1. What is the content of the exam?

The final exam will be 4 hours long and will include four sections. Each section of the exam will be 50 minutes and will contain questions in one particular area. There will be three 10 minute breaks between the sections. Overall, the final exam will include 4 major areas: the three core areas (Advanced Algorithms, Operating Systems, and Computer Architecture) plus one elective area. Each student may select his/her elective area from listed concentration areas such as: AI, Network, Software Engineering, Computer Graphics/Visual Analytics, Database, and Computation/Simulation. Questions in a particular section/area will be created by CS graduate faculty members who regularly teach courses in that area. If possible, questions will be graded by their creators. To facilitate the mix and match of questions in each section to the 50 minute time limit, it is suggested that each question will include the expected time required for completion by a student. Each faculty member may also provide additional instructions on how his/her questions should be grouped for individual exams. The exam coordinator will select questions from the pool of questions submitted by faculty members.

2. Who will coordinate the exam?

The graduate program director will coordinate the exam. The responsibility includes selecting the questions for the exam, administrating the exam, collecting grading results, etc.

3. When can a student sign up for the exam?

A student can sign up for the final exam as soon as he/she has completed 21 credit hours, including all three required core courses: CS456, CS514, and CS516. In addition, since the exam will also assess a student on an elective area, it is advised that the student also complete at least one course in his/her elective area. A student must sign up for the final exam with the graduate program director by the end of the 4th week of the semester.

4. When will the exam be administrated?

The exam will be administrated at a designated 4 hour time slot during the break weeks of each semester, normally the second week of March in the Spring (Spring Break week) and last week of November in the Fall (Thanksgiving week). Students who signed up for the final exam in a semester must take the exam at the designated time. Review material will also be provided.

5. What constitute passing the exam?

Each exam will be graded by a team of (preferably 4) CS graduate faculty members. A student will receive a pass or fail grade in each of the 4 sections. A student must pass all 4 sections in order to pass the exam. A student who passes three of the four sections will receive a conditional pass which allows the student to retake the failed section at a later time, which may or may not be during the same semester.

6. How many times will a student be allowed to take the exam?

If a student fails the exam, he/she is allowed to register and retake the exam during the next semester. A student may change his/her elective area between exams. However, a student is allowed to take the exam up to 3 times.