
Department of Computer Science
Rice University
Guidelines for Evaluating Ph.D. Thesis and Defense

<i>Problem statement</i>	Excellent:	Compelling problem statement that demonstrates the challenge and utility of the work, as well as theoretical or practical applications
	Satisfactory:	Problem is clearly stated; a case is made for utility, application
	Unsatisfactory:	Problem is not clearly stated; little context or justification
<i>Impact of work</i>	Excellent:	Groundbreaking work or a novel problem; a thesis that will change the literature
	Satisfactory:	Solves an important or novel problem; quality of work merits publication in important venues
	Unsatisfactory:	Obvious extension to the existing literature
<i>Technique</i>	Excellent:	Develops new approach to solution or applies techniques that are novel to the area
	Satisfactory:	Uses established techniques to solve novel problems
	Unsatisfactory:	Uses techniques incorrectly or inappropriately
<i>Content of results</i>	Excellent:	Computer Science content is substantial and correct
	Satisfactory:	Content has acceptable depth and breadth & requires only minor corrections
	Unsatisfactory:	Content is shallow and/or contains significant errors
<i>Thesis text</i>	Excellent:	Well organized text, fluent prose, and few grammatical errors
	Satisfactory:	Acceptable organization & text, limited grammatical errors
	Unsatisfactory:	Poor organization, difficult prose, or numerous grammatical errors
<i>Oral Presentation</i>	Excellent:	Engaging, polished presentation with well crafted visual aides that illustrate key results; includes a substantial conclusion
	Satisfactory:	Professional presentation on a par with a solid conference talk; includes a coherent project narrative and conclusion
	Unsatisfactory:	Too much or too little detail; unclear about project goals and direction; incoherent slides; candidate reads from slides
<i>Replies to questions</i>	Excellent:	Complete answers that demonstrate a deep understanding of the discipline that extends beyond the thesis
	Satisfactory:	Competent answers that illustrate a facility with the issues and techniques immediately relevant to the thesis
	Unsatisfactory:	Answers reveal a limited comprehension of the work and its context