ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCES

2023-2024
Graduate Student Handbook

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Aggie Code of Honor

For many years Aggies have followed a Code of Honor, which is stated in this very simple verse:

An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.

The Aggie Code of Honor is an effort to unify the aims of all Texas A&M men and women toward a high code of ethics and personal dignity. For most, living under this code will be no problem, as the Honor System Rules (http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/Rules-and-Procedures/Rules/Honor-System-Rules) ask nothing of a person that is beyond reason. It only calls for honesty and integrity, characteristics that Aggies have always exemplified.

The Aggie Code of Honor functions as a symbol to all Aggies, promoting understanding and loyalty to truth and confidence in each other.

Atmospheric Sciences Mission

The Department of Atmospheric Sciences is dedicated to advancing our scientific understanding of the atmosphere and imparting that knowledge for the benefit of society.

Our most fundamental mission is to help students at all levels, from undergraduate to postdoctoral, acquire and develop scientific knowledge, critical thinking skills, the ability to continue to learn and the potential to contribute to society. We also serve students in other disciplines through survey courses, which give students a better understanding of nature and of scientific methods, and through specialized courses for students in fields that require applied knowledge of meteorology.

Our research efforts serve two purposes: to expand the frontiers of atmospheric science and to give students experience and training in conducting research. The knowledge gained from research may be fundamental or applicable to a particular societal need. Research results are communicated through journals or other appropriate media to other scientists and the public. As a department, we seek to maintain the highest standards of excellence in the research we perform.

We have a duty to contribute to society through our educational and research activities. This public service includes administrative and educational efforts both inside and outside the university, such as assisting in university governance, developing and disseminating teaching materials or improving pre-college education, and research-related efforts, such as serving on committees of scientific societies, providing advice to state and federal governments, acting as reviewers and editors, organizing meetings and assisting industry. Research and service activities should not be allowed to adversely affect our educational mission but should be encouraged where they improve the quality of our teaching and of the scientists we train. We are committed to helping Texas A&M University and the State of Texas carry out their broader missions.

General Information

The Program

The Atmospheric Sciences graduate program (the Program) is hosted by the Department of Atmospheric Sciences (the Department), which is part of the College of Arts and Sciences (the College) of Texas A&M University (the University). The Program is designed to provide students with an understanding of the fundamentals of atmospheric sciences and related disciplines, and in-depth knowledge of a particular area.

Administrative Structure

The Head of the Department (the Department Head) delegates the authority to make certain decisions regarding the Program to the Atmospheric Sciences Graduate Committee (the Graduate Committee). The chair and the members of the Graduate Committee are appointed by the Department Head. The Director of the Program, who is also the voting member of the graduate curriculum committee of the College for the Department, is the Chair of the Graduate Committee. The contact person to the Graduate and Professional School is the Graduate Academic Advisor of the Program. The current Department Head, Graduate Director and Graduate Academic Advisor, and their contact information are the following:

- **Department Head:** Dr. R. Saravanan, e-mail: sarava@tamu.edu, Tel:979-845-0175, Office: Eller O&M 1204GA.
- **Graduate Director:** Dr. Anita Rapp, e-mail: arapp@tamu.edu, Tel: 979-862-1580, Office: Eller O&M 1002B.
- **Graduate Academic Advisor:** Suzanne Rosser, crosser@tamu.edu, Tel: 979-845-2451, Office: Eller O&M 205 (Tuesday: 7:30 am-4:00 pm, Friday: 7:30 am-11:30 am), and by Zoom (Wednesday: 7:30 am-4:30 pm, Zoom Room: 979 862 3697), After Hours Emergency: (Text Only!) 979-219-3640.

Degrees Offered

Graduate education in the Program is offered at both the **Master of Science (MS)** and **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)** level. The **MS degree** has a **Thesis** and a **Nonthesis** option, but currently only the thesis-based option is open for new applicants to the Program. Students currently enrolled in the Program as either a thesis-option MS student or PhD student can change to the nonthesis MS option with the approval of their faculty advisor and the Department Head. Research investigations comprise a significant part of the thesis-based degrees.

Admission Requirements

Prerequisites

A **Bachelor of Science or Art degree is a prerequisite** to apply to the **Program**, but a **prior MS degree is not a prerequisite** to apply as a **PhD student**. Most successful applicants have a degree in one of the following disciplines: meteorology/atmospheric sciences, geosciences, physics, chemistry, mathematics, or engineering. The prerequisites are **12 hours total of calculus** or **engineering math** and **differential equations**, and **8 hours total of chemistry and physics** for engineering or physical sciences.

Credentials

Grade Point Average (GPA)

There is no minimum GPA requirement. However, most successful applicants have GPAs well above 3.00.

Graduate Record Examination (GRE)

GRE scores are **not required**.

Letters of recommendation
Three letters of recommendation are required. The recommendation letters are important: applicants should choose recommenders who can adequately and fairly assess their potential, both as a student and a researcher.

English Language Proficiency

The **University** requires that **all international graduate students** must meet minimum English language proficiency standards. To achieve admission to a graduate or professional program at Texas A&M University, international applicants are required to attain **English Language Proficiency (ELP) Verification**. For eligibility to hold a graduate assistantship with instructional or curricular support responsibilities, international graduate students must achieve **ELP Certification**. (Reference: Graduate and Professional School policy on ELP).

Test Scores Accepted for ELP Verification:

- A TOEFL score of at least 80 on TOEFL iBT (550 paper-based) or
- 8.5 on TOEFL Essentials.
- A IELTS score of at least 6.0.
- A GRE Verbal Reasoning score of at least 146 (400 on the old scale).
- A GMAT Verbal Score of at least 22.

Scores from TOEFL and IELTS administered **more than two years** before submission of the admissions application are **not eligible** for use in attaining ELP Verification.

While the University rules allow academic units to request an **ELP Waiver for Admission** (see reference for details) under extenuating circumstances, the Department has never requested and is not planning to request such waivers.

Alternative Verification may be acquired following the admissions process from the Graduate and Professional School *via* request submitted by the Department or College. Alternative Verification indicates that an international applicant meets the ELP Requirement through means other than the acceptable standardized test scores. An international graduate student may qualify for Alternative Verification by a bachelor's degree (with less than four years of coursework) or holding an MS degree from an **accredited academic institution located in the United States**. If an international graduate student holds a bachelor's degree after completion of all four years at an accredited academic institution located within the United States, the Graduate and Professional School recommends submission of the **Alternative Certification Form**. The Departments follows this recommendation in all applicable cases.

International graduate students who hold citizenship with an English-speaking country listed on the Office of Admissions' International Graduate page will automatically receive ELP Verification

Identifying a Faculty Advisor
Applicants for admission to the program are **strongly encouraged** to browse the profiles of the faculty of the Department to find a potential faculty advisor. Applicants are encouraged to contact the potential faculty advisor via email. An applicant must be nominated for admission by a faculty who is willing to act as the applicant's faculty advisor. If the applicant is admitted to the Program and that applicant accepts the Department's offer, the applicant will become a member of the faculty advisor's research group upon enrollment in the Program. The final admission decision is made by the Graduate Committee.

Pursuing a Degree in the Program

University, College, and Department Level Rules and Requirements

University level rules and policies for graduate studies are determined by the Graduate and Professional School. These rules can be found in the Graduate Catalog, which is published annually each spring for the next academic year. The University rules provide considerable freedom to the academic units in determining the specific degree requirements of the graduate programs that they host. The present handbook provides a summary of the University and College level rules, and a full description of the Department level rules of the Program. All students are expected to meet the deadlines established in these documents to insure successful completion of degree requirements and graduation. Students must be continuously registered until all degree requirements have been met.

Grade Point Ratio (GPR) Requirements (University Requirements)
All graduate students have two GPRs:

•**Degree Plan GPR** – includes all courses listed on the degree plan that were completed at TAMU.
•**Cumulative GPR** – includes all courses completed at TAMU that are, or could be, listed on the degree plan.

The University rules require that both GPRs must be at least 3.0 to be in good standing to conduct any type of exam and to graduate. Course levels included in the GPRs are 300, 400, 600, and 900. Courses NOT included in the GPRs are transfer courses, 100-200 level courses, and courses that involve grades of W-drop (W), Satisfactory (S), Unsatisfactory (U), and Q-drop (Q). While the University rules allow colleges and departments to establish higher GPR requirements, the College and the Department currently has no such higher requirements.

ATMO Graduate Courses

Core Courses

The six core courses of the ATMO graduate program are ATMO 601, 602, 606, 611, 612 and 613. They cover three main fields of the atmospheric sciences:

- Dynamical meteorology (ATMO 601 and 611).
- Physical meteorology (ATMO 602 and 612).
- Atmospheric chemistry (ATMO 606 and 613).

ATMO 681 Seminar (Weekly Graduate Seminar)

Attendance at the weekly graduate seminars is **mandatory, regardless of whether a student is registered in ATMO 681.** Those who are registered in ATMO 681 will typically have additional assignments related to the seminars. The instructor of record in ATMO 681 will make these assignments. MS students are required to register at least once and not more than twice. PhD students are required to register twice.

ATMO 678 Professional Development in Atmospheric Sciences

This 1-credit course is offered every other year. While Both MS and PhD students can take this class, PhD students are required to take this class once.

ATMO Graduate Elective Courses

The Department typically offers 1 or 2 graduate elective courses per semester, which are selected based on input from the students currently enrolled in the Program.

MS Students

Most program specific requirements and additional university requirements are published in the Graduate Catalog.

Course Requirements for the Thesis Option

All Thesis Option MS students are required to submit a degree plan with **at least 32 hours** of coursework, of which the department requires that 23 hours must be formal (i.e., non-research based) coursework. The minimum course requirements are the following:

- 9 hours of ATMO core courses,
- 6 hours of additional ATMO courses (may be core courses),
- 3 hours of out-of-department courses,
- 1 or 2 hours of ATMO 681 (seminar),
- 4 or 3 additional hours of formal coursework, and
- ATMO 691 (research hours)

Important Notes:

- While the department only requires 23 hours of formal coursework, university rules state that no more than 8 hours in the combination of 691 (research) and 684 (professional internship) may be used on an MS degree plan. If a student registers for only the departmentally-mandated 23 credits of formal course work, there will be 9 credits of research hours. Students who wish to use 9 credits of ATMO 691 must request an exception on their degree plan. The departmental policy has been to approve such requests, which thus far have also been approved by the Graduate and Professional School. Students should keep in mind, however, that the approval of these requests is done on an individual basis, and it cannot be guaranteed that the Graduate and Professional School will approve them in the future. The safest approach is to register for at least 24 credits of formal course work (e.g., by taking 2 credits of ATMO 681, a combination of ATMO 681 and ATMO 678, or another 3-hour course).
- Many Thesis Option M.S. students stay in the Program after graduation to pursue a PhD degree. Such students may have earned more than 8 or 9 ATMO 691 credits by the time of graduation. The extra ATMO 691 credits may be used on a future PhD degree plan, but only if ATMO 691 credits from the same semester were not used on the MS degree plan. Hence, (a) students should plan to take their ATMO 691 credits carefully, and (b) they should explicitly specify in the MS degree plan the semesters from which they want to use the ATMO 691 credits. Students in the past lost many credit hours by not considering these constraints on the use of 691 credits.

Course Requirements for the Nonthesis Option

All Nonthesis Option M.S. students are required to submit a degree plan with **at least 36 hours** of coursework, all of which must be formal (i.e., non-research based) coursework. The minimum course requirements are the following:

- 9 hours of ATMO core courses,
- 6 hours of additional ATMO courses (may be core courses),
- 3 hours of out-of-department courses,
- 1 or 2 hours of ATMO 681 (seminar),
- 17 or 16 additional hours of formal coursework.

The University rules state that a student pursuing the Nonthesis Option is **not allowed to enroll in a 691 (research) course for any reason.** In addition, a 691 may not be used for credit toward a non-thesis option MS degree. However, the department head for the program may approve an **exception for a PhD student who changes to a nonthesis option MS degree** after at least one year of PhD studies to use 691 credits toward a non-thesis option MS degree. The department head may approve an **exception for an MS student who changes from an MS thesis option degree to a MS nonthesis option degree** to use 691 credits toward a non-thesis option MS degree. In both cases, the student is allowed to use a maximum of 8 credit hours of 685 and 691 combined. Departments, Colleges, and Interdisciplinary Degree Programs may opt to establish higher standards. **The College and Department currently does not have a higher standard**.

A maximum of 4 credit hours of 684 (Professional Internship), 8 credit hours of 685 (Directed Studies), and up to 3 credit hours of 690 (Theory of Research) or 695 (Frontiers in Research) may be used toward the non-thesis option Master of Science degree. In addition, any

combination of 684, 685, 690, and 695 may not exceed 25 percent of the total credit hour requirement shown on the individual degree plan.

For Nonthesis MS students a **Final Comprehensive Examination** is **required**.

All requirements for the non-thesis option Master of Science degree other than those specified above are the same as for the thesis option degree.

Steps to Fulfill the Requirements of an MS Degree

The steps to fulfill the University requirements can be found in the relevant section of the Graduate Catalog. Step 2 states that an advisory committee must be established, and a degree plan must be submitted prior to the deadline imposed by the student's college and no later than 90 days prior to final oral or thesis defense. The deadline imposed by the College is the end of the student's **second full (fall or spring) semester** in the Program, which typically comes much earlier than 90 days prior to final oral or thesis defense. If a student does not satisfy this requirement, the student will not be able to register for the next semester. Under extenuating circumstances, the registration hold can be lifted. These circumstances must be explained in a memo by the Department Head or the Graduate Director to the Associate Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs of the College, who can then request the Graduate and Professional School to lift the hold. A successful request typically includes a statement that the degree plan has been submitted, but the approval process has not been completed.

Doctoral Students

Most program specific requirements and additional university requirements are published in the Graduate Catalog.

Course Requirements

Doctoral students that have an MS degree are required to submit a degree plan with **at least 64 hours of coursework.** Doctoral students that do not have an MS degree are required to submit a degree plan **with at least 96 hours of coursework**. The minimum course requirements in either case are the following:

- 12 credits of core courses (both courses in the student's primary field of interest and at least one course in each of the other two fields),
- 12 credits of additional ATMO courses (may be core courses),
- 6 credits of out-of-department courses,
- 2 credits of ATMO 681 (seminar)
- 1 credit of ATMO 678, and
- ATMO 691(research).

Students should identify the primary field of their interest in consultation with their advisor. Students may substitute other coursework (including ATMO 691) for all or part of a course requirement that has already been satisfied by taking classes towards an MS degree in the Program. Any other substitutions of additional out-of-department courses toward the 12 credits of additional ATMO courses must be pre-approved by the graduate director or department head and approved by the student's advisory committee as part of their degree plan. Only one out-of-department course may be considered for substitution for required ATMO course credits.

Including Credits Earned Before the Completion of an MS Degree in a PhD Degree Plan

The general principle is that credits cannot be double counted. However, a PhD student that first obtained an MS degree in the Program can include the following types of credit hours earned before the completion of the MS degree in the PhD degree plan:

- Credits for formal course work that were not included in the MS degree plan.
- Research (ATMO 691) credit hours, if the MS degree plan included ATMO 691 credits from specific semesters and none of the credit hours that are included in the PhD degree plan are from those semesters.

Steps to Fulfill the Requirements of a PhD Degree

The steps to fulfill the University requirements can be found in the relevant sections of the Graduate Catalog. The College and Department specific policies regarding these steps are the following:

- Step 2 states that an advisory committee must be established, and a degree plan must be submitted prior to the deadline imposed by the student's college and no later than 90 days prior to final oral or thesis defense. The deadline imposed by the College is the end of the student's **third full (fall or spring) semester** in the Program, which typically comes much earlier than 90 days prior to final oral or thesis defense. If a student does not satisfy this requirement, the student will not be able to register for the next semester. Under extenuating circumstances, the registration hold can be lifted. These circumstances must be explained in a memo by the Department Head or the Graduate Director to the Associate Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs of the College, who can then request the Graduate and Professional School to lift the hold. A successful request typically includes a statement that the degree plan has been submitted, but the approval process has not been completed.
- According to the rules of the University, the Department or the student's advisory committee may require qualifying, cumulative, or other types of examinations at any time deemed desirable. These examinations are entirely at the discretion of the Department and the student's advisory committee. The Department currently requires that **all PhD students of the Program must pass a PhD Qualifying Exam** (see details below).
- A Preliminary Examination of all PhD students is required by the University. The rules state that the format of the preliminary examination shall be determined by the student's department and advisory committee and communicated to the student in advance of the examination. The exam may consist of a written component, oral component, or combination of written and oral components. The preliminary exam may be administered by the advisory committee or a departmental committee. According to the current rules of the Department, the **Preliminary Exam** is an **oral exam** administered by the student's advisory committee. It is recommended that the preliminary examination be completed no later than the end of the semester following the completion of the formal course work on the degree plan. Students are also strongly encouraged to submit the **dissertation proposal** to their committee prior to the preliminary exam. Questions by the exam committee can then focus on the proposal and on the background knowledge necessary to successfully carry out the proposed work.

PhD Qualifying Exam

The qualifying exam is a **departmental requirement** for PhD students, for which the objectives are: (1) to restrict our PhD program to students who are likely to be successful in their research, (2) to establish a minimum foundational knowledge and integrative analysis requirement for PhD students that distributes responsibility broadly among the faculty, and (3) to require students to demonstrate an ability to carry out bibliographical research. The qualifying exam results, along with grades in courses, are used to decide who should be allowed to continue their studies in the PhD program.

The format of the Qualifying Exam of the 2023/2024 Academic Year is new. The previous format was used from the 2016/2017 Academic Year. Students who have already passed an earlier format of the exam will not have to retake the exam. All other students will have to take the new format of the exam.

Exam Format

The exam is an oral exam. The exam is offered once a year, at the end of the spring term. For students who enroll in the fall, the exam must be completed within 36 months after graduate study

begins. Students who begin their study during the summer are considered to have enrolled in fall. For students who enroll in the spring semester, the exam must be completed within 32 months.

The Doctoral Curriculum Committee selects a small number of papers in each major field of the atmospheric sciences (atmospheric dynamics, atmospheric physics, and atmospheric chemistry). Students choose a paper from this list and have 2 weeks to prepare an oral presentation based on the paper. The oral presentation should be no more than 30 minutes, after which examiners will ask questions. The entire exam should not exceed 2 hours.

The purpose of the oral presentation is to give an oral demonstration of the ability to understand key scientific concepts and arguments in the chosen paper. Only figures/tables from the paper and equations can be presented as slides (e.g., PowerPoint, Keynote, pdf). No additional text should be included in the slides. These restrictions are intended to help the students to focus attention on trying to understand the paper during the week. They also imply that the students will not be judged on the quality of their presentation graphics. If students want to discuss material from textbooks or other papers, they can simply "talk about it", or draw/write on the white board.

The exam should focus narrowly on the student's understanding of the material presented in the paper, and any relevant material covered in the textbooks and core courses. The student is not expected to "back trace" the citations and read all the important previous papers on the topic in the short time span of two weeks, although students may choose to do so to better understand the chosen paper itself. The student will be asked questions that are directly related to core topics discussed in the paper. It is assumed that the student has reviewed these topics using core course material when reading the paper.

Only students who satisfy the following requirements are eligible to take the exam:

- The student satisfies the 36 (32) month time limit requirement.
- The student has not failed the exam more than once before.
- The student completed the minimum required core course work of 12 hours (which may include approved transfers of core courses).
- The student has a GPR of 3.1 or higher over all core courses taken.
- The student has a cumulative GPR of 3.0 or higher.
- The student's Ph.D. advisor approves their pursuit of a Ph.D.

The Department Head will appoint a Qualifying Exam Coordinator, who will verify the eligibility of students to take the exam, constitute an Oral Exam Committee for each eligible student, and schedule the Oral Exam.

Composition of the Oral Exam Committee:

- Each student's committee will have the same number of members (three or more).
- The Department Head will appoint the additional members of the Oral Exam Committee before the exam.
- The student's faculty adviser cannot be a member of the Oral Exam Committee.

The faculty advisor should discuss the options of a student who fails the exam. A student who fails the exam for a second time can no longer pursue a Ph.D. degree in the Atmospheric Sciences Department. The adviser of such a student will usually suggest a path to graduation with a Master's degree. Students also have the option to transfer to another Ph.D. program.

Scholastic Requirements

Grade Point Ratio (GPR) Requirements (University Requirements)
All graduate students have two GPRs:

•**Degree Plan GPR** – includes all courses listed on the degree plan that were completed at TAMU.
•**Cumulative GPR** – includes all courses completed at TAMU that are eligible to be listed on the degree plan.

The University rules require that both GPRs must be at least 3.0 to be in good standing to conduct any type of exam and to graduate. Course levels included in the GPRs are 300, 400, 600, and 900. Courses NOT included in the GPRs are transfer courses, 100-200 level courses, and courses that involve grades of W-drop (W), Satisfactory (S), Unsatisfactory (U), and Q-drop (Q). While the University rules allow colleges and departments to establish higher GPR requirements, the College and the Department currently has no such higher requirements.

Academic Deficiency and Probation

The University policy states that if a student's Cumulative GPR or Degree Plan GPR falls below the minimum of 3.0, the student is considered scholastically deficient. If the minimum GPR is not attained in a reasonable length of time, the student may be dropped from graduate studies.

Departments or colleges may adopt specific guidelines pertaining to scholastic deficiency or dismissal in addition to these University policies. The specific guidelines adopted by the Department are the following:

- If the Cumulative or Degree Plan GPR of a student falls below 3.0, the student will receive a letter from the Graduate Director providing warning of scholastic deficiency.
- If the Cumulative or Degree Plan GPR of a student stays below 3.0 at the end of the following term, the student will be permitted to continue in the program on scholastic probation. After consultation with the student's faculty advisor, the Graduate Committee will determine the terms of probation. The student will be informed in writing of the terms of probation in accordance with university regulations. If these terms are not satisfied at the end of the following term, the Graduate Committee will recommend dismissal of the student from the ATMO graduate program. The Department Head will make the final decision on the dismissal of the student from the Program.

Dismissal of a Graduate Student

For policies and procedures on dismissal of a graduate student refer to student rule 12.7.1- 12.7.5 http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule12.

Annual Evaluation

All graduate level students in the department of Atmospheric Sciences are required to complete and submit a Graduate Student Annual Review Form. The purpose of this form is to help the assessment of the progress of each student toward graduation by the Department. The form is to be completed and signed by the student and their faculty advisor stating and documenting the student's goals and progress for the year. The Graduate Advisor sends out and collects the form near the end of the spring term. The typical deadline to complete the form is the end of the spring term. The Graduate Committee uses this form to assess the progress of each graduate student in the program toward graduation.

Graduate Assistantships

An applicant is admitted to the program only if the Department has sufficient funding to offer assistantship that provides full financial support, which includes a stipend, tuition and fees at the in-state rate, and benefits. While an assistantship cannot be guaranteed until graduation, the Department's intent is to provide an assistantship to all students upon satisfactory academic and job performance.

There are three types of graduate assistantships available:

- **Graduate Assistant Research (GAR)** – The student works with and report to a particular Principal Investigator (PI) who is the student's faculty advisor (chair of the student's advisory committee). The student works on a research project that typically serves as their thesis research project.
- **Graduate Assistant Teaching (GAT)** – The student teaches labs or does grading assignments. The normal teaching load is 3 sections of ATMO 202, or an equivalent workload in other courses (e.g., 2 sections of ATMO 251, or 1 section of ATMO 456).

- **Graduate Assistant Non-Teaching (GANT)** - The student completes various non-teaching duties within the department. (Grading assignments are considered teaching duties that cannot be performed by a GANT.)

All three types of assistantships are considered 50% full time effort (FTE) appointments (on average, 20 service hours per week). Graduate students holding assistantships must be registered for a minimum of 9 semester hours during a fall or spring semester, or for 6 credit hours during the summer. Assistantships terminate upon failure to maintain the minimum enrollment requirement.

Stipend

The current monthly stipend of the graduate assistants at the Department is

- $2,450 for MS students and PhD students who have not yet passed the Ph.D. Qualifying Exam, and
- $2,600 for Ph.D. students who have passed the Qualifying Exam and have an approved PhD degree plan.

Changes in the stipend rate are proposed by the Department Head and approved by a vote of the full faculty of the Department.

Graduate Assistant Research

About 90% of the students of the Program serve as GARs at any given time. They are paid for the work performed for one or more externally or internally funded research projects. While GARs work on a funded research project that typically forms part of their thesis research, they are expected to work additional hours on their thesis research. A GAR who takes a full load (9 hours in the fall and spring semester and 6 hours in the summer semester) of research credit hours (ATMO 691), is expected to work about an additional 20 hours per week on average (a total of about 40 hours per week on average) to earn a Satisfactory grade.

Graduate Assistant Teaching

About 5-7 students of the Program serve as GATs in each fall and spring semester. (GAT positions are typically not available at the Department in the summer.) The number of TAs for a semester is determined by the Chair of the Undergraduate Committee of the Department. The course assignments are made by the Graduate Director. Students are typically nominated by their faculty advisor for a GAT position, but students interested in such a position can contact the Graduate Director directly (the approval of their faculty advisor is still necessary). All GAT course assignments **must be finalized at least one month before the start of the semester**.

An international student can serve as a GAT only if the student is ELP Certified. ELP eligibility must be demonstrated prior to the date of hire as a GAT. There are three levels eligibility:

1. Eligible: a student who has a score of at least 11 on the TOEFL Essentials Speaking Section, 26 on the TOEFL Speaking Section, 8 on the IELTS Speaking Section, or 80 on the ELPE Oral Examination.
2. Conditionally Eligible: a student who is not eligible but has a score of at least 9 on the TOEFL Essentials Speaking Section, 23 on the TOEFL Speaking Section, 7 on the IELTS Speaking Section, or 75 on the ELPE Oral Examination.
3. Ineligible: a student who does not have a score that would make them eligible or conditionally eligible.

A student who is conditionally eligible may teach for one semester only and must simultaneously enroll in the Texas A&M University Center for Teaching Excellence ELP (CTE-ELP) Program. The student must achieve a Level 1 score on the ELPE Oral Examination (at least 80) or one of the global standardized tests (TOEF or IELTS). The **practice of Department has been to appoint only Level 1 Eligible students** to GAT positions.

Alternative Certification may be acquired from the Graduate and Professional School via request submitted by the Department. Alternative Certification indicates that an international student meets the English Language Proficiency standard required to hold a teaching position through means other than the acceptable testing scores and confers Level 1 (Eligible) status. An international

graduate student completing all years of a bachelor's degree from an accredited academic institution located in the United States qualifies for Alternative Certification. International graduate students holding a **master's degree** or a **bachelor's degree with less than four years of coursework** at an accredited academic institution located within the United States are **ineligible for Level 1 Certification**. Students who are citizens of certain English-speaking countries will also be considered for Alternative Certification. The Office of Admissions' International Graduate webpage maintains a complete list of countries whose citizens are exempt.

ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION FORM

The form must include the student's name and UIN and must be signed by the Department Head. Alternative Certification requests must be submitted by the Department to ELPCompliance@tamu.edu. The Graduate and Professional School will determine whether to grant Alternative Certification Requests on a case-by-case basis.

TA Training
University policy requires all GATs to take a mandatory training course provided by the Center for Teaching Excellence at Texas A&M University and a discipline specific training course provided by the Department prior to teaching. Students must take these training courses only once before the semester when they first serve as a GAT. For more information on the CTE course visit the following website: http://cte.tamu.edu/. The available dates for the exam are usually sent by CTE to the Graduate Director a couple of months before the start of the semester. The Graduate director then forwards these dates to the GATs. The department level training course is coordinated by the Chair of the Undergraduate Committee of the Department.

Transfer Course Work

Transfer course work may be accepted contingent upon the approval of the students' advisory committee, department head, and the Graduate and Professional School. **Transfer work is handled on a case-by-case basis.** Course(s) must be completed at an accredited U.S. institution or approved international institution with a grade of A or B and must be graduate level or upper-level undergraduate courses. In most cases, MS students may transfer in 12 hours. The Department has no stricter limits on the number of hours that can be transferred in. A final official transcript (with grades) must be received by the Office of Admissions for all transfer work listed on the degree plan. A degree plan listing transfer work 'to be taken' will be approved pending receipt of the final official transcript listing such work. Once the transcript has been received, it will be used to verify that the courses in question meet all eligibility criteria. MS students who are scheduling their final exam and are currently registered for transfer work must have confirmation of registration in the course from the attending university on file with the Graduate and Professional School prior to approval of the final examination. Notification may be in the form of an unofficial transcript or a copy of the student's registration. Doctoral students are not eligible to transfer in course work during their last semester or the semester of their final examination.

The Department approves the transfer of course work only in exceptional cases (e.g., the student moves to Texas A&M with their faculty advisor from another university). The student must submit a petition to the Department that identifies each course to be transferred and the equivalent course offered at Texas A&M University. These courses may be core courses of the Program.

Submitting Required Documents

Filing a Petition with the Graduate and Professional School

There are two types of petitions offered by the OGAPS office. The "MDD Petition" (MDD stands for Major, Degree, or Department) and the "LongForm Petition". All petitions are to be submitted online at **https://ogsdpss.tamu.edu/.** A student may only have one petition in process through the DPSS system at one time. The petition must be approved by the OGAPS office before a new petition of either type may be created.

MDD Petition
The MDD Petition is used to request a change affecting at least one of these three parts to a student's graduate program of study.

- **Change of Major, Degree or Department**- If a student already has an approved degree plan, the student will create a new degree plan of study after this request is approved.
    - **Change of Major-** May keep an approved degree plan**.** This is an option reserved for special cases where the graduate student changes to a closely related major and may choose to keep to an existing plan of study.

- **Add a Second Program of Study**- Only certain pre-approved combinations of programs are allowed. This petition requests permission to pursue a second program. When a student pursues two programs, one is considered "primary" and the other is considered "secondary". Speak with your graduate advisor or contact OGAPS for further information.

- **Drop a Program**- If a student previously requested a second program, but for reasons unforeseen, cannot pursue two programs, this requests approval to drop one of the programs. As a graduate student must have at least one program of study, a request to drop a program is not permissible when the graduate has only a single program.

LongForm Petition
Such a Petition allows a student to submit requests for any one or a combination of Committee Changes, Course Changes, Extension of Time Limits or for a Waiver/Exception of rules. The initial approver for the Department is the Graduate Advisor. Then the petition is routed to the student's committee. The committee members will have access to approve the petition only after the chair of the committee has approved it. Once all committee members have approved the petition, the Graduate Director is the final approver for the Department. Once the approval process is completed by the Department, the document is routed to the Graduate and Professional School office for processing and final approval.

Filing a Petition with the Department

All petitions regarding department requirements (e.g., waiver of deadline for Qualifying Exam or course requirements) must be addressed to the Department Head or the Graduate Director. The Department Head makes the final decision on the approval or denial of the petition after consultation with the chair of the student's committee and the Graduate Director.

Using the Academic Requirements Completion System (ARCS)

The Academic Requirements Completion System (ARCS) is designed to streamline the process of tracking and fulfilling graduate degree program academic requirements. Students with an approved degree plan can access ARCS by logging into Howdy. From the ARCS dashboard, students can click on milestones to create requests. Students can then monitor request approval status. Students have the option to submit the following in ARCS:

- Preliminary Exam Request
- Proposal Approval Form
- Final Exam (Defense) Request
- Final Exam Exemption Request
- Copyright and Availability Form
- Thesis/Dissertation/Record of Study Approval Form

Letter Of Intent

A student completing a graduate degree who wants to continue for another graduate degree may request to do so by filing an approved letter of intent with the Graduate and Professional School, if there is no break in enrollment, or if the break is less than one calendar year. A student who has

an enrollment break of more than one calendar year or longer following graduation must re-apply through Graduate Admissions. The following is included in the Letter of Intent:

- The degree and semester of the completed degree, the proposed continuing degree, department, major and the semester to begin the proposed degree.
- The student's signature is required along with printing his/her name, student UIN, and mailing address.
- The department head, or the Chair of the Interdisciplinary Faculty, must sign indicating their acceptance of the student and date. The signer checks if the student must begin in the term listed only, or if they receive the one-year time frame to register.

Upon approval of the Graduate and Professional School, a copy will be sent to the Department. International students should contact ISS directly for assistance in obtaining a new Form 1-20 or DS 2019.

Note: Students who are approved for a Letter of Intent, and do not attend the beginning semester indicated, must file a new Letter of Intent with the new semester indicated (if within one year of graduation).

The Letter of Intent can only be approved once all degree requirements have been met. If the student is registered for graded course work in their last semester, the letter may not be able to be approved prior to final grades being submitted.
Link to Form: **http://ogs.tamu.edu/incoming-students/student-forms-and-information/**

Use of Departmental Resources

Office Space

Office space is provided for graduate students that hold a GAR or GAT position, or a Fellowship. Students that are provided office space will be required to fill out a key check out form to receive a key for their office space. The form must be signed by the student as well as their faculty advisor prior to receiving a key. Key forms are available in the department's main office. Students are allowed possession of their keys for as long as their office space is occupied. All keys must be turned in to the front office prior to graduation and/or termination/resignation of graduate assistant or fellowship privileges. Students that are granted office space will be provided with a desk and chair by the department.

Departmental Equipment

Departmental equipment is any equipment that is owned by either the department or the university. All students are entitled to usage of departmental equipment as long as prior authorization is obtained beforehand. The department applies a strict rule that all departmental equipment must be returned in good condition. Any damages to departmental equipment must be reported immediately to the proper individual. Failure to use or return equipment properly may result in disciplinary action and/or loss of equipment use privileges. Failure to inform the department about known damage to departmental equipment WILL result in disciplinary action and/or loss of equipment use privileges.

Building Access

All graduate students in the department of Atmospheric Sciences are entitled to building access at all times. From 7:30 A.M. - 5 P.M. Monday –Friday, students may enter the building through any door. At all other times students needing access to the building after hours must enter through the designated after hours entrances by swiping their university identification card. To obtain after hours building access, students should contact the ATMO Business Administrator.

Parking

All students are to park in the designated student parking lots, garages, and/or visitor lots. Parking in an unauthorized area may result in a parking ticket, and/or towing of the students car at their own expense. Parking at Texas A&M anywhere other than a visitor lot requires a parking pass. For information regarding parking, please contact the transportation department at 979-862-7275 or visit their website at **http://transport.tamu.edu/.**

Computer Usage

All graduate students are granted the privilege to use any of the student computer labs within the building. A username and password will be required to operate a departmental computer.

Official University Travel

Certain trips such as conferences, research symposiums, and fieldwork may qualify as official university travel, and may qualify to be paid for by the department and/or university. Students must obtain prior authorization from the university for any and all official university travel. Requesting authorization and claiming expense reimbursement for such travel is done electronically in CONCUR through the **sso.tamus.edu** website. Students must receive proper training and authorization before using this website to claim travel as official university travel. Note that authorization for international travel may take several weeks. Students may not claim personal travel as official university travel.

Domestic Students and Official University Travel

For domestic students, it is the responsibility of the student to obtain passports, health insurance and /or visas for the respective country they plan to visit when traveling abroad. For more information on obtaining passports and visas, please contact the Study Abroad Programs Office at 979-845-0544 or by email at **studyabroad@tamu.edu**. For more information on official university travel, please contact the ATMO Business Office.

International Students and Official University Travel

International students holding F-1 and J-1 visas are encouraged to attend conferences, research symposiums, and conduct fieldwork during their studies at Texas A&M University. Travel of these sorts may qualify as official university travel and may be eligible to be covered at the expense of the department and/or university. It is up to the student to ensure that they have a valid passport, visa, health insurance and travel signature on their form I-20 or DS-2019 prior to traveling, especially when traveling abroad. Failure to remain in compliance with ISS and DHS policies may result in the loss of an international student visa, and/or the privilege to study at Texas A& M University. Students may not claim personal travel as official university travel. For more information on international student travel both domestically and internationally, contact International Student Services office at 979-845-1824 or by email at **iss.tamu.edu.**

Mentoring & Student Organizations

Mentoring

The student's faculty advisor who is also their committee chair serves as their primary academic advisor, principal thesis advisor, and the general mentor for their academic program and research. Students are encouraged to meet with their faculty advisor frequently to ensure successful progression and completion of their graduate program.

Atmospheric Sciences Graduate Council (ASGC)

The Atmospheric Sciences Graduate Student Council is the governing body for the graduate students in the department of Atmospheric Sciences. The council meets to discuss issues pertinent to graduate students within the department. The council disseminates information regarding graduation, courses, symposiums, speakers and other events. The council also coordinates social and professional development events throughout the year for students and faculty. For more information on joining the ASGC, contact ASGC President Ashley Sebok (aesebok@tamu.edu). The current faculty advisor of ASGC is Dr. Anita Rapp (arapp@tamu.edu).