

About the Research Presentation Exam (RPE)

- Passing the Research Presentation Exam (RPE) is a requirement for the Ph.D. degree.
- Student signs up for RPE after he/she has a thesis adviser and must pass RPE before the thesis proposal.
- RPE involves reading a paper assigned by the student's RPE committee, presenting the paper to the committee, and answering the questions by the committee. The committee looks for a thorough understanding of the research reported in the paper and a convincing presentation of the central ideas in the paper. If the committee believes that certain concepts or results are important to understand the paper or appreciate the significance of the paper, they can question the student on those concepts and results, even if they are not prominently discussed in the paper.
- RPE committee consists of three members of the CS faculty, at least two of whom are tenure track faculty in the Dartmouth CS department. Generally, the student's thesis adviser chairs the committee.
- The chair, in consultation with the other two members, selects a paper that the student has not seen before (to test if the student is able to understand and present research on their own). From the time the paper is announced, the student has at most four weeks to present it. The student should not take anyone's help in understanding or presenting the paper.
- The student has at most two chances for passing the RPE, and is expected to pass by the end of the Winter term of their third year. If the student fails in their first attempt, they will be assigned a different paper the next time, but the committee need not be different.
- To schedule the exam, the student informs the Ph.D. program adviser who then constitutes a committee on the advice of the student's thesis adviser.
- The student must take a blank "RPE form" to the exam. The committee records on it the result of the exam (Pass/Fail) and signs, which the student should then submit to the CS Department office.