PHYSICS, M.S.

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Department of Physics has a strong tradition of graduate study and research in astrophysics; atomic, molecular, and optical physics; condensed matter physics; high energy and particle physics; plasma physics; quantum computing; and string theory. There are many facilities for carrying out world-class research (https://www.physics.wisc.edu/research/areas). We have a large professional staff: 45 full-time faculty (https://www.physics.wisc.edu/people/staff) members; 11 faculty members holding joint appointments with other departments; 34 assistant, associate, and senior scientists; and 46 postdocs.

The department occupies all of Chamberlin Hall and a portion of Sterling Hall, located in the central campus area. The Physics Library (http://physics.library.wisc.edu), (https://www.library.wisc.edu/physics) in Chamberlin Hall, is large and convenient to use. It has complete electronic access to databases and, of course, copy machines and comfortable chairs. The department maintains a fine instrument and machine shop and an electronics shop (http://uw.physics.wisc.edu/~eshop) staffed by skilled electronics technicians. There is, in addition, a student-staff machine shop open to graduate students and supervised by an experienced machinist who assists and instructs shop users. Several computers are available for general computing, and a number of smaller machines are used for on-line control of experiments and for data collection. The Division of Information Technology (DoIT) (http://www.doit.wisc.edu) has a large professional staff which assists users, provides contract programming services and offers a wide variety of computing courses. Researchers have free access to large scientific computing resources (http://aci.wisc.edu/services/large-scale). Many research programs in physics use the Physical Sciences Laboratory (PSL) (http://www.psl.wisc.edu).

The department offers the master of arts and master of science degrees in Physics, a master of science degree in Physics with a named option in Quantum Computing, and the doctor of philosophy degree with a named option in Quantum Computing. This is an accelerated 30-credit program designed to be completed in a single calendar year. The tuition for this program is $1,600 per credit hour. Students in this program cannot accept research assistantships, teaching assistantships, project assistantships or other university appointments that grant waivers of tuition.

Research specialties include:

THEORETICAL PHYSICS

Astrophysics; atomic, molecular, and optical physics; condensed matter physics; cosmology; elementary particle physics; nuclear physics; phenomenology; plasmas and fusion; quantum computing; statistical and thermal physics; string theory.

EXPERIMENTAL PHYSICS

Astrophysics; atomic, molecular, and optical physics; biophysics; condensed matter physics; cosmology; elementary particle physics; neutrino physics; experimental studies of superconductors; medical physics; nuclear physics; plasma physics; quantum computing; spectroscopy.

M.S. DEGREE DETAILS

The master of science degree in Physics is a professional program that requires the completion of a directed master's project and thesis in the student's area of interest, 30 credits of graduate work, and passage of the qualifying examination at the master's level. It is designed to strengthen the student's background and experience in physics, and enhance the opportunities for employment as a physicist or in physics education.

The research program in physics is unusually broad in scope with active experimental and theoretical research programs in astrophysics; atomic, molecular, and optical physics; biophysics; condensed matter physics; elementary particle physics; nuclear physics; particle physics theory; phenomenology; and plasma physics. This broad range of research opportunities makes the department especially attractive to beginning students who have not yet chosen a field of specialization.

The program also offers a master of science degree in Physics with a named option in Quantum Computing. This is an accelerated 30-credit program designed to be completed in a single calendar year. The tuition for this program is $1,600 per credit hour. Students in this program cannot accept research assistantships, teaching assistantships, project assistantships or other university appointments that grant waivers of tuition.

ADMISSIONS

Please consult the table below for key information about this degree program's admissions requirements. The program may have more detailed admissions requirements, which can be found below the table or on the program's website. Graduate admissions is a two-step process between academic programs and the Graduate School. Applicants must meet the minimum requirements (https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements) of the Graduate School as well as the program(s).

Once you have researched the graduate program(s) you are interested in, apply online (https://grad.wisc.edu/apply).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall Deadline</td>
<td>December 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Deadline</td>
<td>This program does not admit in the spring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Deadline</td>
<td>This program does not admit in the summer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRE (Graduate Record Examinations)</td>
<td>Required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Proficiency Test</td>
<td>Every applicant whose native language is not English or whose undergraduate instruction was not in English must provide an English proficiency test score and meet the Graduate School minimum requirements (<a href="https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/#english-proficiency">https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/#english-proficiency</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Test(s) (e.g., GMAT, MCAT)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters of Recommendation Required</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Admission is competitive. All applicants are reviewed and evaluated on the basis of previous academic record, three letters of recommendation, statement of purpose for graduate studies, resume, and Graduate Record Exam (GRE) general and subject scores. The physics subject GRE exam is required for admission to the PhD. The MS Physics,
“Quantum Computing” Named Option does NOT require the physics subject GRE for admission. For applicants whose native language is not English, the department requires a minimum score of 580 (paper-based), 237 (computer-based) or 92 (internet-based) on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam, or 7 on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam. To be considered for admission, students must submit all application materials (including test scores) via the Graduate School electronic application site (https://www.gradsch.wisc.edu/eapp/eapp.pl) by December 15. The MS Physics, “Quantum Computing” Named Option program application deadline is March 15.

**FUNDING**

**GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES**

Resources to help you afford graduate study might include assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, and financial aid. Further funding information (https://grad.wisc.edu/funding) is available from the Graduate School. Be sure to check with your program for individual policies and processes related to funding.

**PROGRAM RESOURCES**

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR PHD STUDENTS IN PHYSICS**

All admitted Ph.D. students are provided with a guarantee of financial support. Typically, a graduate student is first appointed as a teaching assistant. Teaching assistants assist faculty members in the introductory physics courses, generally by teaching discussion and laboratory sections. Later, as a research assistant, the student works with a major professor on a mutually agreed research program. Tuition is remitted for teaching assistant and research assistant appointments greater than one-third time or greater. However, all students must still pay the segregated fees, which are about $600 per semester for full-time students, and any additional university fees.

**Teaching Assistantships**

The typical first appointment for a beginning graduate student is a teaching assistantship (TA). A teaching assistantship is both a teaching position and a means of support for graduate study. It is normally advantageous for a graduate student to hold a TA position for at least a semester during graduate studies, since the teaching activity solidifies and deepens the teaching assistant’s undergraduate education in physics and also helps prepare for a possible career in teaching.

TA appointments are granted for a semester at a time. Based on a 50% appointment at the standard rate, a TA earns approximately $8,000 per semester.

**Research Assistantships**

Research assistantships are made available by individual professors to students who have decided on their field of research. Most departmental RA appointments are made for an annual (12 months) period. Applicants who wish to be considered for an RA appointment should contact the faculty (https://www.physics.wisc.edu/people/faculty) directly.

**Fellowships**

Fellowships, including University Fellowships and Advanced Opportunity Fellowships, are awarded by the Graduate School upon recommendation of the Department of Physics. In addition, the department may have additional fellowships—funded by endowments from physics department alumni—available for first-year graduate students. Information on these fellowships is available on the department website (https://www.physics.wisc.edu/academics/gradstudents/fellowships).

Information on nondepartmental fellowships can be found on the Graduate School funding page (http://grad.wisc.edu/studentfunding/types).

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR MS STUDENTS IN PHYSICS- NAMED OPTION IN QUANTUM COMPUTING**

Students admitted to the MS degree in Physics named option in Quantum Computing are not provided with a guarantee of funding support as this is a one year accelerated master’s program. Students cannot accept research, teaching, or project assistantships or other university appointments that grant remission or waivers of tuition and fees.

**REQUIREMENTS**

**MINIMUM GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS**

Review the Graduate School minimum academic progress and degree requirements (http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiesandrequirementstext), in addition to the program requirements listed below.

**MAJOR REQUIREMENTS**

**MODE OF INSTRUCTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Face to Face</th>
<th>Evening/Weekend</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Hybrid</th>
<th>Accelerated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mode of Instruction Definitions**

- **Evening/Weekend**: These programs are offered in an evening and/or weekend format to accommodate working schedules. Enjoy the advantages of on-campus courses and personal connections, while keeping your day job. For more information about the meeting schedule of a specific program, contact the program.
- **Online**: These programs are offered primarily online. Many available online programs can be completed almost entirely online with all online programs offering at least 50 percent or more of the program work online. Some online programs have an on-campus component that is often designed to accommodate working schedules. Take advantage of the convenience of online learning while participating in a rich, interactive learning environment. For more information about the online nature of a specific program, contact the program.
- **Hybrid**: These programs have innovative curricula that combine on-campus and online formats. Most hybrid programs are completed on-campus with a partial or completely online semester. For more information about the hybrid schedule of a specific program, contact the program.
- **Accelerated**: These on-campus programs are offered in an accelerated format that allows you to complete your program in a condensed time-frame. Enjoy the advantages of on-campus courses with minimal disruption to your career. For more information about the accelerated nature of a specific program, contact the program.

**CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS**

**Requirements Detail**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum Credit</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Minimum Residence Credit Requirement: 30 credits

Minimum Graduate Coursework Requirement: Half of degree coursework (15 credits out of 30 total credits) must be completed graduate-level coursework; courses with the Graduate Level Coursework attribute are identified and searchable in the university’s Course Guide (https://registrar.wisc.edu/course-guide/). No 300-level courses will be counted toward the 30 credit minimum.

Overall Graduate GPA Requirement: 3.00 GPA required.

Other Grade Requirements: The Graduate School requires an average grade of B or better in all coursework (300 or above, not including research credits) taken as a graduate student unless conditions for probationary status require higher grades. Grades of Incomplete are considered to be unsatisfactory if they are not removed during the next enrolled semester.

Assessments and Examinations: All master of science degree candidates must pass the qualifying examination at the master's level. Master of science degree candidates must write a master’s thesis and defend that thesis in a seminar.

Language Requirements: Contact the program for information on any language requirements.

REQUIRED COURSES

All graduate degree candidates are required to take five core courses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICS 711</td>
<td>Theoretical Physics-Dynamics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICS 715</td>
<td>Statistical Mechanics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICS 721</td>
<td>Theoretical Physics-Electrodynamics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICS 731</td>
<td>Quantum Mechanics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICS 732</td>
<td>Quantum Mechanics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The remaining 15 credits may be earned through a combination of research and coursework, to be determined by the advisor in consultation with the student.

NAMED OPTIONS (SUB-MAJORS)

A named option is a formally documented sub-major within an academic major program. Named options appear on the transcript with degree conferral.

View as listView as grid

- PHYSICS: QUANTUM COMPUTING, M.S. (HTTP://GUIDE.WISC.EDU/GRADUATE/PHYSICS/PHYSICS-MS/PHYSICS-QUANTUM COMPUTING-MS)

POLICIES

GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICIES

The Graduate School’s Academic Policies and Procedures (https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy) provide essential information regarding general university policies. Program authority to set degree policies beyond the minimum required by the Graduate School lies with the degree program faculty. Policies set by the academic degree program can be found below.

MAJOR-SPECIFIC POLICIES

GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK

The Graduate Program Handbook (https://www.physics.wisc.edu/pmsd) is the repository for all of the program’s policies and requirements.

PRIOR COURSEWORK

Graduate Work from Other Institutions

Prior coursework from other institution may count toward any graduate degree in physics as allowed by the Graduate School policy on prior coursework.

UW-Madison Undergraduate

Up to 7 credits in courses numbered 500 or above may be used to satisfy minimum degree requirements.

UW-Madison University Special

With program approval and payment of difference in tuition (between Special and graduate tuition), students are allowed to count no more than 15 credits of coursework numbered 500 or above taken as a UW–Madison University Special student. Coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to a master’s degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

PROBATION

Grade of B or better in all coursework and a minimum cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0 are required.

ADVISOR / COMMITTEE

All students are assigned a temporary advisor upon matriculation. The responsibility to acquire (choose and be accepted by) a major professor (permanent advisor) is entirely with the student. Acceptance for M.S. research by a professor depends on the professor’s appraisal of the student’s potential for research and on the ability of the professor to accept a student at that time. Usually the major professor will be able to offer support in the form of a research assistantship, but this is not always the case, and occasionally a student may need to work as a teaching assistant while performing thesis research.

Graduate students should begin research work as early as possible. Students are encouraged to acquire a major professor (advisor) and begin research by the end of the second semester. Students who do not acquire a research advisor and begin research by the end of their third semester may be dropped from the program.

All M.S. candidates are required to write a master’s thesis and present their research in a seminar. All master’s theses must be approved a committee comprised of the student’s advisor and two other members, at least one additional faculty member.
**CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED**
15 credits

**TIME CONSTRAINTS**
n/a

**OTHER**
n/a

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES**
Resources to help you afford graduate study might include assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, and financial aid. Further funding information (https://grad.wisc.edu/funding) is available from the Graduate School. Be sure to check with your program for individual policies and processes related to funding.

**PROGRAM RESOURCES**

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHYSICS GRADUATE STUDENTS**
Our students have multiple opportunities for professional development throughout their graduate careers. As an integral part of research experience, students regularly work at CERN, national laboratories (Argonne, FermiLab), IceCube Neutrino Observatory at the South Pole etc.

Students are encouraged to travel to relevant conferences across the U.S. and the globe. Our students regularly attend the annual American Physical Society (APS) March Meeting and are encouraged to attend APS meetings in their sub-field throughout the year. We also encourage students to attend summer schools at various host institutions to expand their knowledge and to interact with fellow scientists in their field.

All incoming Ph.D. graduate students who will be Teaching Assistants (TA) receive extensive TA training during a week long, comprehensive program designed and implemented by our Director Undergraduate Studies. Students are also encouraged to join the DELTA program on campus which provides excellent training and mentorship for those interested in teaching. Each spring the course PHYSICS 603 Workshop in College Physics Teaching is offered. This gives our students the opportunity to learn effective teaching methods, do research into new teaching practices, and provides a forum for students and the instructor to openly discuss challenges and rewards of teaching.

Students are also encouraged to attend Graduate School sponsored Professional Development events and participate in Graduate School Professional Development resources, such as the Individual Development Plan (IDP).

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

1. Mastery of the core physical concepts (classical mechanics, electricity and magnetism, quantum mechanics, and statistical mechanics).
2. Articulates, critiques, or elaborates the theories, research methods, and approaches to inquiry or schools of practice in physics.
3. Evaluates or synthesizes information pertaining to questions or challenges in physics.
4. Gains rudimentary awareness of physics research execution.
5. Communicates clearly in ways appropriate to the field of physics.

**PEOPLE**

**FACULTY**
More detail about each faculty member (https://www.physics.wisc.edu/people/faculty) and the research areas (https://www.physics.wisc.edu/research/areas) can be found on the Physics website.

Yang Bai, Associate Professor
Baha Balantekin, Eugene P. Wigner Professor
Vernon Barger, Vilas Professor and Van Vleck Professor
Keith Bechtol, Assistant Professor
Kevin Black, Professor
Stanislav Boldyrev, Professor
Tulika Bose, Professor
Victor Brar, Assistant Professor
Duncan Carlsmith, Professor
Daniel Chung, Professor
Mark Eriksson, Professor
Susan Coppersmith, Robert E. Fassnacht Professor and Vilas Professor
Sridhara Dasu, Department Chair & Professor
Jan Egedal, Professor
Mark Eriksson, Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professor
Lisa Everett, Professor
Cary Forest, Prager Professor of Experimental Physics
Pupa Gilbert, Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professor
Francis Halzen, Gregory Breit Professor and Hilldale Professor
Kael Hanson, Professor, WIPAC Director
Aki Hashimoto, Professor
Matthew Herndon, Professor
Lev Ioffe, Professor
Robert Joynt, Professor
Albrecht Karle, Professor, IceCube Associate Director, Science & Instrumentation
Shimon Kolokowitz, Assistant Professor
James Lawler, Arthur and Aurelia Schawlow Professor
Alex Levchenko, Associate Professor
Dan McCammon, Professor
Robert McDermott, Professor
Marshall Onellion, Professor
Kimberly Palladino, Assistant Professor
Yibin Pan, Associate Professor
Brian Rebel, Visiting Associate Professor
Mark Rzchowski, Associate Chair and Professor
Mark Saffman, Professor
John Sarff, Professor
Gary Shiu, Professor
Paul Terry, Professor
Peter Timbie, Professor
Justin Vandenbroucke, Assistant Professor
Maxim Vavilov, Professor
Thad Walker, Professor
Sau Lan Wu, Enrico Fermi Professor and Vilas Professor
Deniz Yavuz, Professor
Ellen Zweibel, William L Kraushaar Professor of Astronomy & Physics

**AFFILIATED FACULTY**
David Anderson, Professor, Electrical & Computer Engineering
Chang-Beom Eom, Professor, Materials Science & Engineering
Chris Hegna, Professor, Engineering Physics
Sebastian Heinz, Professor, Astronomy
Mikhail Kats, Assistant Professor, Electrical & Computer Engineering
Irena Knezevic, Professor, Electrical & Computer Engineering
Max Lagally, Professor Emeritus, Materials Science & Engineering
Alexandre Lazarian, Professor, Astronomy
Carl Sovinec, Professor, Engineering Physics
Kalin Vetsigian, Assistant Professor, Bacteriology