Guidelines for Comprehensive Exam for CEE MS Programs

The comprehensive exam for students in CEE MS programs will be administered once per semester (spring, fall), usually one month before the end of the term. Each student takes the exam during one semester as agreed upon by the student’s committee. All CEE students taking the exam in that semester will take it on the same day. The exam is a three hour written open book exam that will be taken by the graduate student after completing at least 15 credit hours of coursework. Classes the student is enrolled in during that term count towards the 15 credits.

The exam is compiled by the program coordinator (for Arctic and EQS/ENVE MS programs) or by the committee chair (for MS CE and MCE programs) and consists of questions from courses taken by the respective student, which may include courses offered by other departments. The student taking the exam will provide a list of satisfactorily completed graduate coursework and respective instructors to the faculty member compiling the exam, who will then contact the instructors of those courses to obtain exam questions. Based on the classes taken, an exam containing questions on 5-7 topics will be tailored to each student. The student will be required to answer questions from four chosen topics.

Each question is graded (+/- letter grades) by the instructors that provided the respective question, and the graded answers are passed on to the exam coordinator, who then calculates the overall grade. The student passes with an average of B or better. If a student does not pass the exam, the student will have the option to take an oral exam. If an oral exam is given, a CEE faculty member not involved in the student’s committee (designated by the department chair) will be present to assure that the test is fair. To ensure fairness, any special considerations will be addressed by the CEE faculty as a whole, not just the students committee. If the oral exam is to be administered, it should be scheduled on a date no more than 2 months after the written examination results have been returned to the student. The tests will not be returned, but will be kept on file in the CEE department office. The student advances to candidacy once the comprehensive exam is passed.