Research Immersion Labs (RILs) in the Preparatory Phase

(information for doctoral students and their advisors)

Purpose: The Graduate School's preparatory phase is to allow doctoral candidates to broaden and deepen their background in computer science. During this period doctoral students should also identify a research field according to their interests, find an appropriate research group and match up with a suitable advisor who is willing to work with them and ensure financial backing. This is only feasible if students are able to get a feeling for the kind of research they would be doing as well as for the group and advisor they would be working with. Equally importantly, an advisor needs to get to know students well enough to gauge their strengths and weaknesses in order to gain the necessary confidence to commit advising effort and resources to a student. Research Immersion Labs (RILs) were created to facilitate and formalize the *matchmaking process* between doctoral students and advisors. They are also part of the breadth requirement in the preparatory phase.

Contents: Obviously, the particular curricular requirements of an individual lab cannot be specified. The guiding idea is that the doctoral candidate should be actively engaged in the group's research activities and be involved as much as possible in all the regular goings on within the group. Ideally, the student should temporarily have workspace in the group and should included in the appropriate mailing lists.

Format/Duration: A RIL counts for 6 ECTS ungraded credit points. This corresponds to *roughly 180 hours* of work. To put this in context, a student is generally expected to complete 30 ECTS per semester, a core lecture is worth 9 ECTS points. These 180 hours *should be completed within 6 months (or less)* and can be spread over this period as desired. Typically a student is also taking regular courses during this time and the RIL should not unduly interfere with their completion. This means full-time work on the RIL is only possible during the semester breaks. Possible time allotments are, for example, 12 weeks at about 15 hours (+/- 5 hours) per week, or 6 weeks at 10 hours per week during the semester followed by 3 weeks full-time (40 hours per week) during the semester break.
Students required to complete the entire preparatory phase must take at least two RILs. These must be with *different* (independent) research groups. In addition, a RIL extension may be taken in the chosen research group to prepare for the qualifying exam (QE). A RIL extension will not be recognized after the QE. In well-founded cases, a third RIL may be taken with yet another research group instead.

Formalities: RILs are part of our doctoral curriculum and not part of the "official" university course program. Therefore students cannot register for RILs via HISPOS. We require the student and the RIL advisor to enter a written "contract" (see sample agreement) *at the beginning* listing the research project, time allotment, what is expected of the student, and the commitments of the RIL advisor so the student can register the RIL with the Graduate School office. Upon successful completion, the advisor then certifies the RIL by signing an addendum to be filed with the Graduate School office in order to book the credits.
Please remember that only members of the Graduate School's faculty assembly, i.e. *someone with the official right to advise doctoral students in Faculty MI*, may offer a RIL (see list of Advisors on our webpages).

Final report: A final report may be part of the requirements listed in the agreement but is not obligatory. In any case the student will be required to submit a *brief half-page report* on the RIL as part of the regular semester report.

Money: RILs are part of doctoral training during the preparatory phase. Students receive stipends during this period and therefore no remuneration is necessary. In fact, for reasons of fairness in the friendly competition between groups remuneration is prohibited.