MS Program: Proficiencies

C. R. Ramakrishnan, Graduate Program Director
Erez Zadok, Graduate Program Advisor
gradadvising@cs, Graduate Coordinator
Computer Science Department
Background

• Some students admitted to the MS program have weak CS preparation.

• Areas of particular weakness are listed as “proficiency requirements” in the admission offer letter.

• These requirements are in addition to the usual MS reqs. and may lengthen the total program time (one more semester common).

• The default way to satisfy the requirements is to take recommended undergraduate or bridge courses.

• **BUT**, a graduate student cannot take an undergraduate course and claim graduate credit, nor apply credits to full-time status.

• We have a special graduate “cover” course, **CSE 587**, that can be used as a vehicle for grad students to take UG courses.
The Need for a Proficiency Plan

• A student may have already taken an UG course in an indicated weakness area (perhaps after applying to the MS program)

• A student may have significant work experience in an area; this along with a set of related UG courses may offset an indicated weakness.

• A student may have significant strengths that lead us to believe that he/she will survive in a graduate course instead of having to take an undergraduate course.

• In one-on-one advising sessions (contact Prof. Zadok), we plan out a path (called “Proficiency Plan”) …
  … considering each student’s preparation, …
  … to fulfill the requirements in the offer letter.
# Proficiency Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSE-215</td>
<td>Foundations of Computer Science (covers “Discrete Math”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSE-219</td>
<td>Computer Science III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSE-220</td>
<td>Systems Fundamentals I (covers “Computer Architecture/Organization”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSE-303/CSE-581</td>
<td>Theory of Computation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSE-304</td>
<td>Compilers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSE-305</td>
<td>Databases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSE-306</td>
<td>Operating Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSE-307/CSE-583</td>
<td>Programming Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSE-308</td>
<td>Software Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSE-310</td>
<td>Computer Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSE-320</td>
<td>Systems Fundamentals II (covers “Operating Systems”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSE-582</td>
<td>Algorithms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Proficiencies: Examples and Rules

• “Algorithms or Theory of Computation” means you have to take only one of Alg. or ToC to satisfy this proficiency.
• “Operating Systems” means you can only take the OS course to satisfy the proficiency.
• “Programming Languages” means you can only take the PL course to satisfy the proficiency.
  • Note: “PL” is a course on the theory of programming languages, not a course where you learn how to program. Merely knowing how to program does not satisfy the PL proficiency.
• You cannot take the graduate version of any proficiency course until you satisfy the proficiency first.
• We do not accept online courses in lieu of accredited undergraduate courses.
• Cannot go on internship (i.e., get a CPT) until all proficiencies are passed.
Option 1(a): CSE 587 [3 credits]

• To fulfill a proficiency requirement, a student takes a specified UG course via CSE 587.

• We have one section for each instructor of an UG proficiency course.

• **Example:** Prof. Liu is teaching CSE 307, and she is listed under Section 02 of 587.
  • If you have a “PL” requirement in your offer letter, you may take CSE 587-02. [with permission of GPD/GPA]
  • You will attend CSE 307 lectures, and do same homeworks and take same exams.
  • You will have cleared the “PL” requirement if you get a **B or better** in CSE 587-02.
Option 1(b): CSE 5XX  [3 credits]

- We are moving away from using undergraduate courses for proficiencies
- Instead, students will take special, graduate level “bridge courses”, instead of CSE-587 as a “cover” for some undergraduate CSE-3xx course
- The transition is underway
  - Take any offered Bridge course instead of an undergraduate one
    - C or better to pass
  - Take the undergraduate one (option 1a) otherwise
    - B or better to pass
- New offering
  - Alg: CSE-582 (instead of CSE-373)
  - PL: CSE-595/583 (instead of CSE-307)
  - Later offering: ToC: CSE-581 (instead of CSE-303)
- No need for special permission to enroll in bridge courses: just register directly.
Option 2: Graduate Course

[Rare]

• A student may have background in related areas that do not quite remove the weakness, but indicates possible success in a grad course instead.

• Then, the GPD/GPA may permit the student to take a grad course to satisfy a proficiency requirement.

• Note advantages over Option 1:
  1. “C” or better in grad course is sufficient for proficiency
  2. Grad course may count for breadth
Option 3: Waiver

[Very Rare]

• A student’s background may indicate that the weakness is insignificant.
  • E.g., past courses taken plus work experience

• Then we waive the need to satisfy that proficiency requirement.

• Example: you have a “networking” proficiency but you worked for Cisco for 5 years on their IOS software.
Proficiency and Graduation Credits

• **All credits** are counted from all courses taken to satisfy proficiency requirements.

• *This is regardless of whether a grad course, bridge course, or CSE 587 is used to satisfy a requirement.*

• **However:**
  
  • Recall the requirement to take a certain number of lecture courses (e.g., Advanced Project Option: 7 or more lecture courses)
  
  • 587 and Bridge courses **do not count** towards these lecture courses

• Recall the offer letter: these requirements are over and above the usual ones for an MS degree.
Advising Process (Virtual)

• Provide Latest Transcripts
  • May have courses not present at application time

• Provide Syllabus
  • To determine equivalence of courses: must be a very close match.

• Provide Resume
  • To evaluate any relevant work experience

• If you think Options 2 (Grad course) or 3 (Waiver) applies to any of your stated weaknesses, present your rationale.
  • We will make a 2-semester plan to satisfy the requirements considering (a) your rationale for the above, and (b) availability of seats in courses.
Permission to Register

• We will issue permission to register in 587s for courses in your proficiency plan.

• Email the proficiency plan and the registration permission forms to gradadvising@cs (Graduate Program Coordinators).

• She will put the plan on your file and hand you a copy for your records.

• She will also give permission to enroll in 587 on Solar.

• We will handle permission to enroll in any other graduate course separately (no paper).

• Use the permissions to register ASAP (reserved seats fill up quickly).
Questions?