Atmospheric Sciences PhD Program – Qualifying Examination
6 October 2010

Students in the Atmospheric Sciences PhD program must take the Qualifying Examination within the first two years of entering the program (i.e., after completing the core courses). The exam may be taken no more than two times.

The Qualifying Examination will evaluate a student’s mastery and synthesis of the fundamental principles underlying the atmospheric sciences, and will be based on the topics covered in the core courses:
ATM5515 – Atmospheric Chemistry
ATM5640 – Atmospheric Physics
ATM5680 – Atmospheric Fluid Dynamics

The exam will be given each year in the Spring semester; the exam may also be offered in the Fall semester upon request.

The first part of the exam consists of three written sections, one for each core course, and each section will be given on a different day, with an allotted time of two hours. All exams are closed book and only a nonprogrammable calculator can be used.

Each written section is nominally worth 100 points, and the following scores determine the exam outcome:
- A score of greater than or equal to 70 points on a section results in unconditional pass of that section.
- A score of less than 40 points on a section results in unconditional failure of that section.
- A score between those two levels on a section results in a conditional pass, with the final result determined by the PhD Advisory Committee after the second part of the examination.

The second part of the exam consists of a written exam prepared by the candidate’s PhD Advisory Committee taking place after the first part have been graded. This written exam is unique for individual students and will allow committee members to evaluate aspects of the general atmospheric sciences background that are particularly relevant to the student’s research area. A list of study materials defining the scope of the exam and the general topics considered of importance will be provided by the PhD Advisory Committee to the student at least one month prior to the exam. The PhD advisor is responsible for scheduling the exam, arranging the list of study materials, and preparing the exam questions, all in consultation with the members of the Committee (e.g., each committee member should contribute at least one question for the exam). This written exam should be appropriate for a two-hour time period and it should be offered within two months of the first part of the exam. The exam is closed book and only a nonprogrammable calculator can be used.

Students who do not pass one or more written sections of the exam may retake the section(s) in the following semester. If the second part of the examination is not passed, it will be rescheduled according to the recommendation of the PhD Advisory Committee.