PhD – Geospatial Information Systems
Exams & Qualifiers

Ph.D. Research Project Qualifier
All doctoral students must register for and complete GISC 7389 GISciences PhD Research Project Qualifier. This requires completion, according to uniform guidelines established by the GIS program, of a GIS Research draft proposal and its evaluation by a committee of at least three GIS faculty, two of whom are chosen by the student with approval of the Director of the GIS Doctoral Program, and the third is appointed by the Director of the GIS Program and represents the program.

The committee will judge the quality of the project as it exemplifies the student's potential to conduct original research (including their ability to define their research objective, survey literature, develop an appropriate design, etc.) and the strength of the student's course record to date, and make a determination of the student's suitability to continue toward the PhD degree.

The student must receive a PASS. If a FAIL is recorded, the course may be repeated one time only in the immediate following semester, including summer. This course will normally be taken after the student has completed between 15 and 30 hours.

A student must register for GISC 7389 in the semester immediately following the one in which he/she first accumulates 42 or more hours. GISC 7389 GIScience Research Project Qualifier can substitute for GISC 6389 GIScience Master's Project, but not the reverse unless a special petition is presented and granted.

Grade Point Qualifier
Students must normally have a GPA of at least 3.25 and preferably 3.5 in courses taken at UT Dallas at the time they register for GISC 7389 Ph.D. Qualifier. Students may petition the GIS faculty for an exemption for extenuating circumstances beyond the student's control.

Qualifying Examination and Defense of Proposal
At a point in time after meeting the Research Project Qualifier, the student must demonstrate through a general examination his/her competency in the area chosen for their dissertation. Normally, this examination will be written and based upon the GIS Research draft proposal prepared as a part of the GISC 7389 GISciences PhD Research Project Qualifier course and conducted by the same committee.

The general examination will test the student's (i) mastery of basic principles in geospatial information science, (ii) mastery of the technology(ies) and methodologies to be used in the dissertation, and (iii) thorough knowledge of the application area for the proposed research.

Following the successful completion of the Qualifying exam the student must successfully present in public and defend a dissertation proposal through an oral examination. The proposal defense will evaluate the viability of the proposed research and its contribution to knowledge.

Upon successful completion of the qualifying examination and the proposal defense, the student is officially “advanced to candidacy” for the Ph.D. degree and a dissertation committee of at least four faculty is formally constituted to oversee the research.

Defense of Dissertation
A dissertation must be prepared and defended successfully following the procedures established by the Dean of Graduate Studies.