

Comp Exam Committees

A Comp Committee is appointed for each of the core areas listed at

<http://www.math.illinois.edu/GraduateProgram/Study/study.html>

The committee consists of two faculty members, preferably those who have recently taught the associated core course. The sole responsibility of the committee is to set and grade the Comprehensive Exams offered in its area.

Comprehensive exams are offered three times per year, in August (at the beginning of the Fall semester), in January (at the beginning of the Spring semester) and in May (at the end of the Spring semester). The committee's appointment covers a one-year cycle: January-May-August. The committee is thus responsible for three exams. The exams may be set, and deposited in the Graduate Office for safekeeping, at any time prior to the exam dates. This option should be used if committee members anticipate being away or otherwise unavailable during the weeks immediately preceding any of the exams.

Other useful information:

1. Deadlines

- a. The Graduate Office needs to have the exams two days before the date of the exam (or at least one week in advance if assistance in typing the exam is needed).

2. The exam

- a. The exam is a two hour written examination covering the syllabus as described at <http://www.math.illinois.edu/Bourbaki/Syllabi/syllabi.html#graduate-course-syllabi>
- b. The purpose of the comprehensive examination system is (a) to ensure breadth of knowledge in our Ph.D. recipients and (b) to identify students who have a poor prospect of completing a Ph.D. degree. The goal is not primarily to identify exceptionally strong students. The exam should be constructed so that well prepared students will finish early and have time to review their answers. The problems chosen for the exam should not be more difficult than ones chosen for a standard final exam.

3. Grading and solutions

- a. Possible grades are Pass and Fail. However, students often ask for fuller information, such as their ranking, how many points they got, and the minimum passing score.
- b. Students are to be notified of the results within one week of the exam.
- c. Separate copies of the completed exams will be furnished to each examiner for simultaneous grading.

4. Other important rules

- a. Written solutions must be deposited with the Director of Graduate Studies before the exam is administered.
- b. An examiner for each unit should be available in person or by phone while the exam is in progress.