Oral Examination Policy

Rationale

The Department of Computer and Information Sciences Masters Degree program requires the completion of core and concentration-specific courses. In addition, each student is required to complete a capstone project. This project is either a masters thesis that reports the student's research, conducted individually, or a software development project, conducted as a group project. To evaluate each student and to meet the graduate school policy requiring a culminating experience covering a student's course work, the department requires that each student pass an oral examination, given at the time of thesis defense or software development project defense, over the coursework completed by the student. The following policy takes effect starting Fall semester, 2001.

Policy

1.) For each core course and for each concentration specific course, a set of questions will be developed by the instructor(s) of these courses. The core courses are CSCI 5200 (Software Systems Engineering), CSCI 5300 (Software Design), CSCI 5230 (Software Project Management), and CSCI 5520 (Research Methods). The concentration specific courses in Applied Computer Science are CSCI 5150 (Topics in Distributed Systems), CSCI 5620 (Analysis of Algorithms), CSCI 5250 (Database Design), and CSCI 5220 (Software Verification and Validation). The concentration specific courses in Information Technology are CSCI 5710 (E-Commerce Implementation), CSCI 5720 (Enterprise and E-Business Integration), CSCI 5360 (Network and System Administration), and CSCI 5460 (Network and Information Security).

2.) The questions will be updated on a yearly basis. Existing questions will be reviewed for appropriateness as the curriculum of each course changes. New questions will be added, both to cover new material and to avoid using the same questions over multiple semesters. Sample questions will be made available to candidates at least one month before the thesis or software development project defense.

3.) Each masters degree candidate will be asked a subset of the exam questions after the candidate's thesis or software development project defense. The exam question session will be private, attended only by the candidate, committee, faculty observer, and other interested faculty. The candidate's committee chair (thesis or software development project) will be responsible for the deciding which questions are asked.

4.) The candidate's committee will determine, after the question session, whether the candidate has passed, passed conditionally, or failed the exam. A passing grade is 80% of questions answered correctly; a conditional grade is greater than or equal to 50% but less than 80% of questions answered correctly; a failing grade is less than 50% of questions answered correctly.

If the candidate receives a conditional pass, the student will be required to take a second oral examination within two weeks of the first examination. The second examination will cover only the material which the candidate has failed in the first examination. If the student's combined grade is a passing grade, the student has passed. If the student's combined grade is passed conditionally or failed, the student has failed the examination.
If the candidate fails the oral examination, a second oral examination covering all of the material will be scheduled within two weeks of the first examination. If the student receives a passing grade on the second examination, the student has passed. If the student receives a passed conditionally or failed, the student has failed the examination.

5.) A written report will be made on the candidate's performance and reported to the Graduate School as part of the candidate's graduation process.