

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) About The Foundation Examination in Computer Science

## What is it?

Students need to pass this **Foundation Exam** before they can officially be a Computer Science major and before they can take the following required 4000-level computer science courses: COT 4210, COP 4331, COP 4934, and COP 4935.

## When is this exam given?

The exam is typically given on the first Saturday of each semester. The only exception to this rule will be on Saturdays when there is a home football game or the university is closed (weather etc.). Check the **secure sign-up** page for exact dates at <https://www.cs.ucf.edu/registration/new/index.php>.

## Who needs to take this exam?

Anyone registered as a Computer Science major in myUCF who has passed COP 3502 needs to take the exam to continue as a Computer Science major. Due to the time limit restrictions, it's strongly recommended that students take the first exam offering after they complete COP 3502 to maximize their chances of passing the exam.

## What is covered in this exam?

The outline of the syllabus covered on the exam is located here:

<https://www.cs.ucf.edu/~dmarino/ucf/fndexam/FE-ExamOutline.pdf>

Copies of past exams along with solutions are located at this link:

<https://www.cs.ucf.edu/registration/exm/>

The material covered in COP 3502 should prepared you well for the exam.

# Why does the Foundation Exam exist?

The exam was created in 1998 to address a difficulty that professors of some 4000-level Computer Science courses were facing: that their students weren't prepared for their courses. Thus, the goal of the exam was to ensure that every student entering 4000-level Computer Science courses had shown a reasonable level of proficiency in a timed exam setting in fundamental computing topics so that the professors of those courses could teach their courses as planned without needing to do any remediation on topics they expected students to have learned in their earlier course work. The exam succeeded in its goal, which is why the exam has been retained.

# What extra steps must SAS students take to ensure they receive their accommodations?

Students must register for the exam officially at the following website, as all students do: <https://www.cs.ucf.edu/registration/new/index.php>. After they register on this site with the Computer Science Department, students should **ALSO put in a test request with SAS**. Since the SAS office isn't open on Saturday, when the exam is given, all students who choose to use their SAS accommodations **must take the exam on Friday**, the day before the exam is typically administered. To ensure fairness, all students who take the exam early will sign a form stating that they will not discuss the exam with anyone until after the regular examination period has completed.

# When are students allowed to take the exam?

Students may take the exam within one year of passing COP 3502 (Computer Science I) with a C or higher. Since the exam is offered once every semester and UCF has three semesters in a year (spring, summer, fall), the maximum number of attempts a student has to pass the exam is three. If a student elects not to take the exam when it is offered (for example, if she is out of town for an internship), she does not get to take the exam beyond one year of passing COP 3502 with a C or higher. In practice this means that some students will have three opportunities to take the exam and those who elect not to use one of those opportunities will have two opportunities to take the exam. If a student already has COP 3502 transfer credit when they arrive at UCF, they have one year after their first day of class at UCF to pass the Foundation Exam. (If a student chooses to not take the exam during their eligibility period, they lose that opportunity to pass the exam and do not get any chances to take the exam beyond their eligibility period.)

# Why are there new restrictions on the number of times students can take the exam?

UCF wants students to get their degrees in a timely manner. Historical data indicates that a vast majority of students who pass the Foundation Exam pass it within three attempts. Due to the lack of restrictions in the old system, some capable students skipped taking the exam multiple times and other students who were likely a better fit for a different major delayed their start in that major by taking the Foundation Exam many times. With the new rules, the hope is that all students will pass the exam and get into their upper level Computer Science courses or switch majors within twelve months of completing COP 3502. In turn, a higher percentage of students who take COP 3502 ought to graduate from UCF in a timely manner.

## Can you get credit for this exam?

No! This is not **credit-by-exam** scheme for COP 3502. However, if you satisfy both of the following requirements, namely

- transferring from an out-of-state or a private school into UCF
- have already completed a course similar to COP 3502 with a grade ``C" or better

and pass the foundation exam, see your faculty advisor for course substitutions.

## Will the exam affect a student's GPA?

No! A consequence of the exam not counting for any credits is that it can NOT affect a student's GPA at all.

## How many times can a student attempt this exam?

The maximum number of attempts a student has to pass the exam is three. But some students may elect not to use all of their potential attempts.

# **What are the criteria for passing the exam?**

This is subject to change, slightly, at the discretion of the exam graders and Foundation Exam Coordinator. Unless some anomaly is detected in terms of exam difficulty, exam conditions or exam grading, the goal will be to set the passing mark at 60%. The exam coordinator reserves the right to move this passing line for any reason however.

# **Will I get to use the formula sheet posted online during the exam?**

Yes. The formula sheet provided to students during the exam is linked here:

<https://www.cs.ucf.edu/~dmarino/ucf/fndexam/FormulaSheet-2017.pdf>

# **What is the difference between the Foundation Exam and COT 3960?**

The Foundation Exam is the actual exam that students need to pass to complete the Computer Science major. Passing the exam is one of several requirements for completing the Computer Science major. Another requirement for completing the Computer Science major is an academic advising meeting with a computer science professor. In the second half of the semester that students pass the exam, they are enrolled in COT 3960 (0 credit hours) and assigned a faculty advisor. Students have until the end of the semester to meet with their faculty advisor, submit their plan of study via website (details in the COT 3960 webcourses), and get it approved by both their faculty advisor and the College of Engineering advisors. Assuming students do this, they'll receive the grade of 'S' for COT 3960 and in the following semester, may sign up for COP 4331 and/or COT 4210. If students do not complete these steps in the half semester they are enrolled in COT 3960, they will get an 'I' grade and be unable to sign up for COP 4331 or COT 4210 until they clear the 'I' grade by completing all the necessary steps.

Sign Up for FE → Pass FE → Get Autoenrolled in COT 3960 + Get assigned a Faculty Advisor  
→ Meet with Advisor → Get COT 3960 credit → Rest of CS Major

Note: FE is short for Foundation Exam and CS is short for Computer Science Major.

# **How do I Sign-Up?**

Sign up for the exam at <https://www.cs.ucf.edu/registration/new/index.php>.