Earth and Planetary Sciences

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Degree Requirements

PhD in Earth and Planetary Sciences

The degree requirements for a PhD in Earth and Planetary Sciences are intended to ensure that all students develop independence and originality of thought and that they acquire knowledge of sufficient breadth and depth to be scientific leaders in the field. Students are required to complete eight courses, five of which must be taken in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences. Students entering with an AM degree in a closely related field may waive two of these course requirements if approved by the faculty.

Students begin research early in the program, completing a small project during their second semester. At this time, each student selects a faculty member to serve as their major advisor as well as two additional faculty members to provide further guidance; these three faculty members comprise the student’s Research Advisory Committee. During their second year, students continue their research as they work toward the oral examination that occurs at the end of their second year, which requires the preparation of a research paper, an oral presentation of research results, and a question-and-answer session with the Research Advisory Committee. Students are also required to obtain experience in teaching during their studies. The PhD program culminates in the writing of a dissertation and its defense in an oral presentation.

AM in Earth and Planetary Sciences

The department offers two tracks for the completion of the AM degree. Both tracks require the completion of six courses, four of which must be taken in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences. One track toward the AM degree is a component of the PhD degree program, with students being awarded an AM upon successful completion of the oral examination that occurs during the second year of the program. The other track is for students seeking a terminal AM degree. This track requires the completion of a master’s thesis and its defense in an oral presentation by the end of the second year of study.