The Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Science offers a program leading to the Doctor of Philosophy Degree (Ph.D.) in atmospheric and oceanic science. This program is designed to furnish the student with the background necessary to carry out independent and original scientific research. To earn the Ph.D., the student must complete a course work requirement, pass the Candidacy Examinations, and prepare and defend a dissertation.

A student seeking a Ph.D. degree will be assigned to a faculty advisor whose interests parallel those of the student. The academic advisor will establish and chair an advising committee which will oversee the student's degree program.

The course work requirement is 30 semester hours of 600-level or above AOSC Department courses. In addition, the student must take 12 credits of AOSC899. Students may wish to take a number of the core courses in order to prepare for the Qualifying Examination. In addition, there is a Minor course requirement of six semester hours of ancillary courses taken beyond the bachelor's degree in a related scientific area at the 600-level or above. These credits must have a unified or coherent theme. Students may petition the Department for a waiver of a portion of these requirements based on credits earned at another institution at the graduate level.

A student seeking the Ph.D. degree in atmospheric and oceanic science must pass the Candidacy Examinations, which are divided into two parts - The Qualifying Examination and the Specialty Examination. During the Specialty Examination, the student must present and defend a dissertation prospectus to the examination committee. Following successful defense, the student advances to candidacy. Ability to perform independent research must be demonstrated by a written dissertation. The dissertation should be an original contribution to knowledge and demonstrate the ability to present the subject matter in a scholarly style. Upon completion of the dissertation the candidate is required to present the research results at an Atmospheric and Oceanic Science Department seminar and to defend the material to the satisfaction of a Final Examining Committee appointed by the Dean for Graduate Studies.

Full-time students are expected to complete the Qualifying Examination by the end of the second year of graduate study and be admitted to candidacy by the end of the third year. Students must be admitted to candidacy within three years after admission to the doctoral program and at least six months before the date on which the degree will be conferred. The student must complete the entire program for the degree, including the dissertation and final examination, during a four-year period after admission to candidacy.

Graduate Track for Accomplished Scientists
Graduate students with exceptional scientific achievements may, through written petition to the Graduate Director, replace the written portion of the Comprehensive Exam with a seminar followed by an oral examination. To qualify for this track, the candidate needs to meet the following requirements:

1. have an earned MS degree in atmospheric or oceanic science, or a related field, ordinarily from an accredited American university, and receive approval from the five-member Departmental Examination Committee.
2. have published at least five, peer-reviewed, Science Citation Index (SCI) journal articles in atmospheric, oceanic, or a closely related science. He or she must be the lead or corresponding author of at least three of those papers.

The candidate must present an open seminar on his/her past research followed by a closed oral exam by the Examination Committee of at least three faculty plus the Graduate Director, and the Admissions Committee Chair. Two or more negative votes constitutes failure. The final decision will be subject to review by the committee of the whole.