The New Computer Science MS Comprehensive Exam Process

Effective starting September 2011, each offering of a Core CS course will include a portion of the MS comprehensive exam as part of the course offering. Typically this will be the final exam for the class but it may differ in format. For example, it could be a weighted average of one or more midterms and the final exam, at the discretion of the instructor. The exam will be comprehensive in nature, covering most of the content of the course. The instructor will determine the threshold for passing the MS Comprehensive Exam for that course offering.

Students enrolled in a Core CS course offering may choose either to attempt or to not attempt the MS Comprehensive Exam for that course and must inform the course instructor of their choice by the instructor-specified deadline. If a student takes a course but does not pass the MS Comprehensive Exam, that student can take the exam in a subsequent offering without re-enrolling in the course. In order to retry the Exam, such a student must sign up with the instructor of that subsequent course offering before the end of the second week of the quarter.

At the end of the quarter, the instructor of a Core CS class will report the results of the Comprehensive Exam to the Student Affairs Office for all the students in the class who attempted the Exam, as well as for any students who took the Exam who were not enrolled in the class.

Note that the MS Comprehensive Exams in Core courses will only be offered in conjunction with Core course offerings. Special arrangements will be made as necessary to handle students who entered the MS program under the previous exam system.

Each student must pass the Comprehensive Exam for at least three Core courses, no more than one from each category. A Comprehensive Exam for a particular course may not be attempted more than twice. The maximum number of Comprehensive Exams that may be attempted, including re-tries, is eight. Re-tries will only be offered in quarters when the course is being taught. (A student can always opt to change Core course areas if they urgently need a test on a tighter schedule than that.)

Special instructions:

1. If you plan to graduate this quarter and the Core courses you took are not being offered, please email Kris Bolcer, kris@ics.uci.edu, by Friday, October 7, 2011, listing: your Core course list, quarters enrolled in the courses, instructors of record.

Please understand this is only for students graduating this quarter, F11 – students must be advanced to candidacy for the MS and enrolled in last few courses or on filing fee.

1. If you are not graduating this quarter, but are working towards earning your MS degree, start taking the MS comprehensive exams now – for both the Core courses you are enrolled in and the Core courses you’ve already taken and passed. Special arrangements will not be made for students who did not sign up appropriately.
2. If you are a new student, sign up for the comprehensive exams as you take the Core courses.
3. Please understand that you are allowed to re-take any comprehensive exam once, in the event that you fail (maximum eight tries total), the next time the Core course is offered. Special arrangements will not be made for students with urgent graduation plans. Please plan ahead.