# The global ocean meets the great ice sheets – the physics of the grounding zone

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**ABSTRACT:** The great ice sheets of Greenland and Antarctica have marine-based sectors in which the ice sheets are grounded on a bed that is below modern-day global sea level. As such sectors move towards the open ocean under the action of gravity there is an area over which the ice transitions from being grounded on the sea floor to abruptly terminating into or going afloat on the ocean– the so-called grounding zone. In Greenland, the transition is generally of the abrupt type known as a terminus and in Antarctica, the transition is usually a floating extension known as an ice shelf. The physical processes, largely unknown, occurring in the grounding zone are critical to the ice sheet advancing into or retreating away from the global ocean.

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