DSC Doctoral Qualifying Exam

Any doctoral student who has completed two or more long semesters in residence may, with the approval of a faculty advisor who is a member of DSC and a permanent member of the Mechanical Engineering Graduate Studies Committee, request that the area coordinator establish a qualifying exam committee. The committee will consist of five tenured or tenure track faculty members, at least three of which must be permanent members of the Mechanical Engineering Graduate Studies Committee. One committee member must be the student’s aforementioned DSC faculty advisor and one committee member must be appointed by the area coordinator (with the advice and consent of the faculty advisor) to serve as the qualifying exam committee chair. The other committee members are selected by the faculty advisor (with the advice and consent of the area coordinator).

In requesting that the area coordinator establish a qualifying exam committee, the student certifies that he/she is prepared to present his/her dissertation proposal and provides the area coordinator the title and subject matter of that proposal. The student must also designate three graduate level courses, taken in residence and for letter grade, and related to the dissertation proposal, on which he/she is prepared to take an oral examination.

At least two weeks prior to the oral exam the student must provide the committee with a written dissertation proposal (the committee is authorized to set, in advance, a maximum length for the written proposal). The committee will conduct an oral qualifying examination, as follows: the student will present his/her dissertation research proposal to the committee, which is normally expected to be (in whole or in large part) the final dissertation committee. During the course of the student’s presentation, the committee will examine the student on the three graduate courses previously designated by the student, to insure that the student’s knowledge of fundamentals is sufficient to undertake the proposed research. It is normally expected that the fundamentals examination will focus on questions related to the proposed research, so that the fundamentals examination would be an integral part of the research proposal presentation.

The qualifying exam grade (pass or fail) will be determined by a majority vote of the five members of the committee. The committee chair will prepare a memorandum certifying completion of the exam and the resulting exam grade, for signature by the committee chair and the area coordinator. The committee chair will provide the student, the area coordinator, and the graduate office with hard copies of this signed memorandum.

If a student fails the exam, he/she may retake the exam one time.

The stipulated responsibilities of the area coordinator will not be delegated to any other faculty member.