CBE Graduate Program Milestones/Expectations

Leading up to the Q exam

Graduate students enrolled in our PhD track will be required to take CHEME 7920 and write a fellowship-type research proposal as an integral part of the course. The proposal should be drafted following discussions with a potential advisor as part of the advisor selection process, a writing exercise/assessment, and fellowship proposal preparation.

All fellowship-eligible students will submit applications for NSF (etc.) fellowships. Students will receive coaching in CHEME 7920, but faculty advisor engagement is paramount to success.

The DGS will aim to finish advisor selection ~ mid-October, or sooner, if possible.

Students will work towards the goals written in this proposal (or write another one if the advisor has changed) as a roadmap for their first-year research leading up to the Q exam. In this way, expectations are clear from the advisor what is to be achieved by the time the Q exam report is written.

The Q exam is to be completed by the end of the summer of the first year (following their second semester). The Q evaluation is based on:

- Performance in core courses; the minimum expectation is a B average for all cores and none below B-
- Evaluation of the content and quality of the written research report
- Progress in research to date & advisor endorsement

Leading up to the “A” exam

* Note that following these recommendations is always at the discretion of the committee.

In the second year, a student should form a special committee and host an informal committee meeting to discuss his or her research topic. Special committee meetings should be held at least once per year to provide students ample feedback on their progress.

Grad School Policy: “A” exam must be done by the 7th semester. A petition is required after this for each semester delay.

CBE Recommendation: Our expectation is that, under normal circumstances, students will graduate within 5 years. For this to occur routinely, students will be expected to schedule their “A” exam sometime between the 4th-6th semesters. All CBE students are expected to schedule their “A” exam before the end of the 6th semester.

All students should submit a written document (as defined by their special committee) to accompany the “A” exam presentation. The document could be a paper preprint, a paper draft, a thesis proposal, a research report, or a summary of their research and plans to complete their doctoral degree (the details of what is to be included will be as defined by their special committee). The expectations for the “A” exam will be communicated to the student during the first committee meeting (Year 2). This written document should be delivered to the committee no later than two weeks before the “A” exam to allow enough time for committee review.

“A” exam presentations are open to the “public,” i.e., department-wide participation is encouraged. The examination portion will be closed following public questioning. All members of the special committee must attend the meeting.

Leading up to the “B” exam & before degree conferral

* Note that following these recommendations is always at the discretion of the committee.

The expectation is that students will finish their Ph.D. in 4-5 years. Students should continue to host committee meetings each year after the “A” exam until the “B” exam is completed to stay on track.

The thesis must be delivered to committee no less than two weeks (one month is preferable) ahead of the defense so that the committee can evaluate if it is suitable for defense. Once the committee approves of the draft (but not necessarily the final document), then scheduling of an oral defense can be made. The oral defense is to be announced with no less than 7 days of public notice of the date.

Students should plan to commit to spending two weeks after the defense to make thesis edits mandated by the committee.

Grad School Policies & Procedures for your reference:
CBE Graduate Program Milestones/Expectations

- The oral defense is to be announced with no less than 7 days of public notice of the date.
- B exams presentations are open to the “public,” i.e., department-wide participation is encouraged. Examination portion will be closed following public questioning. All members of the special committee must attend this meeting.
- Committee chairs need to establish a clear understanding among committee members and the student, at the time of the examination, of what revisions are required before the dissertation will be approved. A dissertation is generally expected to be in virtually final form before the exam is given. At times, of course, the committee concludes that various revisions are warranted. If there are any concerns about the dissertation, any conditions attached to its final approval, these must be made very clear to the student in a statement on the Results of Examination form. The Results of Examination form must be submitted within three business days of the exam.