Computer Science Proficiency Exams

The proficiency exams for CS 101, 105, 125, 173, and 225 are offered near the start of classes each fall and spring term. The main exam is typically the Saturday before classes start, with the conflict time being the following Wednesday evening. Please watch this main page for up-to-date information about the exams as the start of term approaches.

Schedule and signing up

The exams for Fall 2017 will be given Saturday August 26th, 7-10pm. The conflict exam will be Wednesday August 30th, 7-10pm. You may take a proficiency exam at the conflict time only if you have a compelling reason why you cannot take the exam at the regular time, e.g. religious obligations, conflicts among proficiency exams and/or other scheduled university activities.

You must sign up on the Proficiency Exam Sign-up Form no later than August 24th (main exam) or August 29th (conflict exam).

- When you do the sign-up form, don't be alarmed by one typo: in one spot, the form refers to a main exam on the 20th, when it's actually on the 26th. The 20th wouldn't make any sense, because it's before move-in date! Our form-making tool isn't smart enough to let me update a running form. — Margaret

Students with DRES accommodation letters and students needing to take two proficiency exams on the same date (typically CS 125 and CS 225) will be able to sign up (on the same form) for a 50% extended-time exam period, starting at 5:30pm. If you need DRES accommodations other than 50% extended time, you should contact Margaret Fleck (mfleck@illinois.edu) 1-2 weeks before the exam, to work out a suitable plan and (if necessary) schedule a time at the DRES testing center.

Taking the exam

You must bring a photo ID (e.g. icard, driver's license, passport) to the exam. If you have not received instructions (e.g. by email) to go to another room, you should go to 1404 Siebel. (All the rooms are in/near the Siebel Center.)

In general terms, the proficiency exam for each course is similar to a comprehensive course final, designed to test whether you are well-qualified to take later courses in the same subject area (similar to a course grade of B-). The web sites for the individual courses contain study materials for the course finals, lecture notes, and other information you can use to prepare for the proficiency exam. Here are some useful links:

- CS 101: https://relate.cs.illinois.edu/course/cs101-prof/
- CS 105: https://courses.engr.illinois.edu/cs105/sp2016/proficiency.php (but a B- score is now required for credit)
- CS 125: https://wiki.cites.illinois.edu/wiki/display/cs125/Proficiency+Request
- CS 173: https://wiki.cites.illinois.edu/wiki/display/cs173/Home (Look at the full set of weekly examlets for recent terms that don't have a comprehensive final.)
- CS 225: https://courses.engr.illinois.edu/cs225/fa2014/exams.htm

The current instructor for each course will email the proficiency results to you as soon as the exams are graded, typically several days after the exam. Proficiency credit should appear on your transcript a few weeks later.

Restrictions on taking the exam

The ECE department requires that ECE students take ECE 220 prior to CS 173 and CS 225. Passing the CS 125 proficiency exam will not allow you to take these courses earlier.

You cannot take the proficiency exam for a course in which you have already received a grade (even a failing one).

Graduate students may take these proficiency exams only by special permission from the CS academic office. This will typically be granted only to satisfy requirements of other UIUC programs.

If you have taken more than one later course in the same topic area, you may not receive proficiency credit. You must consult with your departmental advisor as to whether you must take a substitute course or can use the proficiency exam to be exempted from the course requirement. For example, you may not receive proficiency credit for CS 173 if you have already taken CS 374. CS and ECE majors who have neglected to obtain credit for CS 173 in a timely manner will need to satisfy the requirement by taking some additional computing course.