

Preliminary Exams

(2nd Year)

Students **must** successfully complete three exams before or during the second year of the program. Students may elect to take the exams of their choosing within the first year of their admission.

The Ph.D. Preliminary Exams are intended to test students' knowledge in four core subject areas of computer science. Students are required to select three out of four core knowledge areas listed below and pass a written exam for each:

- Algorithms
- Computer Architecture
- Operating Systems
- Theory

The preliminary exams are held once per year in January, during the last week of Winter Break, before the start of Spring semester classes. Exams for Architecture and Operating Systems will be held on that Thursday at 10:00am and 12:00pm respectively; exams for Algorithms and Theory will be held on that Friday at 10:00am and 12:00pm respectively.

Students must sign up for the exams by December 5th (the Fall semester before exams take place). Students cannot change the 3 chosen exam areas once they have signed up for the first time.

Students may take one, two, or all three exams at once. Students may retake an exam area once. If a second retake is needed, the student must petition the Exam Committee for approval. If the petition is denied, or if the student fails more than one area, the student will **lose their place in the program**.

A guide for the exams is available on the [CSE department website](#).

Once a student has successfully completed their Preliminary Exams, they are eligible to enroll in dissertation credits.