Guidelines for  
Doctor of Philosophy in Engineering  
Focus Area: Security  
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I. INTRODUCTION

The College of Engineering and Applied Science (EAS) at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS) offers the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in Engineering with a focus area of Security.

The Security concentration option is multi-disciplinary. As its core, it requires a broad and in-depth understanding of cyber security and physical security technologies. It is also related to the policy, management, mechanics, and engineering of wide variety of systems for homeland security. This doctoral concentration combines breadth of knowledge in Computer Science, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Aerospace Engineering, and Homeland Security with the depth of technical knowledge in technology-based support of security and mastery of independent research, performance analysis, synthesis, and design skills in security engineering.

The purpose of this set of guidelines is to help prospective students enter the PhD program and to assist admitted students in meeting the requirements of the program. The degree requirements are determined by the graduate faculty of the Computer Science Department at UCCS. Other regulations may be imposed by the College of Engineering and Applied Science and Graduate School of the university. It is the student's responsibility to know and satisfy all relevant requirements.

Graduate students are encouraged to participate in the professional activities of the college. This includes attending seminars and colloquia, suggesting improvements in curricula (both undergraduate and graduate), suggesting new teaching techniques and participating in the enhancement of hardware and software facilities within the college.

The Security concentration program is research-oriented with more course taking flexibility. A student may work on the PhD studies full time or part time. Up to 9 credit hours of independent study can be taken as distance learning in consultation with a PhD advisor. Beyond the traditional learning component, the students in the program will be required to have at least three months of operational security experience (as internship, training, etc.), as determined by the Ph.D. in Engineering/Security Committee (PESC).

II. ADMISSION

Students may be admitted in one of two categories:

A. Regular Degree Students

A student can be admitted as a regular degree student if the student satisfies the following conditions:

1. The student holds a bachelor's degree or a master's degree in any of the branches of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), homeland security, or closely related field
from a college or university of recognized standing. Depending on the PhD track, program candidates may be required to complete prerequisite courses in STEM and/or homeland security policy.

A student who is admitted without a master's degree may earn that degree as a part of the Ph.D. studies.

2. The student has at least a 3.3 grade point average (on a scale of 4.0) in the bachelor or master degree program attempted. Graduate students in the University’s Homeland Defense Certificate program must complete the certificate with a 3.3 GPA or better prior to starting Security PhD studies.

3. If the student is not a graduate of a program of recognized standing or does not meet the minimum GPA requirements, the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) may be required with a minimum score of 148 on the quantitative portion.

4. Students whose native language was not English must take either the TOEFL examination with a minimum score of 80 (internet based) or IELTS with a minimum score of 6; or have graduated from an accredited U.S. university and have performed satisfactorily; or complete an approved English as a Second Language program through level 5 or level 112 (depending on the program).

B. Provisional Degree Students

Students who do not meet requirements for admission as regular students may be admitted as provisional students upon recommendation of the PESC. Applicants will be evaluated on the strength of their academic background and experiences. With the concurrence of the chair(s) of the Ph.D. Governance Committee (PGC), the PESC may admit provisional students for a probationary period. After completing the noted provisional requirements, the provisional student will be considered for regular admission. If admission is denied at this time, the student will be dismissed from the program.

Recommendation for change from provisional status to regular degree status will be based on grades received in all courses taken during provisional status. Credit earned while in provisional status will count towards the Ph.D. if and when the student moves from provisional to regular status.

Transfer Policy

The program director will determine how many credit hours of course work may be transferred from an earned Master's degree or from other universities if a degree was not obtained. This includes courses taken at UCCS before the student is accepted into the Ph.D. program. Only courses at the graduate level in which the student has received a grade of B or above are eligible for transfer. No hours of dissertation credit may be transferred. The chair of the PESC and the chair(s) of the PGC must approve all transfers.

Application Materials

The online application system is available here: [http://www.uccs.edu/admissions/apply.html](http://www.uccs.edu/admissions/apply.html). Generally, applicants should hold a technical degree in STEM or homeland security policy studies. The supporting documentation (transcripts, etc.) should be sent directly to the Admissions office, 1420 Austin Bluffs Parkway, Colorado Springs, CO 80918-3733.

The PESC meets periodically for action on completed applications. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all materials are received in a timely manner. The applicant being considered for admission will be notified in writing of the results of the decision.

Applicants for regular admission should have all application materials in by June 1 for Fall Semester and by November 1 for Spring Semester. These deadlines permit time for the Department Graduate Study Committee (DGSC), the College and the Graduate School to process the application. It is the
applicant’s responsibility to follow up to make sure all materials are received on time. If these deadlines are not met, an application for regular admission will be considered for the following semester.

*International students* applying for the program should have all application materials in by April 1 for Fall Semester and by October 1 for Spring Semester. Applications sent later than these dates or incomplete by these dates may be considered for the following semester. It is the applicant’s responsibility to follow up to make sure all materials are received on time.

### III. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

*Curriculum Description*

The Doctor of Philosophy is a degree that is conferred on a student who has demonstrated proficiency in some broad area of learning, and who has proven that he or she has the capability to evaluate work in the security field critically. In addition, the student must have demonstrated the ability to work independently and make original contributions to the field. No single prescribed set of courses can be established that, when completed, guarantee the student has attained this high level. Rather, the degree is conferred after the student has satisfied both a course work and an independent study requirement under the supervision of a committee. Minimum course work and independent study requirements and the composition of the advisory committee for the Ph.D. program are described below.

*Credit Hours*

For candidates entering the program with a bachelor’s degree in STEM and/or homeland security, a minimum of 30 credit hours of course work at the 5000-level or above, including independent study, which may be taken as distance learning, is required. For candidates entering with an M.S. degree in STEM and/or homeland security, up to 24 credit hours of course work from a previously earned Master’s degree may be transferred to the PhD program to meet the 30 credit hour course requirements. In all cases, 30 semester hours of dissertation credits are required. All PhD students will be required to take CS 6000, Intro to Computer Science Research. Beyond the traditional learning component, the students in the program will be required to have at least three months of operational security experience (as internship, training, etc.), as determined by the PESC. This requirement can be substituted with a peer-reviewed publication or by passing CISSP certificate examination.

Some prerequisite courses may be required for students who have not taken these courses or their equivalents before. The specific required courses will be determined by the Ph.D. advisor and the Ph.D. Advisory Committee according to the study area and research topic.

Most course work will require an on campus presence, but on a case-by-case basis with committee approval, some course work, including independent study taken as distance education, may be possible. Research toward dissertation may be done remotely.

No more than 15 dissertation hours can be taken prior to the semester in which the Comprehensive Examination is passed.

*Plan of Study*

A Ph.D. plan of study is a document that lists the courses that a student has/will take to fulfill degree requirements. It also lists course deficiencies and transferred courses. A student must develop a plan of study by the end of the first semester after the semester in which the written qualifying examination is passed. The plan is developed with the assistance of the student’s advisor. Any subsequent changes of the plan must be approved by the advisor.
Advisory Committee

A student is to choose an advisor by the end of the first year in the program. You may change your advisor by mutual agreement at any time. The advisory committee shall be formed early in the dissertation research so that the committee can guide the research.

The student and advisor will form the advisory committee subject to the following requirements:

A. The advisory committee consists of 5 members. Three of the members must be from the EAS College with at least one member of the committee being from outside the EAS College.

B. A maximum of two members from outside the college of EAS may serve on the committee. They must be members of the graduate faculty.

C. The committee should reflect the focus area of the dissertation work and be able to support and evaluate the student’s work.

D. The student and advisor will propose the committee to the PESC and the PGC for approval.

Advisory Committee Authority: Subject to the requirements for the PGC, the committee is fully responsible for all aspects of the student’s academic program.

Examinations

Satisfactory performance of the student is judged not only by course grades and dissertation credit, but also by performance on a series of examinations as described below.

Qualifying Examinations

The qualifying examinations consist of two parts, one oral examination and one written examination.

The oral qualifying examination is an oral presentation with a written report that surveys the literature in the planned research area that a student may pursue. A few example papers, recommended by the PhD program committee will be posted and available to students for reference. The examining committee will be organized by the advisor. The examining committee consists of three faculty members from appropriate departments or institutes at UCCS as approved by the Ph.D. Security program committee.

The topic of the exam will be determined by the student’s advisor in consultation with the examining committee.

Students having any sponsorship via the advisor’s research funding or departmental teaching should pass the oral qualifying examination by the end of the first year after admission to the program. Other PhD students should pass the oral qualifying examination by the end of the second year after admission to the program. A student has one chance to take the oral exam. The advisor or the program director may request one additional year and one additional attempt for a student to take the examination. The request needs the approval of the PhD-Security program committee.

Waiver to the oral qualifying exam may be given if a student, as the first author, has one paper published or accepted for publication in peer-reviewed sources, such as well-recognized international journals and highly-selective international conference proceedings. The work of the paper must be done after joining the program. The request is initiated by the advisor.

The written qualifying examination consists of four distinct topics, Computer Communication, Fundamentals of Network & Computer Security, Applied Cryptography, and Homeland Security. The examination is formally defined by the syllabus of material it will cover. Students may take courses to help prepare for the examination, but the syllabus, not the course, defines the expectations for the exam. Students should be aware that the standard will be all self study as if no courses exist in the area.
The exam takes place twice a year for all students in May and December.

A student can take the examination up to two times: Students only need to retake the failed topics in the subsequent attempt. Students having any sponsorship via the advisor’s research funding or departmental teaching should pass all topics by the end of the second year after admission to the program. Other PhD students should pass all topics by the end of the third year after admission to the program. The advisor or the program director may request one additional year and one more attempt for a student to take the written examination with a sound reason; for example, the student has made significant progress in research with good publication(s). The request needs the approval of the PhD-Security program committee.

Waiver to the written qualifying exam may be given if the student has passed the courses of the four qualifying exam topics at UCCS with a minimum average GPA of 3.75. The four classes are CS 5220 Computer Communication, CS 5910 Fundamentals of Network & Computer Security, CS 5920 Applied Cryptography, and PAD 5950 Intro to Homeland Defense. The program committee will decide if the grade of a transferred class can be used. Courses cannot be retaken to increase GPA in order to qualify for the waiver.

Comprehensive Examination

The purpose of the comprehensive examination, which must be taken before more than 15 hours of dissertation credit is earned, is to ensure that the student possesses the following:

1. Sufficient grasp of the fundamentals of the chosen dissertation area to begin research, normally achieved through a thorough study of the current literature on the topic
2. Ability to conduct innovative research
3. Ability to exchange ideas and information with members of the Advisory Committee

Comprehension of existing literature and course material pertinent to the dissertation research, as well as the reasonableness of the unknown or undeveloped concepts that the student proposes, will be assessed by the Advisory Committee. The responsibility of the Advisory Committee is to review the research proposal and the qualifications of the student to complete the research successfully. If the research and the approach are found to be significant and appropriate and the student is judged capable of completing the research, the Advisory Committee will approve the research direction. If the Advisory Committee does not find the student ready to begin dissertation research, it must suggest further preparation by the student and plan on a subsequent taking of the comprehensive examination.

A passing grade in the examination is given if at least four of the five members of the public Committee, including the student’s advisor vote affirmatively.

Final Examination (Dissertation Defense)

The final examination can only be applied after at least three months of operational security experience (as internship, training, etc.), as determined by the PESC.

The dissertation must be based on original investigation. It must demonstrate mature scholarship and critical judgment, as well as a familiarity with the tools and methods of research. It must be written on the subject approved in the comprehensive examination.

Although publication is not the only criterion, generally, it is expected that a Ph.D. candidate at the dissertation defense stage has at least one significant article published or accepted for publication in peer-reviewed sources, such as well-recognized international journals and highly-selective international conference proceedings. The department criterion defines a significant publication as having ALL three of these characteristics: 1) Multiple formal written reviews, 2) Publication in a venue with < 40% acceptance rate, and 3) Indexed in major library databases. If a candidate’s publications do not meet these criteria, the candidate’s advisor can request the committee to also consider other justifiable criteria including grants, patents, major software packages in widespread use, etc. All those
achievements should be largely based on the study and research during the degree work.

After the dissertation has been completed, a final examination on the dissertation and related topics is conducted. This examination, which is conducted by the Advisory Committee, is oral and is open to anyone who wants to observe. More than one negative vote by members of the Advisory Committee disqualifies the candidate in the final exam. In case of failure, the final examination may be retaken after a period of time determined by the Advisory Committee.

IV. RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT
The minimum residency requirement is six credit hours of regular courses at the 5000 level and above not including dissertation credit hours.

V. TIME LIMIT FOR COMPLETION OF DEGREE

Individuals who are admitted as doctoral students normally are expected to complete all degree requirements within six years from the date of the start of course work in the doctoral program. For students who fail to complete the degree in the six-year period, the PESC must file an annual statement with the Graduate Dean giving the reasons why the Program Director believes that the student is making adequate progress and should be allowed to continue in the program. This request must be signed by three members of the graduate faculty who serve on the student's Advisory Committee. If the Graduate Dean approves this statement, the student may continue his/her studies for one additional year.

VI. Further Information
For more information, call (719) 255-3325, visit our Web site at http://eas.uccs.edu/cs, or e-mail st-cs01@uccs.edu.