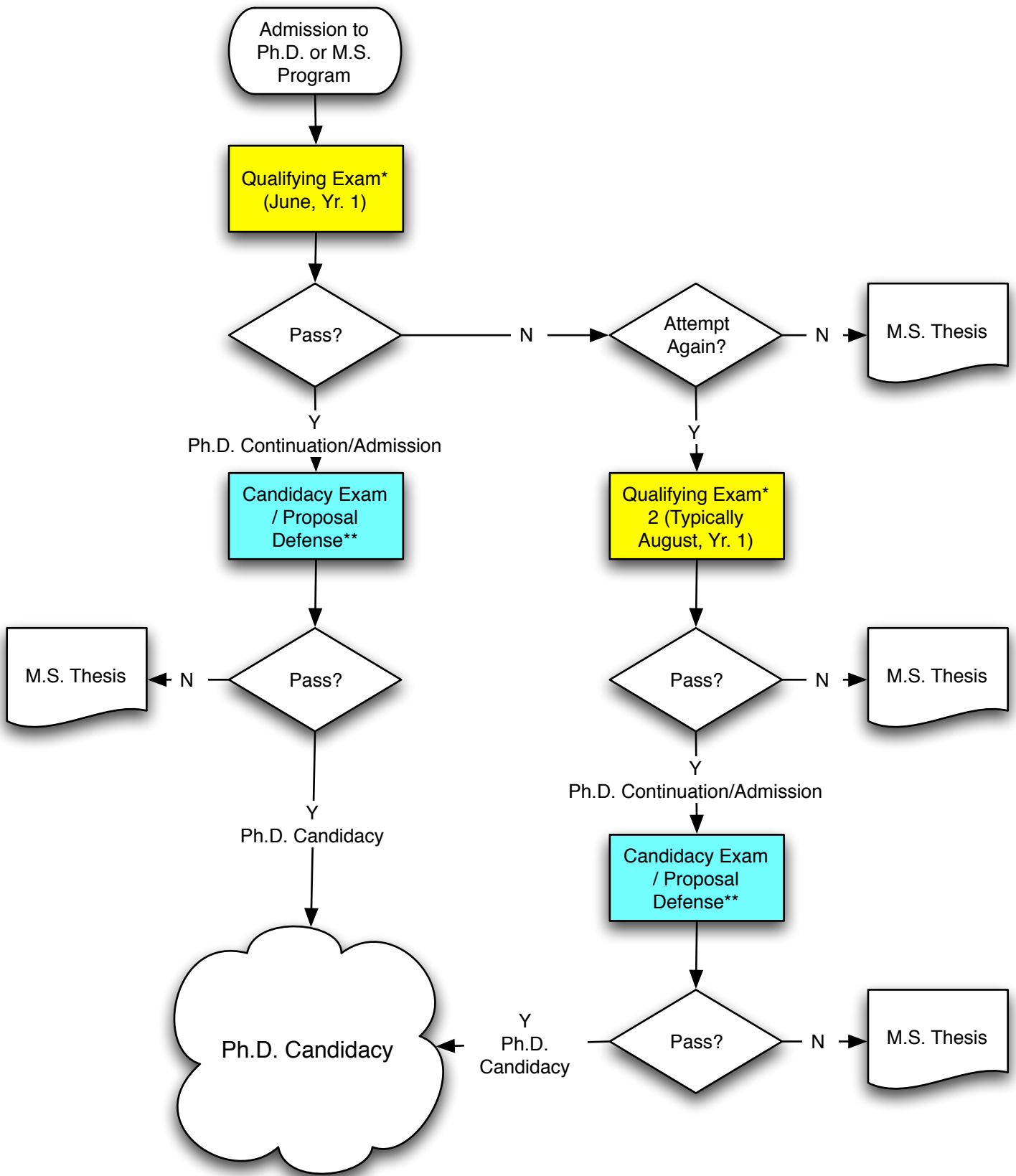
- second attempt, offered at end of summer of year 1 (or at end of year 2, at advisor's recommendation)
 - pursue MS (only option available to students who fail 2nd attempt)
- Pass or fail, PhD (or MS) research advisor and updated study plan should be in place within 3 months following announcement of results of the first attempt at written exam

PhD Candidacy Exam and Dissertation Proposal:

- Barring exceptional circumstances, candidacy exam is an oral exam administered by PhD research committee on the same day (immediately following) public presentation and defense of PhD dissertation proposal
- Written dissertation proposal to be circulated to research committee members at least 2 weeks prior to proposal defense and candidacy exam

Oral Candidacy Exam:

- Only students who have passed qualifying exam are eligible to take the Oral Candidacy Exam
- Administered by Research Committee
 - Including Provost's representative ("outside Chair")
 - Committee members nominated jointly by student & advisor, submitted to Coordinator for approval; "outside Chair" approved by Provost
- Timing, scope, logistics:
 - Ideally held near the end of year 2, with the expectation that it will be held no later than end of year 3 (for full-time students)
 - Written dissertation proposal made publicly available 2 weeks in advance of exam
 - Exam to consist of a public presentation and defense of PhD thesis proposal and ensuing "closed-door" question session, wherein questions directly related to and/or elaborating on the research proposal are submitted to the student by the Research Committee
- Upon passing, students are admitted to Ph.D. candidacy and receive second stipend increment
- If student fails Oral Candidacy Exam, student shall be offered the option to pursue an MS thesis



*Written Qualifying Exam by Exam Committee

**Oral Candidacy Exam by Research Committee after Public Proposal Defense