

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 when classroom space can not be reserved for students to take the exam. 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/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/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.

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.

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 credits 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, and students must take the exam within 3 semesters (including Summer) of receiving a passing grade in CS1 (see the above section: When are students allowed to take the exam?).

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/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/FE-FormulaSheet.pdf>

How do I Sign-Up?

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

Do NOT attempt to register directly for COT 3960 like you would for a normal course. Once you pass the exam you will have a meeting with a faculty advisor and fill out your Plan of Study. That Plan of Study is signed by you and your advisor and returned to the CS office. Once processed, you will then be given permission to register for COT 3960 in the system so that you can register for courses that require it as a prerequisite.