Graduate Degree Requirements

Department of Computer Science

University of Illinois Chicago

2025

Important contact information

Key personnel

Roksana Sady (Assistant Director, Student Affairs)   Graduate Program Lead
Prof. Xinhua Zhang (Associate Professor)   Director of Graduate Studies
Prof. Ugo Buy (Associate Professor)   MS Faculty Advisor

Website: https://cs.uic.edu/

Email:
CS Graduate Program   cs-grad@uic.edu
Director of Graduate Studies   cs-dgs@uic.edu
MS Faculty Advisor   cs-ms-advising@uic.edu

Phone:
CS Student Affairs Office   312-996-5940

Address:
Department of Computer Science (MC 152)
University of Illinois Chicago
Student Affairs Office, CDRLC 3410
850 West Taylor Street
Chicago, Illinois 60607-7053

Table of Contents

Academic Integrity

As stated by the Office of the Dean of Students, "Academic integrity, is a foundational element of all educational communities, is the value underpinning everything we do at UIC." The faculty of the department of Computer Science expect all students to perform their academic work with the high ethical standards of the engineering profession. **Any student in violation of the Academic Integrity policy will NOT be funded by the department, especially as a Teaching Assistant.**

The Office of the Dean of Students outlines the guidance for conduct, academic integrity and disciplinary policy in their student disciplinary handbook. CS department will be guided by 'The Office of the Dean of Students' in the implementation of the same policies.

The standards of conduct include, but are not limited to, the following:

Cheating
> Either intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, people, or study aids in any academic exercise; providing to, or receiving from another person, any kind of unauthorized assistance on any examination or assignment.

> Students cannot reuse any work done outside a certain class to satisfy that class's requirements, unless they are given explicit permission by the instructor of that class. If in doubt, ask.

Fabricating Academic Materials
> Unauthorized reproduction, falsification, lack of attribution, or invention of any information or citations in an academic exercise.

Facilitating academic dishonesty/plagiarism
> Intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise.

Bribes, favors, threats
> Bribing, attempting to bribe, promising favors to, or making threats against any person with the intention of affecting a record of a grade or evaluation of academic performance; any conspiracy with another person who then takes, or attempts to take action on behalf of, or at the direction of the student.

Examination by proxy
> Taking or attempting to take an exam for someone else other than the student is a violation by both the student enrolled in the course and the proxy or substitute.

Grade tampering
> Any unauthorized change, attempt to change, or alteration of grades.

Non-original work

Any unauthorized submission or attempt to submit any written work, written in whole or in part, by someone other than the student. **All work the students submit must be their own**. The use of generative AI to improve writing (grammar, fluency), is not forbidden a priori, but may be further restricted in specific classes or specific requirement for the degree. The student is responsible for accuracy and to avoid plagiarism.

Student Code of Conduct

In addition to the University policies, the Computer Science department at UIC believes our community should be open for everyone. As such, we are committed to providing a safe, welcoming environment for all, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, disability, race/ethnicity, religion or otherwise included in the University Nondiscrimination Statement. As is the case for all of UIC, neither difference nor disadvantage should stand in the way of intellectual and professional achievement.

As in all communities, members must assume the responsibility and obligation to uphold community integrity, standards, and drive toward success. There is an expectation that members' behaviors and actions, including language, do not violate the rights and privileges of other community members. There is room for everyone's success. Someone else's achievements do not diminish your own.

These expectations along with all UIC general community standards should be followed whenever you are acting as a member of the community (i.e., during in person or virtual classes, using course approved chat systems, using the CS lounge, attending UIC and department events, etc.)

Expected behavior of *all* community members:
- Be respectful, professional, collaborative and considerate of others.
- Do not use discriminatory, demeaning or harassing behavior or language.
- Sexual harassment in any form is not tolerated. See Office for Access and Equity for policies.
- Be advocates for your peers. Alert someone (i.e., a faculty member, TA, your academic advisor and/or the Office of the Dean of Students) if you are concerned about another student.
- Respect the boundaries of others, including when speaking or writing. Not sure? *Ask.*
- Participate in creating an inclusive environment that promotes:
  - Professional, intellectual and academic achievements
  - Mutual respect, care and collaboration

Positive examples:
- By default, addressing faculty by their title of Professor or Dr.
- By default, addressing peers by their correct name and preferred gender pronoun
- Offer words of encouragement before and after a difficult exam or project
- Having patience with others who are doing their best, and helping them – "we win when we all win"
- Saying nothing when you have nothing constructive or positive to add

Negative examples:
- The use of slang or profanity that is hurtful, demeaning, or destructive
- The use of abbreviations and acronyms that are hurtful, demeaning, or destructive
- Referring to others in non-professional ways such as "dear", "girl", "boy", "bro", "dude"
- Posting inappropriate remarks or humor (remember that humor often offends in subtle ways)
- Diminishing the work of others (e.g., "if you were smart like me you would have finished in an hour")

Compliance

You are expected to comply immediately when asked to stop unacceptable behavior. Non-compliance will be reported to the Director of Graduate Studies, and possibly the Dean of Students and the Office for Access and Equity

Reporting

If you experience or witness a breach of our Code of Conduct, report to a TA, faculty or staff member. We commit to addressing behaviors that do not follow our Code of Conduct. As mandatory reporters, faculty/staff will report allegations of sexual misconduct, unlawful discrimination, or harassment to our Title IX Coordinator.

Master of Science Degree Requirements

Minimum Semester Hours Required: 36

Coursework:

Requirements* depend on the specific **option** selected:
- _Thesis_: At least 28 hours, 12 hours of which must be CS courses at the 500 level (excluding CS 590, CS 597, CS 598, CS 599)
- _Project_: At least 32 hours, 12 hours of which must be CS courses at the 500 level (excluding CS 590, CS 597, CS 598, CS 599)
- _Coursework Only_: 36 hours, 16 hours of which must be CS courses at the 500 level (excluding CS 590, CS 597, CS 598, CS 599)

*The following constraints apply to all options:
- A maximum of two special topics courses (CS 594) may be counted toward coursework requirement. **Only one CS 594 special topics course may be counted toward the 500-level requirement**.
- A maximum of 8 hours of UIC non-CS graduate courses may be counted toward the overall coursework requirement. However, prior formal approval via petition is required. Consult CS Student Affairs office for details on submitting a petition.
  - Be advised that approved non-CS 500-level courses will NOT satisfy the CS 500 level course requirements.
- Courses taken as an undergraduate that are nearly equivalent to CS graduate courses offered at UIC should not be repeated. Student is responsible for monitoring potential overlap. **Specifically, courses taken as undergraduates at UIC will not earn graduate credit, if repeated at graduate level**.

Comprehensive Examination: None

Research Credits:

Requirements depend on the specific **option** selected:
- _Thesis_*: At least 8 hours of CS 598. Although students may register for more than 8 hours with advisor permission, only 8 hours of CS 598 may be used toward the MS CS degree.
- _Project_*: At least 4 hours of CS 597. Although students may register for more than 4 hours with advisor permission, only 4 hours of CS 597 may be used toward the MS CS degree.
- _Coursework Only_: No research hours required. Students must earn all 36 hours from coursework as described in "Coursework Only" above.

* For details on fulfilling the thesis and project requirements, refer to the 'MS Thesis Option' and 'MS Project Option' portion of this manual.

Advisor

MS students are not assigned a faculty advisor. Questions or advice relating to coursework, research and the program can be directed to Graduate Academic Advisors (staff in the CS Student Affairs Office), MS Faculty Advisor or the Director of Graduate Studies. Students choosing a project or thesis option should select a research advisor among CS faculty.

MS Thesis Option

The MS Thesis option is designed for graduate students with an interest in computer science research. Students selecting this option conduct original research under the supervision of a CS faculty member, culminating in the writing of a Master of Science thesis. At the completion of the thesis, the student presents a thesis defense to a Thesis Committee consisting of at least three faculty members, who are responsible for reviewing and evaluating the research work. The MS Thesis option is strongly advised for students who may be interested in pursuing a PhD in the future.

Thesis students are strongly encouraged to publish their original research in professional journals and conferences.

MS Thesis Guidelines

- First step in pursuing the Thesis option is selecting an advisor, which should be a mutual agreement between the student and a CS faculty member. **All CS Assistant, Associate, Full professors and CS adjunct faculty** are eligible to serve as primary thesis advisor. Refer to CS website for this list.
    - o An advisor typically serves as the chair of the thesis committee. The Chair must be a full member of the UIC Graduate College Faculty. Since not all adjunct faculty are full members of the 'UIC Graduate College Faculty', if a student chooses an adjunct faculty member as their advisor, they must choose to have another committee member serve as the Chair.

- Next step is registering for CS 598 under the advisor's CRN (course registration number). CS 598 CRNs are allocated to only to CS faculty advising MS Thesis option students; if potential advisor does not have a CS 598 CRN allocated they must contact CS student affairs office (cs-grad@uic.edu) for it.
    - o Default hours for CS 598 are 'zero' and must be adjusted to the hours agreed upon with the advisor
    - o Minimum 8 hours are required to satisfy requirements
    - o Students who are required to maintain a specific number of registration hours may register for more than 8 hours with advisor permission, but no more than 8 hours will be used towards the requirements for the degree

- Advisor and student should discuss and set scope, expectations and deadlines/milestones for completion not only of research but also of writing and defending MS Thesis. The advisor and student determine when the work has been completed.

- Refer to 'Graduation Guidelines' section of this manual for information on all steps required to graduate: applying for graduation → successfully defending & submitting MS thesis.

MS Project Option

The MS Project Option is designed for graduate students who are interested in demonstrating their training in the form of a substantive, capstone project. The student undertakes the project under CS faculty supervision, culminating in the development of both the project and a written description of the project in the form of a MS Project report. Both the project work itself and the project report must demonstrate a high level of professional skill. MS projects and project reports are reviewed by a committee of two faculty members (the student's advisor serves as the primary committee member), but do not require a formal presentation or defense of their work.

MS Project Guidelines

- First step in pursuing the Project option is selecting an advisor, which should be a mutual agreement between the student and a CS faculty member. **All CS faculty and CS adjunct faculty** are eligible to serve as primary project advisor. Refer to CS website for this list.

- Next step is registering for CS 597 under the advisor's CRN (course registration number). CS 597 CRNs are allocated to only CS faculty advising MS Project option students; if potential advisor does not have a CS 597 CRN allocated, they must contact CS student affairs office (cs-grad@uic.edu) for it.
    - Default hours for CS 597 are 'zero' and must be adjusted to the hours agreed upon with the advisor
    - Minimum 4 hours are required to satisfy requirements
    - Students who are required to maintain a specific number of registration hours may register for more than 4 hours with advisor permission, but no more than 4 hours will be used towards the requirements for the degree

- Advisor and student should discuss and set scope, expectations and deadlines/milestones for completion not only of research but also of writing and submitting the MS Project report. Advisor and student determine when the work has been completed.

- Refer to 'Graduation Guidelines' section of this manual for information on all steps required to graduate: applying for graduation → successfully submitting MS project.

Doctor of Philosophy Degree Requirements

Minimum Semester Hours Required: 108 hours beyond the baccalaureate degree

Coursework requirements*

Student admitted with prior master's degree in CS or a related field: At least 24 hours, 16 hours of which must be CS courses at the 500 level (excluding CS 590, CS 597, CS 598, CS 599). Graduate College may grant 32 hours of credit from previously earned MS degree.

Student admitted directly after bachelor's degree in CS or a related field: At least 32 hours, 16 hours of which must be CS courses at the 500 level (excluding CS 590, CS 597, CS 598, CS 599).

*Additional constraints to the coursework requirements:
- o A maximum of two special topics courses (CS 594) may be counted toward the 500-level and coursework requirement. Additional special topics (CS 594) courses must be petitioned to be used towards coursework requirements.
- o A maximum of 8 hours of UIC non-CS graduate courses may be counted toward the overall coursework requirement. However, prior formal approval via petition is required. Consult CS Student Affairs office for details on submitting a petition.
  - o Be advised that approved non-CS 500-level courses will NOT satisfy the CS 500 level course requirements.
- o Courses taken as an undergraduate that are nearly equivalent to CS graduate courses offered at UIC should not be repeated. Students are responsible for monitoring potential overlap. Generally, repeat courses will not earn PhD credit. **Specifically, courses taken as an undergraduate/MS at UIC will not earn graduate credit, if repeated at graduate level**.

Research Methods: Required.
Candidates must earn 4 hours in CS 590 within the first two years of enrollment.

Colloquium: 10 required.
Students are required to attend ten colloquia within the first two years of enrollment. Dissertation defenses are acceptable colloquia. **Attendance must be in person** (with exceptions based on advisor's discretion). Student is responsible for keeping track of colloquia attendance and supplying it to advisor for approval; once requirement is met, advisor should send an email to cs-grad@uic.edu confirming.

Research Credits (CS 599):
- Student admitted with prior master's degree in CS or a related field must earn at least 48 hours.
- Student admitted directly after bachelor's degree in CS or a related field must earn at least 72 hours.

Only 48 or 72 hours can be used towards the PhD CS degree, however students may register for additional hours with advisor permission, if needed.

Qualifier Examination

Pass the "PhD Qualifier Examination" before the end of their 4th semester of enrollment (actual completion date is approximately halfway through the 4th semester). The Qualifier Examination consists of 3 parts:

i. Course breadth requirement which is designed to evaluate the student's basic proficiency in core areas of computer science (completed by the end of 3rd semester);

ii. Written Critique and Presentation (WCP) testing the student's analytical and presentational abilities in a particular area of computer science (completed in their 3rd or 4th semester).

iii. Final Evaluation by CS faculty based on: the student's performance in the first two parts, the student's progress in research and any other information related to their performance as a student, conducted in the middle of the 4th semester. All decisions are final. Refer to the PhD Qualifying Exam Information section of the manual for detailed information.

Preliminary Examination

Pass a written and oral preliminary examination on the proposed dissertation topic. This examination is administered by a Graduate College approved faculty committee and chaired by the student's advisor. Students must pass the preliminary examination at least one-year prior to their final defense. Refer to the Preliminary Exam section of the manual for further details.

Final Dissertation

Upon completion of all degree requirements and dissertation, the candidate must orally defend the work before their committee. If a final defense is held in less than one-year preliminary exam completion, a petition has to be submitted – the closer the final defense is to the one-year period, the more likely it is that the petition will be approved. Refer to the Doctor of Philosophy: Final Dissertation Defense section for further details.

Additional Regulations

Advisor

All incoming PhD students are assigned an initial advisor upon admission, who has explicitly chosen the student as their recruit, based on their expressed area of research interest. Students must formalize their permanent advisor selection by submitting a 'Permanent Advisor' selection form to the CS Student Affair's office by the end of their third semester at the latest.

In most cases, the initial advisor will become the permanent advisor, although choosing a different permanent advisor is allowed. Permanent advisors must be formalized by mutual agreement, since they are a critical component of a PhD student's evaluation and progress.

All CS assistant, associate, full professors and adjunct faculty are eligible to serve as permanent advisor. Not all adjunct faculty are full members of the UIC Graduate Faculty – so, if choosing an adjunct faculty member as advisor, students should ensure they are full members of the UIC Graduate Faculty. **PhD students whose primary advisor is an adjunct, will not be guaranteed TAships from the CS department**.

If due to factors beyond their control, PhD students do not find a permanent advisor by the time faculty evaluates them in their 4th semester, the students can anticipate at most receiving a 'conditional pass' requiring a permanent advisor by the end of their 5th semester, excluding summer. If at any point PhD students part with their permanent advisor, they must notify the CS Student Affairs office (cs-grad@uic.edu) immediately. PhD students will be required to find a new permanent advisor within a semester, excluding summer, of parting with their old permanent advisor.

PhD Assessment and Review
All PhD students are required to complete the College of Engineering's annual online self-assessment. Their progress is monitored and reviewed regularly. Reminders and/or warnings are sent when students are behind schedule on meeting PhD degree milestones.

Students are notified when the online self-assessment is open. The self-assessment survey requires students to submit basic information, self-evaluation, publications, presentations and plans for the upcoming year (research, publication and deadlines for milestones in the completion of the degree). Once the student completes and submits the survey, their advisor receives notification that allows them to verify and provide feedback on the student's progress.

Until the student formalizes a permanent advisor, their temporary advisor will provide feedback on student's progress.

Changing to the MS Program is NOT Permitted
The UIC College of Engineering Strategic Plan, adopted in January 2005 and revised from time to time, states that students in a PhD program who have received any financial support from UIC (such as TA, RA, or Tuition and Fee Waiver) cannot transfer into any MS program within the College of Engineering, including Computer Science. Under appropriate extenuating circumstances, the student may petition the DGS for an exception to this policy.

Earning MS after Passing Preliminary Exam
Some PhD students, upon satisfactory completion (passing) of the preliminary exam, may **apply** to receive UICs 'MS in Computer Science' degree.

   Who is Eligible?
   - 'Direct Admit' PhD students (admitted directly after Bachelor's degree); or
   - Students whose master's degree is from a non-computer science discipline; or
   - Students whose master's degree in CS is from a non-US institution

   Requirements to earn the MS
   - Satisfactory completion (passing) of preliminary exam
       o Students seeking to potentially earn the MS in the same semester they complete their preliminary exam must complete the exam by the following dates:
           ▪ Fall – October 15
           ▪ Spring – April 15
           ▪ Summer – July 15
   - Approval by the Director of Graduate Studies and the preliminary exam committee
   - Meeting all requirements of the CS MS degree (refer to MS degree requirements)

How to apply?
- Students should submit their request by the 2nd Monday of the semester they anticipate they will complete all requirements (including passing of preliminary exam and meeting MS requirements).
- If preliminary exam is not completed by above deadlines, the request is void, and the student must resubmit their request for the following semester.

The MS in Computer Science will be awarded in the semester in which students meet the university graduation deadlines. **Please note that students cannot earn both MS and PhD degrees in the same semester**.

Prior Publication of Research Findings (excerpt from Graduate College)
https://grad.uic.edu/doctoral-degrees/: "Candidates engaged in thesis research may find it desirable or expedient to publish, prior to the conferring of the degree, certain findings that later will be incorporated in the dissertation. In such cases, appropriate acknowledgment of the earlier publication should be included in the dissertation. The Graduate College encourages such publication, but the dissertation may not be published in its entirety before all degree requirements, including the defense of the dissertation, have been completed."

Offices
PhD students and Research Assistants are provided a desk space in the room and grouping of their advisor's research group.

TAs can hold office hours in allocated TA spaces for their classes. TA office hours should NOT be held in the research space.

Students should be courteous and keep the space they occupy clean. Be aware of leaving personal belongings in these shared spaces.

PhD: Qualifier Examination Information

The first major "rite of passage" in the PhD program is passing the PhD Qualifier Examination. **All PhD students must pass the Qualifier Examination before the end of their 4th semester of enrollment to continue in the PhD program.**

The Qualifier Examination consists of 3 parts:
- **Course Breadth Requirement** which is designed to evaluate the student's basic proficiency in core areas of computer science (completed by the end of 3rd semester)
- **Written Critique and Presentation** (WCP) testing the student's analytical and presentational abilities in a particular area of computer science (completed in their 3rd or 4th semester)
- **Final Evaluation by CS faculty** based on the student's performance in the first two parts, the student's progress in research and any other information related to their performance as a student, conducted in the middle of the 4th semester. All decisions are final – a decision made by the faculty that a student may stay or must leave the program cannot be petitioned

Course Breadth Requirement
- Complete 4 courses by the end of third semester
    - CS 401; or petition to substitute with an advanced 5xx algorithm course
    - At least one course from each of the 3 areas: Theory; AI/ML/DS/HCC; and SW/Systems
    - CS 494 and CS 594 (special topics) courses are **not** eligible
    - Minimum two 'As' and nothing less than a B in the four required courses
- Refer to https://go.uic.edu/CS-Qualifier-Courses for the 3 areas and applicable courses
- If the chosen course from the list has an in-class comprehensive final exam, the student can satisfy the qualifier course requirement by taking the final exam without enrolling in the course, subject to the course instructor's approval
    - If taking the final exam to meet qualifier course requirement, the instructor of the course should be notified at the beginning of the semester of the student's intent and, provided the instructor gives their approval, the final should be taken at the regularly schedule time for that semester
- If the student received a BS from UIC, they may petition to use CS 401 ONLY to satisfy the PhD qualifier course requirement. The course must have been taken within the last 5 years and completed with an 'A'. They may not use any other coursework completed while an undergraduate to satisfy the remaining PhD qualifier course requirements.
- If the student received a MS from the CS department at UIC, they may petition to use courses from the list to satisfy the PhD qualifier course requirement. Eligible courses must have been taken within the last 5 years.

Written Critique and Presentation: Framework and Guidelines

The purpose of the Written Critique and Presentation (WCP) is to demonstrate the student's ability to analyze, evaluate and present an existing body of research (normally but not necessarily) in the area in which they intend to carry out their dissertation work. The WCP should be completed in the student's second year in the program (completion date is approximately halfway through the 4th semester).

The WCP Committee form is available on our website under ['Graduate Student Resources'](#).

Deliverables of the exam are:
- **Critical review** - a significant (15-25 pages, excluding references; ~10,000 words=20 pages single-spaced) piece of scholarly expository writing based on a coherent selection of at least 3 papers from the research literature in the chosen area.

  The critical review must be a synthesis of the presented approaches. In academic writing, synthesizing is merging the various perspectives the writer has found while researching their topic. The student's job as a writer is to make it clear to the reader how the ideas or research of various authors are connected, including discussing the similarities and differences between their ideas. It should also clearly articulate concrete directions that build on top of the approaches presented in the report.

- **Presentation** - a 45-minute oral presentation, followed by questions from the committee.

Logistical Organization and Requirements:
1. The WCP committee consists of three members:
    a. WCP Chair (NOT the student's advisor)
    b. 2nd member (advisor or another CS faculty member; advisors are NOT required to be a member of WCP committee).
    c. 3rd member (non-specialist in the chosen topic) appointed by the DGS. Students may submit 2-3 suggestions for this member, who may or may not be chosen by DGS.
2. The student identifies a topic and selects a WCP chair (not advisor), who agrees to administer the exam.
3. The student picks at least 3 peer-reviewed technical papers to be critiqued, which the chair must approve (see below). In general, neither survey papers, nor short papers (as defined by the conference) are appropriate as one of the main 3-4 papers the WCP focuses on. If any such paper is included in the final selection, a justification vetted by the chair must be provided. Any relevant paper including surveys and short papers / abstracts can be included in the general discussion of the area the WCP focuses on.
4. The student is in charge of the paper selection process, but the chair has a part in it as well besides approving the final selection. The student initiates the process, by presenting to the chair an initial selection of at least 5 papers (the chair may request a large number of papers for the initial selection); the chair gives general feedback on the potential choices and can provide suggestions on alternative potential venues or research groups; this process is repeated until the chair is satisfied with the main 3-4 paper choices, that the chair then approves. The advisor can be involved in the initial selection of papers, but not in the subsequent negotiation process between the student and chair.

5. A short written proposal naming the committee, describing the area and providing full bibliographic reference (including page count) for the technical papers is submitted to the CS DGS (via cs-grad@uic.edu) for immediate consideration and approval (1-week maximum delay). The WCP form is available online at https://www.cs.uic.edu/~grad/WCP_Committee_Form.pdf. We recommend students submit the form by the first week of August at the latest for WCP in Fall semester. If WCP is in the Spring semester, the form must be submitted by the Friday of Fall final exam week at the latest.

6. The DGS selects the third member and approves the committee. From the date of this approval, the student can have a maximum of 60 days to prepare a critical review of the selected papers in the chosen area. To maximize the time for written critical review preparation, be aware of the final oral presentation deadline of October 31 for Fall semester and March 31 for the Spring semester. These are the very latest deadlines and students should be ready to defend their WCP well in advance. Submitting the WCP form on time (see #5 above) is crucial to having ample preparation time.

7. WCP committee members may answer specific questions about the selected work but should not assist in analyzing the content, the significance, or the accuracy of the selected work. The use of generative AI to improve the writing (grammar, fluency) is not forbidden, but the student is responsible for accuracy and to avoid plagiarism. An initial draft prior to AI use must be available for review by the committee.

8. Please note that the finished critique must satisfy some constraints concerning academic integrity. Please see below.

9. Copies of the finished critique and the plagiarism detection tool report (please see below) should be delivered to each of the WCP committee members and the Student Affairs office (cs-grad@uic.edu) on or before the end of the 60 day period.

10. Scheduling the date for formal Oral Presentation is the student's responsibility. Keep in mind:
    a. Oral Presentation should be held between week 1 & week 3 from the time the written critique is submitted to the committee. i.e. students need to allow a minimum of 1 week for the committee to review their written report, but no more than 3 weeks.
    b. Consult the committee well ahead (at least three weeks) of the presentation for a mutually agreeable date
    c. Submit request for room reservation (cs-reservations@uic.edu) as soon as the date and time are finalized.

11. At the Oral Presentation, the candidate is expected to present the content of the critique as though presenting a technical paper at a conference. Thus, visual aids etc. are expected to be used and the performance evaluation will be based on technical sharpness, presentation style, command of the area and effectiveness of visual aids. The presentation should be roughly 45 minutes in length. Note that while fluency in English is desirable, the primary criterion is the candidate's ability to effectively communicate the material to their audience.

12. The presentation is open to the general public and is followed by a question and answer period (covering both the critique and the general area). The WCP committee may elect to continue with a closed-door question and answer period followed by a discussion.

13. As with all talks and oral examinations in the CS Department, WCP Presentation announcement - with title, student name, committee members, date/time, location and abstract etc. should be sent to the CS Student Affairs Office (cs-grad@uic.edu) for

advertisement to the graduate and faculty email lists at least a week before the event.

14. The WCP is graded on a numerical scale from 1 to 5 (with 1 representing the highest level of performance) along with a brief evaluation of the students' performance. Feedback from the WCP committee along with the numerical scores (of both written and oral parts) will be provided to the student within 4 weeks of the oral presentation.
15. This exam cannot be repeated.

In cases where the WCP topic falls in the student's main research area, there may be substantial overlap between the written critique and the Related Work section of the thesis proposal and/or thesis. This is acceptable.

A conference paper, master's thesis, etc. cannot simply be submitted verbatim as a substitute for the WCP. However, parts of prior written work on which the student is the sole author may be re-used as the basis for part or all of a WCP paper; in general, class papers and class project reports cannot be used. Details should be negotiated between the student, their WCP committee chair and the DGS.

Written critique, academic honesty, and plagiarism: **The finished critique will have to include the declaration below at the beginning, after the title page**[1]. Additionally, when students submit their critique, they will also submit the results of a plagiarism detection tool as applied to their critique; the specific tool to use will be specified to the students when they submit their WCP form. The tool will be chosen among the ones approved by UIC at that specific point in time (for example, as of this writing, iThenticate or the SafeAssign tool in Blackboard).

"I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where others' ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity as adopted by the University, College and Department (including but not limited to p. 10-11 UIC student handbook https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/68615858/uic-dean-of-students-student-handbook-spring-2024; and p. 3-4 of this graduate student manual); and that I have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/data/fact/source in my submission."

Final Evaluation by CS Faculty
Tenure track faculty come together and discuss PhD students to evaluate performance, potential to succeed, and advisor's recommendation. Faculty vote anonymously on whether student passes or fails the qualifier. If a student fails, they are dismissed from the program. All decisions are final - a decision made by the faculty that a student may stay or must leave the program cannot be petitioned.

---

[1] The declaration is derived from language used at IIT Bombay and in other Indian Universities.

PhD: Preliminary Examination

The purpose of the Preliminary Examination is to determine the candidate's readiness to undertake dissertation research, and passing it constitutes formal Admission to Candidacy. The examination serves as the next major step toward the PhD degree. The examination provides the student with timely feedback of the faculty's views of his/her potential for completing the PhD Program.

The preliminary examination is generally administered once the student has completed most, though not necessarily all, of the coursework, and has performed at least some preliminary work towards their dissertation. The timing of the preliminary examination is mutually agreed between the student and their advisor. Only students in good academic standing are permitted to take the examination.

Students who intend to defend their final defense within a year of passing the preliminary examination should note that a minimum of one year must elapse between successfully passing the preliminary examination and the final defense.

Federal regulations require that any research which involves the use of either human subjects or animals be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or the Animal Care Committee (ACC). If the work is completed without IRB or ACC approval, it cannot be published, even as a thesis. Copies of the IRB or ACC approval must be included in the appendix of the final draft of the thesis submitted for review by the Graduate College. It is University policy that theses which are not in compliance with the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) will not be accepted for fulfillment of graduation requirements. For further information, see https://research.uic.edu/compliance/human-subjects-irbs/getting-started-preparation-for-submission/or contact OPRS.

Preliminary Examination Committee
The committee for the preliminary examination is appointed by the Dean of the Graduate College upon the recommendation of the department or program. The advisor, who typically serves as the chair of the Committee, must be a full member of the UIC Graduate Faculty. All CS assistant, associate, full professors and adjunct faculty* are eligible to serve as an advisor.

The composition of the five-member committee should be as follows:
- Consists of at least five (5) members
- At least three (3) are UIC Graduate Faculty with full membership
- Two (2) must be tenured faculty, not just tenure-track
- Majority of the committee should hold at least a 50% appointment in the CS department.

*Note: (1) Reminder - not all adjunct faculty are full members of the UIC Graduate Faculty, so if they are chosen as advisor, students should ensure they are also full members of the UIC Graduate Faculty; (2) adjunct faculty appointment is considered to be a 0% appointment and should be factored into the last point about majority committee; and (3) adjunct faculty are **not** considered as outside members, which is a factor for final defense committee.

Graduate programs strive for diversity in the composition of the preliminary examination committee. The appointment of one or two members from outside* the degree-granting program or university is encouraged (and is required for the final defense). If the outside member is not a UIC graduate faculty member, his/her curriculum vitae must accompany the Committee Recommendation Form to demonstrate equivalent academic standards.

Students should email CS Student Affairs (cs-grad@uic.edu) if they have questions regarding their committee members' Graduate College faculty membership.

Preliminary Examination Process and Requirements
- Once the advisor determines the student is ready to hold their preliminary examination, the advisor and student will select a committee. This process involves ensuring the committee meets Graduate College requirements, securing agreement from members to serve on the committee, and identifying a mutually acceptable date for the **in-person** examination.
- A Committee Recommendation form https://grad.uic.edu/academic-support/student-resources/graduate-student-forms/) listing the committee members and their affiliations, abstract and CVs of any outside members (non-UIC Graduate College faculty) must be submitted at least **six weeks prior** to the exam date to the CS Student Affairs for department approval.
  - If any data (public datasets, or data that is obtained from other institutions, or data student has collected) is used, clearly state so in abstract.
  - IRB approval may be required prior to committee recommendation form approval.
  - If animals are involved, Animal Care Panel approval is required (please see more details on human subjects and animal care on p. 19)
- Upon department approval, the form will be forwarded to the Graduate College for final approval
- Students must submit a thesis proposal document to their committee members **one week prior** to the preliminary exam presentation. At the same time, they must send an advertisement ((title, student name, committee members, date/time, location and abstract)) to CS Student Affairs for announcement to faculty and students.
- All preliminary examinations must be in person - the student and ALL committee members are expected to attend in person.
- An examination report will be generated by the Graduate College and sent electronically to the committee chair via email. After assigning a grade of "pass" or "fail", the committee chair should obtain the signatures of all committee members and submit the signed exam report to cs-grad@uic.edu.
  - A candidate cannot be passed with more than one "fail" vote.
  - The committee may require that specified conditions be met before the passing recommendation becomes effective. On the recommendation of the committee, the Dean may permit a second examination. A third examination is not permitted. Failure to complete the degree requirements within five years (departments may specify shorter periods) of passing the preliminary examination requires a new examination.

Timeline and Progress Expectations

The Graduate College requires the preliminary examination be completed after at least one calendar year of residence and one year prior to the final dissertation defense. As part of students PhD assessment, we expect them to make their preliminary exam attempt at the latest by their 6th semester, if student earned a previous MS degree; or 8th semester if they are a direct PhD student. If a preliminary exam attempt is not met by these semesters, students will receive an email warning. If an attempt is still not made, the department will issue a warning letter with a deadline for completing prelim – failure to make satisfactory progress towards the degree will result in loss of financial aid as TA/TFW and potential dismissal.

PhD: Final Doctoral Defense

The final doctoral defense is the final step of completion of the doctoral degree (PhD).

Students should ensure they have completed all the steps prior to their final defense:
- Coursework requirements
- Qualifying Examination
- Colloquium
- CS 590
- CS 599 – registered for required hours
- Preliminary Examination (at least a year prior to final defense)

Upon completion of all degree requirements and dissertation, the candidate must orally defend the work before the committee. Only students in good academic standing are permitted to defend their dissertation.

As a reminder, a minimum of one year must elapse before the final defense of the dissertation after passing the preliminary examination. Any gap less than 1 year must be petitioned and approved by the DGS and GC; the further the gap from the one-year mark, the stronger the justification must be for it to be approved. Students must defend within 5 years of completing their preliminary exam; if the final defense is not completed within this time period, students must retake the prelim or petition for an extension.

Federal regulations require that any research which involves the use of either human subjects or animals be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or the Animal Care Committee (ACC). If the work is completed without IRB or ACC approval, it cannot be published, even as a thesis. Copies of the IRB or ACC approval must be included in the appendix of the final draft of the thesis submitted for review by the Graduate College. It is University policy that theses which are not in compliance with the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) will not be accepted for fulfillment of graduation requirements. For further information, see https://research.uic.edu/compliance/human-subjects-irbs/getting-started-preparation-for-submission/ or contact OPRS.

The dissertation committee is appointed by the Dean of the Graduate College on the recommendation of the student's department. The Committee Recommendation form is available online through the Graduate College website (https://grad.uic.edu/academic- support/student-resources/graduate-student-forms/), which must be filled and submitted to the CS Student Affairs office **at least six weeks prior** to the exam date. The committee composition requirements of the final defense committee are the same as the preliminary committee, except the appointment of one member from outside the degree-granting program is mandatory. The composition of the committee is as follows:
- Consists of at least five (5) members
- At least three (3) are UIC Graduate Faculty with full membership
- Two (2) must be tenured faculty, not just tenure-track
- Majority of the committee should hold at least a 50%* appointment in the CS department.
- One member must come from outside* the degree-granting program or university. If the

outside member is not a UIC graduate faculty member, his/her curriculum vitae must accompany the Committee Recommendation Form.

*Note: (1) Adjunct faculty appointment is considered to be a 0% appointment and (2) are **not** considered as outside members.

Students should email CS Student Affairs (cs-grad@uic.edu) if they have questions regarding their committee members' Graduate College faculty membership.

Many of the same provisions discussed under Preliminary Examination Process and Requirements apply, specifically:
- All thesis defenses must be held in person - the candidate and ALL committee members are expected to attend in person.
- The candidate must submit the final dissertation document to their committee members **one week prior** to the final defense. At the same time, they must send an advertisement to CS student affairs for announcement to faculty and students.
- An examination report will be generated by the Graduate College and sent electronically to the committee chair via email. After assigning a grade of "pass" or "fail", the committee chair should obtain the signatures of all committee members and submit the signed exam report to cs-grad@uic.edu.
- A candidate cannot be passed with more than one "fail" vote.
- The committee may require that specified conditions be met before the passing recommendation becomes effective. On the recommendation of the committee, the Dean may permit a second examination. A third examination is not permitted. Failure to complete the degree requirements within five years (departments may specify shorter periods) of passing the preliminary examination requires a new preliminary examination.

Format Guidelines
Thesis and dissertation format guidelines are described in detail in a Thesis Manual published and available on the Graduate College website http://grad.uic.edu/thesis. A pdf copy of the thesis must be submitted to the CS Student Affairs office via email for a format check one week prior to the deadline set by the Graduate College.

Academic Standing Policies

Limited Standing
Students admitted with limited standing status must complete the conditions within the time specified in the admission letter. Failure to satisfy the conditions will result in dismissal from the program. Consult CS Student Affairs staff for questions related to limited standing.

Time Limitation
MS: All degree requirements must be completed within five years of initial registration in the degree program. Different time allowances apply to students on student (F-1) visas, reference your I20 for this. Students who fail to graduate within five years will be dismissed from the Graduate College for failure to progress. http://grad.uic.edu/masters-degrees.

PhD: Students admitted to the Graduate College with a master's degree or who continue in the Graduate College after completing the master's degree at UIC must complete the degree requirements within seven consecutive calendar years after initial registration as a doctoral student. Students admitted to the Graduate College without a master's degree who proceed directly to the doctorate must complete degree requirements within nine consecutive calendar years of initial registration as a doctoral student. Students who do not graduate by these deadlines will be dismissed from the Graduate College for failure to progress. Time spent on a leave of absence approved by the program and the Graduate College is not counted toward the degree time limit.

Students on F-1 student visa must ensure they are in compliance with their SEVIS record and I-20 end date. If extension is needed beyond I20 expiration date to complete the degree a program extension must be requested. See 'Program Extensions' section of the manual.

Program Extension
Graduate students on F-1 student visa are given an end date to complete their degree, typically 2 years for MS and 5 for PhD. The end can be found on students' I20.

Students who are unable to complete the degree by the end date on their I20 must request a program extension. This process should be initiated with Office of International Services (OIS). Refer to their website (https://ois.uic.edu/immigration/f-1-student/f-1-program-extension/) for eligibility, timing and steps.

Modified steps of the process for CS students.
- CS students should meet with their advisor to review their progress in the program. During this conversation, student and their advisor should review requirements for degree completion and determine what the new expected program completion date will be.
    - MS students with coursework option would be advised by the 'Graduate Program Advisor'
    - PhD students needing beyond a year should be aware that a program extension will be approved for a maximum of 1 year at a time. This could be shorter based on the progress of their degree.

- Students' advisor must email the CS Graduate Program (cs-grad@uic.edu) with the following details:

- - o Student's Name, UIN
  - o Reason for delay
  - o Expected date of completion (or next degree progress deadline for PhD students)
- Submit the Program Extension E-Form in myOIS. CS students should use CS Graduate Program email (cs-grad@uic.edu) as academic advisor on the e-form. The e-form will also ask student to submit evidence of funding for the length of the extension, up to one academic year. Learn more about international student funding and documentation requirements.
- CS Graduate Program Advisor will review and process the extension. Processing times will vary based on several factors:
  - o Receipt of all the necessary information for students' advisor
  - o Submission time. Examples:
    - ▪ Program extensions are processed 60 days prior to the current I-20 expiration date
    - ▪ Confirmation of completion of conditions for the extension (prelim, paper submission etc.)
    - ▪ Extensive delays can be expected at the beginning and end of the semesters
- Students will then collect and sign their new I-20. When the program extension request is complete, OIS will contact the student with options for receiving their new I-20 reflecting the new program completion date.

Academic Performance

All graduate students are required by the Graduate College to remain in good standing per the conditions outlined by the Graduate College policies. In addition to meeting the Graduate College academic performance requirements, students should not be in violation of any of the Office of Dean of Students student conduct policies, see page 3 for details. Failure to meet the conditions and policies will result in possible dismissal. https://grad.uic.edu/probation-and-academic-dismissal.

Grades
Coursework is graded on a scale of A, B, C, D or F; research hours are graded as 'S' (satisfactory) or 'U' (unsatisfactory). GPA is calculated based on the letter grades and credit hours. For details see: http://grad.uic.edu/grades.

Probation and Academic Dismissal
All graduate students are required to maintain a 3.0 (B) grade point average (GPA). The GPA calculation does not include research courses (CS 590, CS 597-599), but does include all graduate level coursework regardless of whether the course satisfies degree requirements or not.

Graduate course work must be satisfied by a C grade or higher. If a student's graduate GPA falls below 3.0 (B), the Graduate College will issue a letter of warning and impose academic probation for a specified period of time. Failure to comply with the terms will likely result in dismissal from the CS program and Graduate College. Details of this available at: https://grad.uic.edu/academic-support/graduate-college-policies/academic-standing-continuation-%20and-probation-rules/

A student on probation is ineligible for department awarded financial aid or graduation.

Course Information and Policies

Course Selection
Graduate students are given broad leeway in choosing classes of their own interest while keeping in mind the coursework requirement of their degree. MS students are not assigned a faculty advisor, however, they can seek out Graduate Academic Advisors, MS Faculty Advisor or the Director of Graduate Studies for advice. PhD students are strongly encouraged to consult their faculty advisor for course recommendations.

General advice for new students:
- Grades and GPA are important. To maintain good academic standing and qualify for graduation, students must maintain at least a 3.0 GPA. Grade of 'C' or higher is required for a course to count toward coursework completion.
- Unless specifically advised, new graduate students should not enroll in non-CS coursework or research hours (CS 597, 598 or 599). Some new PhD students may be advised to register for PhD Thesis Research hours (CS 599).

Course Prerequisites
Prerequisites are listed for all classes in the course catalog and students should use them as guidelines to determine their success in that class; it is the students' responsibility to check the prerequisites and refer to their content to determine if they have the necessary background. Prerequisite checks are not enforced during registration for graduate students; however, be advised that instructors may choose to enforce and ask a student to drop the class if prerequisites are not met. Students will not be allowed to withdraw from a course after the drop deadline because they have not met the prerequisites. The drop deadline is the 10th day of classes for Fall & Spring and 5th day for summer terms. This drop deadline is strictly enforced for all courses.

CS Registration Restrictions*
The Computer Science department has a strict registration policy for all CS graduate students. Graduate students may not register for more than 3 CS didactic classes (i.e., CS 400-494 and CS 500-594 classes) – 12 credit hours (9 if registering for CS 491-Seminar).

Enforcement of the Policy
During the registration period of each semester, students must ensure they comply with the restrictions of CS classes whenever they register or make changes to their registration. Anyone in violation of the registration policy can be removed from courses by the Department until their credit hours of didactic classes no longer exceed the limit defined above. In addition, students violating this policy repeatedly may be restricted from future registration until they have met with the DGS.

How will it be implemented?
- The Department performs random checks on graduate student registration during the registration period
- Graduate students registered for more than 3 graduate CS didactic classes (at any time in the registration cycle) will be emailed with a warning that they are exceeding the limit and given

ample time to correct their registration; or receive permission to stay in class via petition approved by the DGS. The deadline to correct registration will be significantly shorter as the semester begins.

- Once the deadline has passed, if a student has not corrected their registration or received permission to stay – a hold will be placed on their account which prevents further registration of any kind (both add / drop)
- The Department will then decide which classes to drop and send paperwork to Registration so that the Registration office can drop the class(es) from the student's schedule
- All exemptions must be approved via petition by the DGS

The policy is designed to help the department strategically plan CS course offerings and sizes of the classes that benefit and meet the needs of all CS students in the 400 and 500 level courses.

*The department may implement new temporary restrictions as needed.

University Registration Policies
Refer to Graduate College policy on course load needed for Upass, financial aid, assistantships, and visa status maintenance requirements. Students on a time-limited visa must consult the Office of International Service (OIS) on registration requirements. Registration is required if a student plans to use any university facilities.

MS students choosing the project/thesis option are not required to register in order to graduate, once they have completed all course credit requirements, including research hours. If needed, students can petition to register for zero hours - consult the UIC graduate catalog https://grad.uic.edu/zero-hour-registration/ for details.

Doctoral students upon passing the preliminary exam are required to register for at least zero credit hours each semester (excluding summer) until the final defense is completed and the dissertation is submitted in compliance with department and Graduate College rules. If the PhD candidate decides to defend during the summer, registration is required for summer term. PhD candidates are not required to register after they successfully defend their dissertation unless registration is required to maintain a specific status (i.e., assistantship, visa, or continued use of university facilities). See http://grad.uic.edu/zero-hour-registration for further details

If a PhD candidate successfully defends the dissertation and submits the final dissertation to the Graduate College after the semester deadline but prior to the add/drop deadline of the following semester, the degree is conferred in the subsequent semester. Registration for that semester is not required.

Adding/Dropping/Withdrawing from Courses
Students must finalize their class schedule by the end of the add/drop period (10th day for Fall & Spring, 5th day for Summer terms); it is highly recommended students finalize their schedule by the end of the first week of the semester. Once the add/drop period has ended, students are not allowed to add/drop classes.

Any requests to add/withdraw from a class after the add/drop period must be petitioned, with support from instructor (not advisor) of the class. Submit the petition along with all supporting documentation to 'cs-grad@uic.edu'. Petition will be reviewed for completion and processed accordingly.

As a general policy, there is a high threshold for approval consideration of a late withdraw after the add/drop deadline. If permission (from the Director of Graduate Studies) is granted for such a "late drop", it will be reported as a withdrawal (W) on the transcript. A "W" cannot be stricken from students' permanent record and cannot be replaced by a new grade should they retake the course and obtain a letter grade.

The following are examples of unacceptable reasons for dropping a course after the deadline: "I have had this material before", "This course will not be useful to me", "I am taking too many courses", "I do not have the prerequisites", "I forgot to drop the course before the drop deadline", "A bad grade will affect my GPA negatively" or "I have not attended classes for the past few weeks". It is **students' responsibility** to make sure that they enroll in classes that are appropriate for their academic course load, schedule and that **they have met all prerequisites**.

Students holding fellowships, assistantships, tuition and fee waivers, and student visas must maintain the required number of credit hours or risk loss of their aid for the term. Students whose waivers are revoked due to insufficient credit hours will be billed the full cost of tuition, fees and any late charges that may apply.

Students are allowed to register for a maximum total of 20 hours per semester. Note: students must remain in compliance with the CS department's registration policy for graduate students. In order to register for more than 20 hours, the student must have approval from his/her advisor and submit that information to cs-grad@uic.edu for override permission.

CS 591 – Computer Science Internship
CS 591 (aka Internship class) is intended primarily for international CS MS students*, enabling them to participate in a paid internship outside UIC while a student.

Non-international students and students in unpaid internships may also request to register for the class to receive credit

Eligibility requirements to enroll in the class:
- Student must be in good academic standing (not on probation)
- Internship must be in Computer Science
- Internship date ranges must be within the dates of instruction for the semester. Summer internships: Both Summer & Summer II dates combined are inclusive
- An official/formal offer of internship from the employer:
  o Must be on their letterhead signed by the appropriate personnel that includes their contact information (company email address or phone)
  o Must specify date ranges of internship (meeting date range requirements) and whether paid/unpaid
  o Brief description of the internship and/or their responsibilities
- Offer letter and request to enroll in CS 591 submitted at least 2 days prior to add/drop of the pertaining semester.

Completion requirements of the class:
- At the end of the internship:
  o Employer must submit acknowledgement of students' satisfactory completion of internship within 1-2 business days of last day of internship

- - Student must submit a one-page, high level report on what they did (without breaching any confidentiality or proprietary information), within a week of internship completion.
- Report must include student name, company where interned, dates of internship, and a high-level description of tasks and responsibilities
- CS DGS will review the two above and submit appropriate grade (Credit/No Credit)
  - Satisfactory completion required is for future approvals.

Logistics of the class
- Credit hours: 1 per semester
- Grading mode: Credit / No Credit
- Tuition and fees: Apply as regular credit hours
- Registration limit: May take/use and complete total of 3 times
- Acceptable date range** for the internship:
  - Fall & Spring semesters: First – Last day of instruction (final exam dates **not** included)
  - Summer: Frist day of Summer I – Last day of Summer II semester instruction

**Students using the course for CPT can only work within these dates. If the internship dates fall outside of this date range, students will have to request and obtain offer letter with adjusted date ranges from the employer; or, apply for pre-completion OPT. Consult OIS for further information.

*All PhD students and MS students actively pursuing thesis option should talk to their faculty advisor and register for appropriate 598/599 hrs to apply for CPT, instead of CS 591. PhD students: keep in mind CPT during major semester (Fall/Spring) requires department approval FIRST - email cs-grad@uic.edu with their offer letter before submitting OIS' CPT application

Student Forms

Petitions

A student requesting an exception to a policy, requirement or deadline must submit the request via a petition. Some are internal department petitions (request to take and use non-CS courses towards degree, WCP exceptions etc) and others are Graduate College petitions (transfer credit petitions, zero hour registration etc.).

In general, most petitions would require advisor endorsement (instructor for late drop/add of class) for PhD students. Submitted petitions are then considered by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) who makes the final decision for internal department petitions and recommendations of approval/denial for Graduate College petitions. Graduate College is the final authority on all petitions required by them. Questions can be directed to the CS Student Affairs office (email: cs-grad@ui.cedu) who can advise students on process, status or refer them to the corresponding unit/authority.

The following is a typical petition process:
1. Find the petition in the appropriate website
   - Internal - https://cs.uic.edu/graduate/graduate-student-resources/
   - Graduate College - https://grad.uic.edu/academic-support/student-resources/graduate-student-forms/
2. Secure the necessary supporting documents and complete the petition.
   - Students should begin this process early; in some cases, petitions require students to obtain supporting documents as letters, transcripts from other institutions or syllabus that take extended time to obtain.
3. Obtain advisor's approval – needs comments and signature.
   - If petition related to a course, instructor approval is needed in place of advisor
   - If MS coursework only student – no advisor signature is required unless petitioning to the above.
4. Submit completed petition (with supporting documents and advisor approval) to CS Student Affairs Office (cs-grad@uic.edu).
5. Petitions will be reviewed for completeness and forwarded to the DGS for a decision. Students should not rely on their advisor to do this for them. It is the students' responsibility.
6. The DGS will review the petition, approve or deny, provide written comments, sign it and return it to the CS Student Affairs Office (cs-grad@uic.edu). While we strive for the process to take no more than 5-10 business days, please be advised that certain petitions may take longer to process since they require thorough review and consultation.
7. If the petition needs Graduate College approval, it will be routed to them by the CS Student Affairs office.
8. Students will be notified of the final decision by CS Student Affairs office (if departmental petition) or by the Graduate College (if GC petition).

Transfer Credit.

Once enrolled, students may petition to transfer coursework completed (with grade of A or B) prior to the start of UIC-CS graduate program IF it was not used towards that previous degree. This may be submitted for consideration only after the 3rd week of students' first semester as a CS graduate student.

Information and requirements:

- Maximum 9 semester hours equivalent of UIC CS graduate coursework is eligible for transfer
  - 12 semesters hours are allowed, if classes were taken as non-degree at UIC
- Credit transfer from non-US institutions is generally not allowed
- If requesting to transfer course(s) taken as part of a previous earned degree AND not used to satisfy requirements for that degree, students must also provide an official letter from the university stating that the course(s) were not used to satisfy any prior degree requirements
- Courses completed outside UIC while the student is pursuing their graduate studies in the Computer Science program at UIC are not transferable

Process: After the 3rd week of students' first semester, they must submit the following to CS Student Affairs Office (cs-grad@uic.edu):

1. Transfer credit petition listing all courses wishing to transfer and UIC equivalence, if applicable
2. Transcript showing grades of all the courses requesting to transfer
3. Original syllabus for each course whose transfer is being requested. Complete syllabus must contain the following, at minimum: course description and structure, grading & topics.
4. Syllabus of UIC CS course equivalent (if offered at UIC-CS)
5. Official letter, on University letterhead, confirming courses not used for previous degree if taken as part of the degree.

Financial Aid Information

Financial aid is available in the form of fellowships, teaching assistantships, research assistantships, tuition fee waivers and graduate assistantships. Fellowships and assistantships typically include a monthly stipend and waiver of certain tuition and fees. Students on good standing, as defined by the department standards, can be nominated and/or awarded any type of aid.

Assistantships are service-based appointments and have set start and end dates. The waiver attached to these appointments are conditional upon duration and appointment percentage. The details of the condition and an overview of assistantships are available at http://grad.uic.edu/assistantships.

Fellowships and Awards

Fellowships are awarded in recognition of scholarly achievement and promise. They enable students to pursue graduate studies and research without a service requirement. The stipends vary by fellowships. Some fellowships allow recipients to accept additional funding, recipients should consult the terms of the award for details.

Various fellowships and awards are available through the Graduate College and external foundations. Students and faculty are notified periodically about opportunities and deadlines. Most external fellowships require U.S. citizenship or permanent residency. For details on Graduate College Fellowships and general funding information, consult the 'Funding and Awards' section of the Graduate College website (https://grad.uic.edu/funding-awards/).

Application Procedures: Deadlines for Graduate College administered fellowships are set by the Graduate College Awards Committee. Since departmental nominations are required, students must submit complete application(s) to the CS Student Affairs Office before the Graduate College deadline. Departmental deadlines are communicated via email. Recommendation letters must be submitted electronically by the recommender directly to cs-grad@uic.edu.

External fellowships have their own submission procedures. Students should contact the CS Student Affairs office with questions when opportunities are announced.

After fellowship deadlines are announced, interested students should consult their advisor, then submit a complete application by the department deadlines. The Director of Graduate Studies will review application, write recommendations as needed, and select nominees (if applicable).

Teaching Assistantships
Teaching Assistantships (TAs) are available to all CS graduate students, but priority is given to PhD students. TAs assist in the teaching and grading of CS course work under the direction of the course instructor.

Guidelines for applying, eligibility and hiring consideration can be found at https://cs.uic.edu/graduate/graduate-student-resources/ta-info/.

CS graduate students apply when the electronic TA application becomes available. The majority of TAs are hired well in advance of the start of the semester.

English Proficiency: According to both Illinois state law (110 ILCS 305/7c) and UIC policy, all non-native English-speaking Teaching Assistants must be certified as proficient in spoken English before being given instructional responsibilities. This offer of appointment is conditional on the completion of UIC's oral English proficiency certification process. For information on the procedure, see the International Teaching Assistant Program's website: https://ita.grad.uic.edu/oral-english-proficiency-testing.

Research Assistantships
Research Assistantships (RAs) are allocated by individual faculty so students should contact faculty members with shared research interests directly. The faculty member, depending on the availability of grant money determines the term and eligibility requirements of the appointment.

Tuition and Fee Waiver
A limited number of tuition and fee waivers* are available to the department through Graduate College. These awards provide an exemption from tuition fee, service fee, health service fee, AFMFA, LITA and partial cost of Campus Care health insurance (Fall & Spring only).

Application Procedure: Students must complete and submit the online application when it becomes available and are notified by the CS Student Affairs office. Students are contacted via UIC email when the application is open.

*Predominantly intended for PhD students.

Graduate Assistantship
Graduate Assistantships (Gas) carry similar benefits to TAs and RAs and are described in https://grad.uic.edu/assistantships/. The Computer Science department does not hire any GAs, however other units on the campus hire graduate students as TAs, RAs and GAs. The UIC handshake platform has listings for assistantships that are open to the general graduate student population (https://careerservices.uic.edu/students/join-handshake/).

We expect CS students to be professional in their search. Students should not solicit random staff and faculty for openings; they should only apply to those officially advertised and follow directions on how to apply.

Assistantship during Summer
Students do not need to be enrolled in Summer semester to hold an assistantship in Summer. Students with an RA are advised not to register in the Summer unless specifically instructed by their advisor or PhD students intending to do a prelim or final defense during the Summer. The advisor and student can consult the advisor's grant manager or Student Affair's office for registration requirements and implications.

Graduate Hourly
Graduate hourly are hired by each unit on campus based on need, students are usually paid by the hour for the number of hours worked for each pay period. This usually does not carry any benefits of a fee waiver. Registration for Summer is not required to hold Summer position.

Departmental Information for TAs

Teaching Assistantships (TAs) are awarded to CS graduate students based on academic performance and potential. The renewal of TAs takes multiple factors into consideration, as outlined in the 'Guidelines for appointment, assignment, and reappointment'; however, the primary requirement for renewal is satisfactory TA reviews from both the instructor(s) they are assigned to and the students they are working with. For PhD students: although there is guarantee of funding - if making satisfactory progress - for the duration of studies (most complete within 5 years), a teaching assistantship will not be renewed in cases of misconduct or poor reviews. All first semester TA offers are contingent upon the student passing the Oral English Certification exam conducted by the International Teaching Assistant Program.

TAs are assigned to a class prior to the start of the semester; the department does its best to accommodate preferences, but the department's priority is finding an appropriate TA for each class. All CS graduate TAs are expected to be able to TA any 100 and 200 level CS classes.

Appointment Timeline
Typical contract dates for Fall are August 16th – December 31st and January 1st - May 15th for Spring semester. Start and end date may vary based on time of hire and/or graduation of students on visa.
- TAs are expected to be ready and available to perform TA duties (helping prep for the class) on the start date of the TA contract
- TAs are expected to be available through final grading submission deadline (Wednesday after finals of that semester)
- TAs will be assigned TA duties to avoid conflicts with their own class schedule. No other scheduling requests are guaranteed. TAs should clearly communicate their availability and keep that separate from their scheduling preferences.

TAs are required to:
- Attend university-wide orientations/trainings
- Attend department TA training
- Check-in in-person with CS student affairs on Monday of the first week of classes by Noon
- New international student TAs must pass the Oral Certification by the end of their 1st semester. Information is available on the ITA website at https://ita.grad.uic.edu/.

Once a TA accepts and signs the offer letter, requests to change the appointment after the start date or after the start of the semester (whichever is the earlier date) are not acceptable

Resigning the assistantship at the last minute or after the semester begins reflects poorly on a student's level of commitment and will be taken into consideration for future renewal

TAs are notified as soon as they are assigned to a class. At that point TAs are required to contact the instructor immediately to introduce themself and set up a meeting to understand the instructors' expectations and responsibilities as TA in the class. ***TAs should respond to any emails within 24 hours, including during their first week of work***.

General Information

Meet the instructor before classes start to have a clear understanding of their expectations and TA responsibilities:

- *Curriculum* - get a course syllabus, text book, and or other curriculum materials. If TA is not familiar with the technical content of the course, it is their responsibility to learn the material.
- *Lecture* - TAs may attend regularly to help with managing in class assignments, helping students, taking attendance, etc. TAs may attend only during exams to help proctor. On occasion, TAs may help deliver the lecture, if an instructor has a conflict. TAs may attend the first lecture, to introduce the TA staff to the class.
- *Labs or Discussion Sessions* - for classes which run labs or discussion sessions, these sections are led by graduate TAs. Graduate TAs will be assigned to at least two sections. In cases where less undergraduate TA support is available, Graduate TAs will be assigned to up to four sections. In most cases, graduate TAs are expected to lead these sections, see below for guidance.
- *Grading* - determine from your instructor what your grading duties are. You should also be provided a grading timeline including the time when grading will be available and the deadline to complete the grading. Some instructors will require you to grading in a grading session. This is a scheduled place and time where all TAs grade together. These sessions are required and also much more efficient than grading on your own.
- *Course systems* - as soon as possible, you should set up accounts and familiarize yourself with the course systems. At a minimum this will include Blackboard. Other systems the courses might use include Gradescope, Piazza, Zybooks, github classroom, etc.
- *Exams* - it is important to consider your responsibilities with exams. These occur less frequently during the semester but often require a lot of help from the entire TA staff. The hours you spend helping with exams is factored into your hours per week. Often TAs will help with: pre-flighting the exam to make sure there are no errors, picking up exams and help carry them to the room, handing out exams, getting students in assigned seats, checking student identification during exams, proctoring exams, collecting exams, scanning examples, setting up exams on Gradescope, and grading exams. Please check with your instructor to see what roles you will have during exams.
- *Office hours* – most TAs hold at least a few office hours per week. See below for additional details about the location. TAs should not be deep in their own work during office hours. Keep your eyes out for wandering students and be the first to reach out and offer assistance. Keep Piazza open in case students are not able to find you. Office hours should be held in person unless otherwise instructed by the instructor of your class. Keep track of which students and how many attend your office hours. If your office hours are not being utilized, the instructors may reassign your hours to something more productive for the class.
- *Communication* - make sure you have a clear understanding of the instructors preferred communication style – including email, Slack, Discord, etc. Both parties should decide on working hours and expectations for responding. For example, if you are in the lab, in office hours, it is reasonable for the instructor to expect a somewhat immediate response from you. It is also reasonable for an instructor to expect a response within 24 hours during normal business days/times.

Expected Behavior
A TA has the responsibility to uphold the academic mission of the university, here are some expectations:
- Be on time. This includes staff meetings, lab, lecture, office hours, etc.
- Be professional, polite, considerate and fair to all students and teaching staff.
- Be fair and consistent when grading.
- Make safety a priority on and off campus. Office hours should not be held beyond the closing time of the building where building access is needed.
- Be careful and responsible for equipment in classrooms and labs. To avoid theft, do not leave classrooms, labs, or TA spaces open.
- Harassment in any form is not tolerated

Schedule and Conflicts
Be consistent with your schedule: do not change office hours, switch labs, etc. You are committing to the work schedule for 15 weeks. If something comes up, it is your responsibility to find a substitute or a swap with another graduate TA. After finding a solution, then go the instructor and ask for their approval. In the event of an emergency that will cause you to be late or miss, you must notify the entire relevant teaching team as soon as possible.

As a TA, your primary responsibility is your teaching duties. We only schedule TA duties around the classes you are registered for.

Academic Misconduct
If any TA, RA, TFW holder or grader is caught in an act of cheating, plagiarism, making threats against any person with the intention of affecting academic performance, examination by proxy, grade tampering, or other acts of academic dishonesty, the consequences will be serious. TAs will forfeit all financial aid from the department in that semester and any future consideration for financial aid from the department. If the financial aid is from another unit at UIC, their UIC employer will be informed in writing of any misconduct TAs may be dismissed from the university. Misconduct will result in disciplinary action.

Leading a Section
TAs often lead labs and discussion sections with the help of UTAs. Here is some guidance on how to lead a sections. Each instructor will have additional guidance which should supersede this:
- *First session* - introduce yourself and make sure all other TAs introduce themselves. It is recommended that you do this for the first three weeks due to our two week shopping period. Test the systems before to make sure all is working. Set the tone the first day.
- *Opening the Session* - at the start of each session, you should always say a few remarks. Do not just allow the session to start without a formal introduction to the activity, material, and goals for the session.
- *During the Session* - TAs should be actively involved the entire session. If you are able, you should be walking around the room and proactively asking students if they need help. Do not sit at the front of the room and wait for students to come to you. Do not work on any other work. If you look busy, students will not feel comfortable asking for help. Instead, you should be always available and offer your help continuously throughout the session.

- *Managing Time* - keep an eye on the time throughout the session. It is your responsibility to keep the students on track. If they are taking too long on an activity, you should make an announcement to remind them of time and perhaps address a common question to the entire class.
- *End of the Session* - make sure to end on time. Oftentimes, these sections happen back to back. Get students out of the room in time for the next section to start on time. This does not happen naturally and it will need some facilitation from TAs.
- *Follow instructions from your Instructor* - each section might run differently. Considerations: assigned groups, seating chart, how to help students, if hints are allowed, collaboration policies, allowed resources, devices allowed, notes allowed, etc.

Problems and Concerns
TAs should follow the instructions and take the lead of the instructor. But a TAs ultimate responsibility is to the students. If TAs have concerns regarding the class and/or instructor they should bring their concerns to the Director of Student Affairs or Director of Graduate Studies. All reported concerns will be kept confidential.

Space for Office Hours
All CS classes with TAs are provided a desk space in one of the TA/Tutoring areas on 2nd floor of CDRLC.

The desk spaces for each class will be clearly labeled and advertised to students, TAs and instructors prior to the start of the semester. Look for directions from the CS Student Affairs office.

This is a shared and open space. TAs should be courteous and keep the space they occupy clean and encourage their students to follow their lead. Be aware of leaving personal belongings in these shared spaces even if stepping away for only a few minutes. selected.

General Graduation Guidelines

Students should track progress of their degree completion using this manual as a reference for requirements, policies and procedures. The self-check helps students estimate their graduation term.

Recommended step by step process

1-2 months prior to their intended semester of graduation:

- Students should send email request for "*Graduation Check*" to cs-grad@uic.edu, at least one month prior to the term they intend to graduate. It should include their name, UIN, program (if MS identify thesis, project or coursework only option) and expected graduation term. Student Affairs staff will check students' records and respond with verification of final requirements to be completed to graduate. An early check allows students ample time to modify their registration, if necessary, for their final semester.
- Students should inform their advisor of their intent to graduate (does not apply to MS students' w/ coursework only option).
- Take note of all deadlines related to graduation, they are set by the Graduate College and are **non-negotiable**. It is the student's responsibility to ensure they submit the necessary paperwork/reports by appropriate deadlines to graduate on time. CS Students Affairs office emails a reminder with all the deadlines at the beginning of the semester, they are also available on the graduate academic calendar.
- 'Apply to Graduate' via my.uic.edu portal in the "Academics" tab of the student part of the portal (students may also have staff and faculty sections if they work on campus and/or are a teaching assistant). Go to the "Records" sub-tab and then choose "Declare your Intent to Graduate".

Students graduating with a MS Thesis / PhD Dissertation must:

1. Submit a "Committee Recommendation Form" **six** weeks prior to their defense date. The form must be filled out online, signed by their advisor and submitted to the CS Student Affairs Office (cs-grad@uic.edu). Handwritten forms are not accepted. https://grad.uic.edu/academic-support/student-resources/graduate-student-forms/
   a. Committee members not part of UIC Graduate College faculty are considered external members and a CV for each external member must be attached; most UIC lecturers, clinical faculty, research faculty, post docs or visiting faculty are NOT members. All non-UIC members are considered external. For PhD Dissertations: All proposed members must have a PhD.
   b. Candidates must attach an abstract to the committee recommendation form. If any data (public datasets, or data that obtained from other institutions, or data student has have collected) is used, clearly state so in the abstract. If human subjects are involved, Institutional Review Board approval is required. If animals are involved, Animal Care Panel approval is required (please see more details on human subjects and animal care on p. 19).
   c. All candidates must send a copy of their thesis / dissertation to their committee **at least one week** prior to the defense.

d.　All defenses must be in person – the candidate and all Committee members are expected to attend in person.
　　e.　All candidates must send an email announcement for advertisement at least a week prior their defense to cs-grad@uic.edu. Defense details are advertised to all faculty and graduate students.
　　f.　Graduate College will return an 'Exam Report' after they approve the Committee Recommendation Form. Exam report will be emailed to students' chair, directly.
2. Consult the '*Graduate Thesis Manual*' for information on all required forms and format of the thesis.
3. Schedule defense date at least **two weeks** (for PhD) and **10 days** (for MS thesis) prior to the thesis submission deadline.
4. Just prior to or immediately following their defense, candidates should email a PDF copy of their thesis to cs- grad@uic.edu for a format check.
5. After assigning a grade of "pass" or "fail", the committee chair should obtain the electronic signatures of all committee members and submit the signed exam report cs-grad@uic.edu. A student cannot be passed with more than one "fail" vote.
6. All theses are submitted electronically. Information on electronic submission is available on Graduate College website: https://grad.uic.edu/academic-support/thesis/.
7. All required forms must be completed and signed before submitting them to Graduate College. A detailed checklist of the required forms is available in the thesis manual.

Students graduating with the MS Project option:

1. Students should make sure their advisor and the second committee member have ample time (at least one week) to read and approve the project. Please note: the second member will presumably read it after student's advisor has approved it, so at least two weeks should be allotted to this process.
   - All CS lecturers, assistant, associate, full professors and adjunct faculty are by default eligible to serve as a primary advisor and secondary committee member. Secondary committee member can also be a full-time faculty member at UIC (non-CS faculty or adjunct faculty); however they must be pre-approved by the primary advisor and DGS. One of the committee members should hold at least a 50% appointment in the CS department.
2. Student's advisor & second committee member must sign 'Certificate of Approval' form - both electronic signatures on a single copy.
3. Submit a PDF copy of the project report and the 'Certificate of Approval' form to the cs-grad@uic.edu by the department project deadline.
4. Minimum format guidelines for the project report:
   - Cover page –including title, name, UIN, committee names and semester of graduation
   - Table of Contents
   - Abstract
   - Introduction, chapters, conclusion and cited literature
   - Begin each chapter and section on a new page
   - There are no specific length requirements, however the project should be report should describe the project in detail.

Final Steps
- Students should ensure their advisor submits grade changes for any DFR, I or M grades for research hours (597, 598 or 599).
- Return all borrowed equipment and keys to CDRLC 3414.

Please note that if a student does not graduate in the semester they submitted their 'Intent to Graduate', they must re-submit the request again during the term the student intends to graduate. The previous request does NOT carry over to the next semester.

Additional Important Information

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a work authorization that allows F-1 students to participate in off-campus training, paid or unpaid, that is directly related to their major of study. CPT is an academic benefit, therefore, the internship must be required or considered an integral part of a student's degree program.

CPT is administered through the department via registration in CS 591. It requires department and Office of International Services (OIS) approval. Information on the basics and steps to apply is available at: https://ois.uic.edu/immigration/f-1-student/f-1-curricular-practical-training/. Refer to CS 591 section for details on how to apply to register for the class. PhD students must consult with their faculty advisor directly for CS 599 registration and CPT approval.

All Fall/Spring appointments must be pre-approved **first**. If approved, be advised that students on F-1 visas are limited to maximum 20hrs/week, which could be an internship alone or internship and UIC assistantship.

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

"Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a work authorization that allows F-1 international students to obtain off-campus training directly related to their field of study both during their academic program and after graduation."

Office of International Services has details of OPT requirements and process on their website: https://ois.uic.edu/immigration/f-1-student/f-1-optional-practical-training/.

Be advised that for CS Graduate Students - ALL OPT and pre-OPT requests must be submitted for review and approval through CS Student Affairs. Faculty advisors are NOT authorized to approve any OPT.

Requirements:
- Be on good standing (GPA 3.0 or above)
- Be on full standing (if admitted on limited standing, all requirements must have been met prior to the request).
- Start the process early
- OPT authorization/advisor approval required by OIS can be provided only by the CS Graduate Program Advisor. Approval from faculty advisors are NOT acceptable.

Letters

Students sometimes need verification of their status as a CS Graduate student. All requests should be submitted via 'CS Graduate Letter Request' form.

Eligible letters will be generated and sent to student's UIC email within 5-10 business days, allow for longer processing time at the beginning and end of semester. **Late or walk-in requests will NOT be prioritized**. Below are the most common letters requested:

- Good standing letter -- verifying a student in the department in good standing
- Final semester letter* -- verifying remaining degree requirements
- Graduation letter -- verifying graduation or prospective graduation
- Other**

*Submission of intent to graduate AND finalization of registration is required to process 'Final semester letter'. Students requesting this letter to maintain full-time visa status must be registered for less than full-time course load to be eligible - final semester letters are NOT issued to students who are considered full-time (i.e. 9+ hours or 8hrs + 50% assistantship). Students should verify eligibility, submit intent to graduate and finalize registration BEFORE submitting the form.

** Skills gained via coursework CANNOT be verified by CS Student Affairs staff since they do not have direct knowledge. Instructors should be contacted directly with such requests.

Medical Insurance

All students enrolled at UIC are automatically enrolled in health insurance plan 'CampusCare' - a 'student health benefit program that has been providing comprehensive health care benefits to eligible enrolled students and their covered dependents'. We encourage international students to become familiar with all aspects of medical insurance.

Refer to CampusCare website (http://campuscare.uic.edu/), for complete details on Enrollment and Waiver, Benefits, Policies and other important information. A few highlights of the insurance:
- Coverage - coverage dates can be found under 'Important Information' and 'Dates & Fees'. The dates are continuous from semester to semester providing coverage throughout the year as long as students register continuously.
- Waiver - Students have the option to waive university provided health insurance if they have 'major medical insurance'. Refer to 'Important Information' and 'Waivers' for details on policy and process for the waiver.
  - Reinstatement – Once waived, students have to request reinstatement to re-enroll in 'CampusCare'. The same section covers reinstatement information.

Change of Address/Telephone Number/Name

Any changes to name, address (including current and permanent) and telephone number must be reported the following critical units at UIC:
- UIC Records Office - https://registrar.uic.edu/student-records/
  - Choose 'Updating Student Information'
- Human Resources (HR) - https://www.hr.uillinois.edu/
  - Choose 'HR systems' and 'Update My Information'
- Office of International Services – students on F-1 visa
  - https://ois.uic.edu/immigration/f-1-student/
  - See 'Contact Information Updates' section under 'Maintaining F-1 status basics'

Grievance Procedure

Any grievance related to a particular course should try to be resolved with the instructor first. If the grievance cannot be resolved to mutual satisfaction, students may appeal to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), who will try to mediate. The DGS will try to help resolve the situation; if a resolution cannot be reached, they will then refer the student to the Department Head, Graduate College or 'Office of the Dean of Students' as appropriate.

Similar process applies to any grievances within the CS department. For grievances outside CS department, CS department recommends students appeal to the 'Office of the Dean of Students', if a resolution cannot be reached directly with the party involved.

University Computer Policy

The university is committed to a respectful, safe, and ethical environment for all members of the university community ("members").

This policy applies to all academic, research, and administrative departments and offices at the University of Illinois Chicago; all university faculty, staff, students, alumni, applicants, visitors, contractors and affiliates (university "members'); and all resources in the university computing portfolio including: systems, network infrastructure, devices, facilities and applications (collectively referred to as "computational resources"), whether located on university property or accessed remotely.

Full policy on acceptable use of computational resources is listed at:
https://policies.uic.edu/uic-policy-library/information-technology/acceptable-use-of-computational-resources/

Conduct

Each CS Graduate student represents the department as they interact with the UIC community. We expect all our students to conduct themselves in a courteous, respectful and professional manner. This includes addressing faculty and staff appropriately, following proper email etiquette and refraining from spamming.