ASSIGNMENT OF ADVISOR

The Director of Graduate Studies will appoint a research advisor at the time the student enters the graduate program. The advisor assists the student in planning the academic program and will start the student on the research phase of the program as soon as feasible. It is considered implicit in all advisor-advisee affiliations that the entering student has the opportunity during the first two semesters in residence to change advisors, providing mutually satisfactory arrangements can be made with all the staff members concerned, particularly where assistantship appointments are involved. The Graduate Advisory Committee may be asked by staff members or by students to assist in such arrangements. Students with program already well under way are advised that changes in the advisor affiliation may result in additional time for degree completion and may jeopardize any previous arrangements for financial assistance.

All MS and PhD students are expected to complete an annual review form. See page 48 for details.

PRELIMINARY EXAM

The Written Preliminary Examination and Oral Preliminary Examination must be passed by every PhD candidate. The purpose of these exams is to demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of core concepts in Land and Atmospheric Science and within the student's specific subdiscipline; and to assess the student's analytic ability, creativity, and potential for successful completion of the PhD program in LAAS. The student is responsible for completing all Preliminary Exam-related forms and procedures that are required by the Graduate School and by the LAAS graduate program (see http://www.grad.umn.edu/current-students-forms/formsdoctoral). Both the Written and Oral Preliminary Examinations should normally be completed by the end of the student's second year in the program. If you have questions, please contact the LAAS administrator or DGS.

Part A - Written Preliminary Examination

1) Students develop, write and orally defend an original, hypothesis-driven research proposal that:

- Outlines a series of experimental approaches that will test the validity of the hypothesis.
- Establishes the scientific context of the proposed research with respect to prior work and the current state of knowledge in the field.
- Demonstrates knowledge of core information and concepts in their field within Land and Atmospheric Science.

The Written Proposal is an NSF or USDA-style research grant proposal. The proposal must be hypothesis-driven and an original contribution by the student. It cannot be based on one that was supplied by the advisor. The proposal topic should be selected by the student and approved in advance by the exam committee. The proposal must contain an abstract, a brief review of the literature pertinent to the specific question, a detailed description of experiments designed to test the hypothesis, a discussion and interpretation of the anticipated results, a concise statement of the significance of the project and a list of references.

2) The written proposal should be submitted to the examination committee by eight weeks prior to the end of the student's second year in the program.

3) The proposal should be 5-8 single-spaced pages (12 pt font, 1” margins), not including references or figures, and will be distributed to all members of the exam committee. Each member of the exam committee, with the exception of the minor field examiner, will prepare a written critique.

4) Examiners will be asked to comment specifically on the creativity, originality and validity of the proposal and of the experimental approaches proposed to test the postulated hypothesis as well as on the quality of the presentation.