



Qualifying exam Regulations

The goal of the Qualifying exam is twofold. Its first purpose is to enable the advisor and the doctoral programme to assess whether the student has the potential to become a successful PhD candidate. Its second purpose is to give the PhD students a first experience of the kind of "examination"/presentation that they will have to face later in their careers.

FIRST EXAM

By October: PhD students must upload the research proposal complete in all its parts (for details see below) to the students' web portal according to the instructions provided by the ICT School Secretariat.

Non-submission of the research proposal results directly in a FAIL, i.e. failure to pass the Qualifying exam and consequent exclusion from the doctoral programme, unless there are serious and justified reasons for such non-submission that the Executive Committee reserves the right to evaluate.

Guidelines for the research proposal (paper) draft

PhD students are required to produce a document amounting to a maximum of 10 pages in ACM two-column style which must comprise:

- Contextualization of the research problem identified (why it is important, its impact, etc.)
- State of the art (concerning the research problem identified)
- Identification and specification of the research problem addressed by the student's doctorate, setting it in relation to the current state of research (e.g. specifying existing limitations)
- Methodology and the approach required to solve the problem identified
- Any preliminary results

November – December: students make a presentation of their research proposal before the examination committee. The exam is open to the public and consists of a 20-minute presentation by the student, followed by questions - 25 minutes – from the committee. Upon the session's conclusion, the committee discusses the outcome of the exam (PASS / FAIL / RETRY) and will submit its judgement according to an evaluation form provided by the student's web portal, which will be then known to the student and his/her advisor.

Evaluation form for examination committee and advisor

The research proposal (paper) and the presentation will be evaluated by the examination committee according to the criteria listed in the table below. For each criterion, the committee must insert a comment regarding the judgment assigned.

The advisor must also provide an evaluation according to the same criteria. The advisor must submit the evaluation grid for his/her student to the portal before his /her student's examination within the deadlines indicated by the ICT School Secretariat.

		Insufficient	Sufficient	Good	Excellent
Content of the research proposal and presentation (oral exam)	a) Contextualization, motivation and potential impact of the research problem				
	b) State of the art (coverage, quality, good knowledge)				
	c) Problem statement and objectives (clarity, depth, novelty, feasibility)				
	d) Proposed methodology and expected outcomes (correctness, feasibility, soundness)				
	e) Preliminary Results (quality, own contribution)				
Presentation	f) Organization, structure, timing, content, visual aspects of the presentation. Language and presentation skills. Quality of the research proposal w.r.t. writing skills				
Overall Result	PASS/RETRY/FAIL				



On the basis of the student's submitted research proposal and of the presentation, the examination committee proposes to the Executive Committee one of the following verdicts. The Executive Committee approves the examination committee's evaluation.

PASS if the results for criteria b), c) d) and f) were all rated as at least "Sufficient".
The PhD student may continue his/her PhD studies.

FAIL if at least three of the criteria b), c) d) and f) were rated "Insufficient".
The PhD student will be excluded from the doctoral programme.

RETRY if two of the criteria b), c) d) e f) were rated "Insufficient".
The PhD student must submit a new version of his/her research proposal and make a presentation before a different examination committee within 3 months from the day of the notification of the first exam outcome unless justified exceptions which will be assessed individually.

If only one of the criteria b), c) d) and f) was deemed "Insufficient", the examination committee will evaluate whether to give the student a **RETRY** or a **PASS** in light of the other criteria as well.

Composition of the examination committee

The examination committee consists of three members. Each PhD student is assigned a committee. Besides the members of the Doctoral School Committee, also involved will be the adjunct members, the members of the Department, and the FBK members who are advisors of students of the Doctoral programme.

SECOND EXAM - RETRY

Those PhD students who obtained **RETRY** from the first exam must submit a new version of the research proposal and make a presentation before a different examination committee within 3 months from the day of the notification of the first exam outcome, unless justified exceptions which will be assessed individually.

PhD students must upload the new version of their research proposal together with a rebuttal letter to the students' web portal. The rebuttal letter will refer to the shortcomings indicated by the committee of the first exam and will list what the PhD student has done to remedy them. The committee will access the document through the web portal.

Before the second exam, the **RETRY** exam, the advisor must submit an assessment concerning the student. The advisor may also make a 10-minute presentation on his/her student before his/her student's presentation. The presentation is not public and requires the presence of the student. The committee will also examine the opinion expressed by the committee during the first exam.

The **RETRY** exam is open to the public and includes a 30-minute presentation: 20 minutes for the presentation and then 10 minutes during which the PhD student will respond to the reasons for his/her **RETRY** stated by the previous commission. There will follow 25 minutes of questions from the committee. At the end of the session, the committee will deliberate its final judgment on the exam (**PASS** / **FAIL**) and will submit it by means of an evaluation form provided by the student's web portal, so that it is then known to the student and his/her advisor. The **RETRY** exam committee may also suggest the confirmation of the advisor, which will then be discussed by the Executive Committee.

On the basis of the student's submitted research proposal and the presentation, the examination committee will propose to the Executive Committee one of the following results. The Executive Committee approves the examination committee's evaluations.

PASS if the results for criteria b), c) d) and f) were all rated as at least "Sufficient".
The PhD student may continue his/her PhD studies.

FAIL if at least three of the criteria b), c) d) and f) were rated "Insufficient".
The PhD student will be excluded from the doctoral programme.

Composition of the examination committee

The Executive Committee is a single committee for all the PhD students. It is composed of at least five members whose requirements are the same as those applied for the committees of the first exam.



EXAM RESULT - FAIL

According to art.13, paragraph 7 of the Regulations of PhD Programme “ICT International Doctoral School” “In the event that a student fails to pass the examination, s/he will be excluded from the “ICT International Doctoral School” from the date decided by the Executive Committee, no later than two months from the date of failure, resulting in loss of the following benefits: study grant, apartment of the Opera Universitaria, canteen card, workstation and any other facility related to the status of a student on the PhD Programme. In particular, those who have not passed the examination are not entitled to benefit from the ordinary endowment from the date of communication of the failure to pass the Qualifying Examination.”