

Comprehensives

The comprehensive examination process begins with the written examinations. The student must pass the written examinations to stand for the oral presentation of the research proposal. Completion of both written and oral sections advances the student to Ph.D. candidacy.

Written Examinations

Students taking this examination will follow the UAF student code of conduct. The written comprehensive examination will be taken on one day and will take 6 hours. The examination is composed of ten questions; two questions from each of the five core classes. The students have to attempt one question in each core area and one supplemental question for a total of six questions. Only six questions should be attempted and will be graded by the faculty. The tenure-track and tenured professor appointed by the Department of Atmospheric Sciences (DAS) will write the question for the examination with subject material limited to the syllabus of the core courses. The questions will be graded by the faculty who contributed them. The faculty providing the question assigns a grading structure to their exam. For overall written comprehensive examination grading, the scores are converted to grades of unsatisfactory, satisfactory, and excellent. The faculty's grading structure must be in percent. The total of the six answered questions will be averaged to provide an overall grade in percent. Below 70% is unsatisfactory, 70% to 90% is satisfactory, and above 90% is excellent. For a student to pass their written comprehensive examinations, they must have at least a total score of satisfactory or above and four out of the six have to be satisfactory. The written comprehensive examination is offered once per year, during the first full week of June.

The students intending to take the examination have to announce in writing at least by the last day of official instruction in the spring semester (email is not sufficient) by filling out and signing the Request for Written Examination Form that they will stand for the written comprehensive examination. It is policy that neither the test questions nor the student's examination answers will be returned to the student, but rather will be returned to the faculty and graded examinations will be stored in the Department's administrative office. The student may review the examination in the presence of the faculty member who was responsible for the question. The examination will be supervised and a record will be kept of break taken outside of the examination room. The students will provide their own lunch that can be eaten in the examination room. The written examination will be closed book, though each student may bring a single-sided reference sheet for each of the five core areas to the examination. Students may also bring a calculator to the examination pre-assumed the calculator is not programmed. No other electronic devices are allowed.

Oral Examination

The student must give a public oral presentation of their thesis research plan. This presentation must demonstrate to the committee that the student has a viable research project and background knowledge sufficient to complete a PhD degree. For the oral thesis proposal it is recommended that the student prepare a brief document (5-10 pages maximum) for their committee that outlines their research plans, states the overall goals (hypothesis), and presents a proposed road

map to accomplish these goals. This document will not be graded and is intended to help the student better formulate and organize their research plan. The student's Graduate Advisory Committee attends along with an outside examiner (as described in the catalog) and grades this presentation. The grades are pass, conditional pass, and fail. In the case of a conditional pass, the committee will describe the areas that must be remedied, and if the student completes these requirements, their grade is converted to pass. In the case that the student fails the oral examination or fails to convert a conditional pass into a pass, the student may be re-examined once. The public is allowed to ask questions during the public discussion session. After the committee declares the public session is over the public is not allowed to ask anything anymore and/or comment. The deliberation will be closed for the public. All faculty in the room may fill out the Evaluation of the Thesis Proposal form. This form will not be used for the determination of the student's grade. The sole purpose is to gather information for the Student Learning Outcome Assessment requirement.

Failure of Comprehensive Examinations

The student will be allowed to re-take the written comprehensive examinations only once. If a student's score in the written examination is unsatisfactory then they will have to retake the written examination the following year. If a student is unable to pass the comprehensive exams during the second attempt, they transfer into the M.S. program, where they must then satisfy the degree requirements of the M.S. program to get an M.S. degree.