

Current PhD Checkpoints

Deadline* months	Median Time months (lateness)	Checkpoint
12		Oral Presentation of MSc work
20	30 (+10)	Qualifying Oral Exam
26	40 (+14)	Research Proposal
36	51 (+15)	Thesis Proposal
48	57 (+9)	Departmental Thesis Examination
	62 (14 to 19 mos beyond funding)	SGS Final Oral Exam (FOE)

* Deadlines are for PhD-M program (students with MSc from elsewhere). Students with an MSc from DCS have earlier deadlines for the qualifying oral and research proposal (9 and 18 months, respectively).

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Some Current Issues

1. Qualifying oral and research proposal are held too late (2.5 and 3.3 years into PhD program).
2. Limited supervisor support of the checkpoint deadlines (only 10% of our PhD students meet the deadlines).
3. Department-wide, annual progress monitoring has had little impact on ensuring the deadlines are met.
4. Our PhD-direct program does not provide a real alternative to the MSc-PhD route.
5. Median time to completion for the PhD is about 1.5 years longer than the guaranteed funding period.

We can address 1 through 4 by rationalizing and streamlining the requirements we place on PhD students. This should also improve time to completion.

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Grad Office Enforcement

What degree requirements do we want the Grad Office to enforce?

- Through our collective behaviour we have effectively voted against the current PhD requirements, specifically the timing of the checkpoints. This makes the timing impossible to enforce.

What can we expect the Grad Office to enforce?

- SGS requirements, and
- **Additional requirements (if any)** that are strongly supported by a substantial majority of DCS research faculty.

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PhD Requirements from SGS

1. Constitute the PhD supervisory committee no later than 16 months into the program.
2. The student [then] meets with their PhD supervisory committee at least once per year. The committee files a report on the student's progress and makes recommendations.
3. The student must achieve candidacy before 3 years (4 years for PhD-direct students)*, that is:
 - Complete all course and breadth requirements;
 - Have an approved thesis topic.
4. The SGS final oral examination is required. (Six year time-limit. At most four one-year extensions can be applied for.)

* Up to two one-year extensions are possible for the deadline for achieving candidacy.

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DCS PhD Requirements (Proposed)

1. Hold the **qualifying oral exam** no later than 16 months into the program.
 2. After passing the qualifying oral, the student meets with their PhD supervisory committee at least once per year.
 3. The student must achieve candidacy within SGS's deadline and extension policy. That is:
 - Complete all course and breadth requirements;
 - Must have a thesis topic **approved at a meeting of the PhD supervisory committee.**
 4. **The Departmental Thesis Examination must be passed before scheduling the SGS FOE.**
 5. The SGS final oral examination is required (same time-limit as required by SGS).
- (RED denotes DCS specific rules.)

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DCS PhD Requirements (Proposed)

The same requirements will apply to all PhD students (whether they have an MSc from DCS, or elsewhere, or no MSc).

Note that PhD-direct students will not be asked to complete an MSc research paper.

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Qualifying Oral Exam

The main purpose of the qualifying oral exam is to provide an early warning, and possible correction, in case a student is unlikely to succeed as a PhD student in DCS.

The scope of the qualifying oral exam is significantly narrower than our current "depth paper", and this should allow all our PhD students to meet the 16 month deadline.

Details are available in the document:

www.cs.toronto.edu/~jepson/gac/2014-15/PhDCommitteeMeetings_171014.pdf

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Thesis Topic Approval

In order to have a thesis topic approved the student needs to argue for:

- the significance of the expected results, and
- the plausibility of the student completing the research within two to three years.

It is expected that some preliminary research results will be available when making such a case.

See the pdf document listed above for more details.

The GAC will continue to accept your feedback on such guidelines. The issue for today is to seek approval for the proposed DCS PhD requirements.

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[Repeat] DCS PhD Requirements (Proposed)

1. Hold the **qualifying oral exam** no later than 16 months into the program.
2. After passing the qualifying oral, the student meets with their PhD supervisory committee at least once per year.
3. The student must achieve candidacy within SGS's deadline and extension policy. That is:
 - Complete all course and breadth requirements;
 - Must have a thesis topic **approved at a meeting of the PhD supervisory committee.**
4. **The Departmental Thesis Examination must be passed before scheduling the SGS FOE.**
5. The SGS final oral examination is required (same time-limit as required by SGS).
(**RED** denotes DCS specific rules.)

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Motion

Implementation:

- Students who first registered in the PhD program prior to the fall term of 2015*, and who are no further than 18 months beyond the checkpoint deadlines, will be permitted to continue following the previous PhD requirements.
- Alternatively, current PhD students will be permitted to opt into the new requirements.
- Students who begin their PhD program in the fall term of 2015* will be subject to the new requirements.

Motion: It is recommended that the department Chair implements the proposed PhD degree requirements effective immediately upon SGS approval.

* The pdf document lists the start date as Jan. 1, 2015, which is probably too early for SGS approval.

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