Stony Brook University

PhD Program Orientation

C. R. Ramakrishnan, Graduate Program Director
Erez Zadok, Graduate Program Advisor
Cindy Scalzo, Graduate Coordinator

Computer Science Department
Goal of the PhD program

To Turn Students into Scholars

… who are able to perform high-quality original research

… with preparation in the broad discipline of Computer Science

… and understand the impact of their and others’ work

… on their specialized area as well as Science and Society at large

This is usually achieved in multiple steps spread over 5 years (more or less)

• We will review these steps and requirements now
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• Academic Progress and Standing
• Registration and Credits
• Support
• Registration for Spring 2021
• Responsible Conduct
• In Conclusion…
CS Department

• Administration
  • Samir Das (Chair)
  • Kathy Germana (Asst. to Chair)

• Graduate Program
  • C. R. Ramakrishnan (Graduate Program Director)
  • Erez Zadok (Graduate Academic Advisor, MS Program)
  • Cindy Scalzo (Graduate Program Coordinator)

• Graduate Admissions
  • Himanshu Gupta (Grad. Admissions Director)
  • Lourdes Hartwell (Admissions Coordinator)
  • Allison Katz (Admissions Coordinator)

• Research Administration
  • Betty Knittweis (Research payroll, other research expenditures)
Other Important Units

• Graduate School
  • Broader support, policy making for all graduate programs in the university

• Registrar and Bursar’s Office
  • Enrollment and fees payment

• Visa and Immigration Services (VIS)
Graduate Handbook and FAQ

- Describes everything you need know about MS/PhD program in CS.
- Access from the departmental web page. Go to Students→Graduate.
- Read the latest version.

Read the handbook. Keep a copy under your pillow.
Requirements

Spring 2021 Handbook describes your PhD progress and graduation requirements.

• This is your default set of requirements.
  • At the time of graduation, you may choose a the requirements from a more recent edition of the Handbook (if anything has changed).

• COVID Exception: you can use Fall 2020 Handbook if you want.
• You cannot mix and match requirements from different years.
• Generally there may be minor tweaks from year to year, but major changes are infrequent.
PhD Program Structure

- Graduate-Level Courses
  - Timing: mainly in the first 2 years

- Research under supervision of a faculty advisor
  - Timing: throughout the program, but starting at least at the end of the 2nd semester
  - Begin with critical reading of a research problem
  - Develop into independent and original research

- Teaching (TA responsibilities)
  - Timing: mainly in the first year
Steps and Milestones

1. Qualifier Courses
   - Time limit: By the end of 4 semesters
   - *Strong recommendation: Complete in 3 semesters*

2. Research Proficiency Exam (RPE)
   - Time Limit: By the end of 4 semesters
   - Earlier completion for research-ready students

   - Complete by end of year 4

4. Thesis Defense
   - Complete by end of year 5
Remember Your Goal
*Do scholarly research to complete your PhD Degree*

- Focusing only on how to complete Qualifiers as quickly and easily as possible is not recommended.
- Focusing on research to the detriment of coursework is not recommended either.
- In your first year, you should be judicious with courses so that they:
  - Help you complete Qualifier requirements.
  - Give you background in your expected area of research.
  - Help you identify and begin work with a research advisor.
  - Shortcuts don’t help!
1. Qualifiers

Complete 5 Graduate Courses with grade A- or better, with following restrictions:

• At least 4 courses, covering 3 breadth areas:
  • Theory, Systems, IIS.

• The 5\textsuperscript{th} course may be any regularly-scheduled graduate lecture course, with a few restrictions; see Handbook for details.

Required: Complete in 4 semesters.

Enforced: Complete these in 3 semesters unless research progress is extraordinary; research-ready students who finish their RPE early may take 4 semesters.
Sample Plan for First 2 Years

1st semester: 2+ quals completed, narrow down dissertation advisor
2nd semester: 2+ additional quals completed, have dissertation advisor
1st summer: research with dissertation advisor

(Don’t disappear in summer!)

3rd semester: finish any remaining quals, research with advisor
4th semester: take any other course you want/need, research with advisor
2nd summer: complete research for RPE, finish RPE by end.

Many students finish quals requirements in 1st year.
Theory Qualifiers

- CSE 512: Machine Learning
- CSE 540: Theory of Computation
- CSE 541: Logic in Computer Science
- CSE 547: Discrete Mathematics
- CSE 548: Analysis of Algorithms
- CSE 549: Computational Biology
Systems Qualifiers

- CSE 502: Computer Architecture
- CSE 504: Compiler Design
- CSE 506: Operating Systems
- CSE 508: Network Security
- CSE 509: Computer System Security
- CSE 532: Database Systems
- CSE 534: Fundamentals of Computer Networks
- CSE 535: Distributed Systems
IIS Qualifiers

• CSE 505: Computing with Logic
• CSE 519: Data Science Fundamentals
• CSE 527: Introduction to Computer Vision
• CSE 528: Computer Graphics
• CSE 537: Artificial Intelligence
• CSE 538: Natural Language Processing
• CSE 564: Visualization
Academic Advising

Every incoming PhD student has been assigned an “Academic Advisor”.

• The academic advisor will help you plan your qualifier and other courses during your first year here.

• He/she will also guide you to find and begin research with your “Dissertation Advisor”.

• Academic advisor may not necessarily be in your research area, but will still provide invaluable advice to guide your progress.

• Email your academic advisor asap and set up an appointment to meet with him/her.
2. RPE
Research Proficiency Exam

*Designed to test basic ability to critically read papers, synthesize information, understand problems, and formalize arguments.*

- When working with an advisor, acquire significant familiarity with one research problem area
- Survey important papers in a narrow area; synthesize info. on their contribution
- Write a formal RPE report
- Make an hour-long presentation before an RPE committee (open to all)
- Expected completion: by the end of Year 2
3. Prelim

Thesis proposal

• Formerly, this was a formal exam with a pass/retake/fail (hence sometimes called by its old name “Prelim Exam”)
• Now this is a proposal of your thesis to a faculty committee
• Generally done when the thesis problem is clear
• The proposal is a detailed report on what has been done so far, and
  • lists what will be completed before the thesis is finished.
• There is a formal proposal presentation to the committee (others may attend by invitation)
4. Defense

- Complete and submit dissertation to a committee (with one external member)
- Make a formal presentation to the committee (open to all)
- Upon successful completion, celebrate (and answer countless questions on where you are headed next).
Good Standing

• Academic progress is evaluated by entire faculty
  • All-hands faculty meetings held twice a year
  • Progress in qualifier and other courses, GPA
  • Advisor report on research progress
  • Student’s self-report on research progress
  • TA evaluations (by supervising faculty)
    • Poor performance may lead to immediate loss of good standing

• Graduate School criteria (common to all graduate programs):
  • GPA ≥ 3.0, no incompletes ("I" grades),

• Loss of good standing may lead to:
  • Loss of financial support, tuition scholarship
  • Dismissal from program
Grad Level and ‘Full Time’

• **Level:**
  • G3 when admitted with a BS degree
  • G4 after completion of 24 graduate credits
  • G5 after completing all requirements except dissertation

• **To be considered full-time**
  • G3: must be registered for at least 12 grad credits.
  • G4/G5: must be registered for at least 9 grad credits.

• **The following students must be full-time:**
  • International students
  • Students getting assistantships
  • Students in University Housing

• **Tuition Scholarship:**
  • G3: 12 credits (but you can register for up to 18 “for free”)
  • G4/G5: 9 credits (12-18 if you need OAE classes, mail Kathy)
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Graduate Credits

PhD students must accumulate at least 20 credits from non-generic CS graduate courses.

• Credits for generic courses such as CSE 593, 600, 698, 699 do not count.

• All lecture courses, special and advanced topic courses and seminars (except CSE 600) are included in this count.

• Note that qualifier courses alone contribute at least 15 credits.
CSE 600
Mandatory seminar: “Ongoing Research Seminar”
• Typically on Fridays, 2:30-4:00pm
• Faculty present their current research
  • Occasionally we have visitors as well
• Gives you a broad overview of current research in CS
• All PhD students must enroll in 2 semesters of CSE 600
  • You can register for 0/1 credit
  • The requirement is 2 semesters with “S” grades; not 2 credits.
• S/U grading based on attendance (>70%)
CSE 698
Teaching Practicum

• All PhD students must enroll in at least 1 semester of CSE 698

• 0-3 credits of registration in any semester
  • Again: requirement is a passing grade in 1 semester, not number of credits.

• Common use: Register in 698 along with your TA work
Registration for G3

• G3 students
  • Must register for at least 12 credits
  • If supported, get tuition scholarship for 12-18 credits
• So G3 students are recommended to take:
  • 3 qualifier courses (9 credits)
  • 1 credit of CSE 600
  • 1 credit of CSE 698
  • 1-credit seminar (not 600) in your area of choice
  • Any OAE courses as needed.
• Speak to your academic advisor.
  • You may reduce qualifier load if you want to get an early start into research.
Registration for G4 - OAE reqs.

G4 students

• Must register for at least 9 credits
• If supported, get tuition scholarship for 9 credits
• **BUT**: if you have OAE requirements, your scholarship can be increased to cover 12-18 credits
  • Send mail to Kathy Germana (kathy@cs) if this applies to you and you’ve not already spoken to her.

Such G4 students are recommended to follow the same recipe as G3 (previous slide)

• Speak to your academic advisor.
Registration for Other G4s

G4 students

• Must register for at least 9 credits
• If supported, but do not have OAE requirements, get tuition scholarship for 9 credits

Such G4 students are recommended to take:

• 3 qualifier courses (9 credits)
• Register for 0 credits of CSE 600
• Register for 0 credits of CSE 698
• Audit a seminar (not 600) in your area of choice

• Speak to your academic advisor
Registration for G5

G5 stands for “Advanced to Candidacy”

• Means that you don’t have any exams that you can fail until your dissertation defense
• You get to G5 after you complete your qualifiers and RPE, and complete all requirements except dissertation.
• When you get to G5, you become a “PhD Candidate”
• 9 credits of tuition for G5 students are paid by Graduate School
• G5 students may register only for Seminars, CSE 696/697 (Internship), CSE 699, CSE 700 or CSE 701 (Dissertation Research)
• You can take lecture courses as a G5 only under extraordinary circumstances with prior permission from GPD.
• So satisfy all your course needs before you advance!
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Financial Assistance

- All PhD TA/RA positions come with tuition scholarship
- Assistantships are contingent on maintaining full-time status and being in good academic standing
- TA offers cover Fall and Spring semesters
- Summer RA supplement covers rest of the year (if a faculty advisor is willing to provide support)
- TA-ships for Fall/Spring semesters are handled centrally by the graduate program
- Limited number of TA-ships may be available over the Summer, but are completely managed by individual instructors
- Domestic students who’re not NY residents now should become NY residents in their first year to remain eligible for tuition waivers
Teaching Assistantship

• 15-20 hours per week, assisting a faculty member in instruction (holding labs, teaching recitations, grading, etc.)

• TAs may register for Teaching Practicum (CSE 698) for credit

• CSE 698 satisfies grad school teaching requirement

• TA work is a part of a student’s portfolio that is reviewed during PhD Student Evaluation meetings

• Take TA-ship seriously:
  • Poor TA performance will lead immediately to “Not in Good Standing”
Research Assistantship

- 15-20 hours per week, assisting a faculty member, usually the thesis advisor, in research
- Paid by individual faculty from their research grants
- Usually, students become RAs in their first summer, and continue as RAs until graduation
Internships

Note: internship is not a requirement.

• You can get credit for internships in industry (CSE 696/697) For international students, such internships can be done as a part of Curricular Practical Training (CPT).
• CPT eligibility:
  • To be eligible for CPT, you must have been at Stony Brook for at least 2 regular semesters, be in good standing, and not have pending (“I”) grades.
  • CPTs are generally approved for summer only.
  • CPTs for Fall/Spring needs to be directly related to your research.
MS Degree

• PhD students can get an MS “on the way”
• 1 year after advancing to candidacy (G5)
• Needs approval of your dissertation advisor
• Research credits and RPE will be used in lieu of MS thesis (up to 9 credits)
• Other 22 credits for the MS can come from lecture courses and seminars
• PhD students leaving the program for MS need to satisfy all MS requirements
• Note: PhD students cannot register for “MS-Only Courses”: CSE 522, 523, 524, 599
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Important Dates

Be familiar with graduate calendar
(www.stonybrook.edu → Academics → Academic Calendars)

• Feb 7 – drop deadline \textit{w/o tuition penalty}
• Feb 12, 4pm – Registration changes on SOLAR (drops may incur tuition penalty)
• Feb 13-19 – swap by petition

• Watch for waitlist movement near drop deadline
  • get off waitlists if you do not intend to take a class!
• We (in this department) do not control tuition and other fees!
Full Classes

PhD students get priority placement in classes
If you want to get into an otherwise full class, email the professor

• *they will contact department admin to give you enrollment permission.*
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Responsible Conduct

• Ethical Behavior
• Professional Conduct
• Authorship and plagiarism
• Safety
Ethical Behavior

“Will you be happy (or, at least, won’t mind) if your actions are splashed on the front pages of The New York Times?”

- Phillip Lewis III, Former Chair, CS @ SB

- Treat others (as well as their work and products) with respect
- Treat everyone over who you have some power (e.g., TA/student) fairly
- Ensure that the results of your work are a reliable statement of its outcomes.
  - Results in your papers must be true to the best of your knowledge
  - No misrepresentations, obfuscations, “wishful thinking”
Professional Conduct

• Complete high-quality work in a timely manner
• Maintain a safe and welcoming work environment
• Live up to your promises
  • So make promises with care
  • E.g., when you accept a job or internship offer, you cannot continue to interview or accept another offer!
Authorship and Plagiarism

• Your work must be yours!
• Don’t put your name on a paper that you did not contribute to
• Don’t put your friend’s name on your paper just to give him/her a boost
• Cite any results that you quote from elsewhere
• Give credit where credit is due
Safety
“First, do no harm”

• Take steps to prevent yourself and others from getting hurt from your work.

• Example:
  • Care of data from medical records
Responsible Conduct!

Do It!

But, I Kant!
RCRS
Responsible Conduct in Research & Scholarship

• Federal funding agencies require every researcher to undergo training and earn RCRS credits.
• Such training is especially critical when handling sensitive data (human subjects, health and social media data)
  • No matter whether the research is federally funded or not.
• University is ensuring that every graduate student is appropriately trained.
  • We have set up procedures within our department to have every graduate student trained.
  • RCRS will become a part of “Good Standing” requirement.
Academic Dishonesty

• Do your own work for all exams and assigned class work.
• Do not copy from anywhere, discuss with anybody, solve problems in group.
  • Unless specifically allowed by an explicit class policy.
  • Check with instructor on what is allowed if looking for solutions (e.g., github). If allowed, cite sources where you got help.
• Guard your work so that others cannot copy.

• Serious consequences:
  • Loss of grade: Many profs will give ‘F’ in the course.
  • Possible dismissal from program.
Research Misconduct

• Plagiarism
  • Example: copy from somebody else’s paper and use it as part/whole of your project report, thesis.

• Falsification
  • Fabrication: Make up data, results.
  • Manipulation: Manipulate an experiment to hide actual performance and to show what you want.
  • Obfuscation: Hide critical facts, but reveal some others.

• Serious consequences on your graduate study. Possibilities exist for retraction of degree even after graduation.

• If you feel pressured, talk to advisor or graduate program staff.
Professional Misconduct

- Accepting an internship/job offer (via campus career center or otherwise), and then turning it down later
  - Reflects poorly on you as well as the department
  - Employers may not come for campus interviews for future students.
- Accepting an RA-ship from one professor, and turning it down later
  - Professors work often do collaborative work, and do not want to “poach” students from one another.
  - If you are unsure what to do with one RA-ship offer, be open about it. **Come and talk to me!**
- False representation in resume for jobs/internships.
  - Serious consequences on your graduate study. **Possibilities exist for retraction of degree even after graduation.**
Ethical Violations: Procedures

Violations reported to Program Director.

- Accusations and penalties for violations may be appealed to special graduate committee
  - Formal proceedings, judged by a committee of 2 graduate students and 2 faculty
  - Recommendations sent to Program Director
- For serious violations, finding of guilt may lead to dismissal from program.
- Minor violations are recorded in student’s file.
  - These records are destroyed at graduation time if there are no other violations.
- Second violation is grounds for dismissal from the program.
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PhD Program

Program’s objective is to prepare you for a successful research career.

The program provides a framework for a student to

• Obtain breadth in CS [*Qualifiers*]
• Develop skills to identify significant research topics [*RPE*]
• Acquire depth of understanding in a chosen area [*Prelim*]
• Gain ability to perform and evaluate original research [*Dissertation & Defense*]

The program’s structure is designed to evaluate progress towards these goals.
Transformation Wrought by PhD

How do I answer this question?

What are the interesting questions here?

PhD Program
Next Steps

• Very important:
  • Get departmental email id (xxx@cs.stonybrook.edu)
  • … which is on grads@cs.stonybrook.edu email list.
  • Important messages sent to these addresses. No excuse for not reading them.
  
• Review Graduate Handbook and FAQs.

• Be familiar with registration calendar.

• Ethics and professional responsibility:
  • Act ethically in coursework and research
  • Watch out for RCRS requirements coming soon.
Questions?