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; 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.

PH.D. DEGREE DETAILS

The Ph.D. degree requires successful completion of advanced coursework in physics (required core coursework), completion of a minor, and passage of the qualifying and preliminary examinations. However, the Ph.D. is primarily a research degree, awarded only upon completion of substantial original research. 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 provides the background, experience, and credentials needed for employment as a professional physicist in research or education. All admitted Ph.D. students typically receive financial support in the form of teaching or research assistantships and fellowships.

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/](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/](https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/)).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</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 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. All eligible applicants with complete files are considered for teaching or research assistantships and fellowships. 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](https://www.gradsch.wisc.edu/eapp/eapp.pl)) by December 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/](https://grad.wisc.edu/funding/)) is available from the Graduate School. Be sure to check with your program for individual policies and restrictions 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 and any additional university fees each semester.

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.

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. Students 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 College of Letters & Science and 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.

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

Accelerated: Accelerated programs are offered at a fast pace that condenses the time to completion. Students are able to complete a program with minimal disruptions to careers and other commitments.

Evening/Weekend: Courses meet on the UW–Madison campus only in evenings and/or on weekends to accommodate typical business schedules. Students have the advantages of face-to-face courses with the flexibility to keep work and other life commitments.

Face-to-face: Courses typically meet during weekdays on the UW-Madison Campus.

Hybrid: These programs combine face-to-face and online learning formats. Contact the program for more specific information.

Online: These programs are offered 100% online. Some programs may require an on-campus orientation or residency experience, but the courses will be facilitated in an online format.

Curricular Requirements

Requirements Detail

| Minimum Credit Requirement | 51 credits |

Minion

ResidenceCredit Requirement

Minimum Graduate Coursework Requirement
Half of degree coursework (26 credits out of 51 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 (http://my.wisc.edu/CourseGuideRedirect/BrowseByTitle(http://my.wisc.edu/CourseGuideRedirect/BrowseByTitle/)). No Physics courses below 500-level will be counted toward the 51 credit minimum. 300-level courses taken from departments outside of Physics in fulfillment of an external minor may be counted toward the 51 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

Physics doctoral students are required to pass the qualifying examination at the Ph.D. level by the end of their fourth semester.

Students are also required to take a comprehensive preliminary/oral examination. It is recommended that this is completed by the end of the fifth semester.

All Incomplete and Progress grades (other than research and thesis) must be cleared from the student's record prior to taking the preliminary examination.

A final oral defense and deposit of the doctoral dissertation in the Graduate School is required.

Language Requirements

Contact the program for information on any language requirements.

Doctoral Minor/Breadth Requirements

All doctoral students are required to complete a minor.

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>
Each core course must be repeated until a grade of at least a B is earned. All first year graduate students are required to enroll in and attend PHYSICS 701 Graduate Introductory Seminars held each fall.

**POLICIES**

**GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICIES**

The Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures (https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicys/) 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**

**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 doctoral 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 incoming students are assigned a faculty mentoring committee upon matriculation. The responsibility to acquire (choose and be accepted by) a major professor (permanent advisor) is entirely with the student. Acceptance for Ph.D. research by a professor depends on the professor’s appraisal of the student’s potential for research and on the ability/willingness of the professor to accept a student at that time. Often the major professor will offer support in the form of a research assistantship, but this is not always possible, and students 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. Summer is the ideal time to begin research unencumbered by coursework or teaching.

At the time of the preliminary examination, the major professor and at least two additional faculty members will form a committee that will evaluate and advise the student. All Ph.D. Committee members will serve as readers of the student’s thesis.

**CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED**

15 credits

**TIME CONSTRAINTS**

Doctoral degree students who have been absent for ten or more consecutive years lose all credits that they have earned before their absence. Individual programs may count the coursework students completed prior to their absence for meeting program requirements; that coursework may not count toward Graduate School credit requirements.

A candidate for a doctoral degree who fails to take the final oral examination and deposit the dissertation within five years after passing the preliminary examination may be required to take another preliminary examination and to be admitted to candidacy a second time.

**GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS**

These resources may be helpful in addressing your concerns:

- Bias or Hate Reporting (https://doso.students.wisc.edu/bias-or-hate-reporting/)
- Graduate Assistantship Policies and Procedures (https://hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp/#grievance-procedure)
- Hostile and Intimidating Behavior Policies and Procedures (https://hr.wisc.edu/hib/)
  - Office of the Provost for Faculty and Staff Affairs (https://facstaff.provost.wisc.edu/)
  - Dean of Students Office (https://doso.students.wisc.edu/) (for all students to seek grievance assistance and support)
  - Employee Assistance (http://www.eao.wisc.edu/) (for personal counseling and workplace consultation around communication and conflict involving graduate assistants and other employees, post-doctoral students, faculty and staff)
  - Employee Disability Resource Office (https://employeedisabilities.wisc.edu/) (for qualified employees or applicants with disabilities to have equal employment opportunities)
  - Graduate School (https://grad.wisc.edu/) (for informal advice at any level of review and for official appeals of program/departmental or school/college grievance decisions)
  - Office of Compliance (https://compliance.wisc.edu/) (for class harassment and discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence)
  - Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/) (for conflicts involving students)
  - Ombuds Office for Faculty and Staff (http://www.ombuds.wisc.edu/) (for employed graduate students and post-docs, as well as faculty and staff)
  - Title IX (https://compliance.wisc.edu/titleix/) (for concerns about discrimination)

Students should contact the department chair or program director with questions about grievances. They may also contact the L&S Academic Divisional Associate Deans, the L&S Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning Administration, or the L&S Director of Human Resources.
Typical funding is through 50% assistantships. Typically all enrolled Ph.D. students are funded for the duration of their degree. All programs are full time and require full-time student enrollment during fall and spring terms.

**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 restrictions related to funding.

**PROGRAM RESOURCES**

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

In addition, Ph.D. students in Physics have multiple opportunities for professional development throughout their graduate careers. As an integral part of the research experience, students regularly work at places such as CERN, national laboratories (Argonne, FermiLab), and the IceCube Neutrino observatory at the South Pole to name a few.

Students are encouraged to travel to relevant conferences across the U.S. and around the world. 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. Often students attend summer schools at various host institutions to expand their knowledge and to interact with fellow scientists in the field.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

1. Demonstrate mastery of the core physical concepts (Classical Mechanics, Electricity & Magnetism, Quantum Mechanics, and Statistical Mechanics).
2. Evaluates or synthesizes information pertaining to questions or challenges in physics.
3. Engages appropriately and communicates clearly with other research professionals in physics.
4. Formulates and plans original research.
5. Creates research, scholarship, or performance that makes a substantive contribution to the field of physics.
6. Gains a broad awareness of the status of contemporary research beyond the student’s area of specialization.

**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
Uwe Bergmann, Martin L. Pearl Professor in Ultrafast X-Ray Science
Tulika Bose, Professor
Victor Brar, Van Vleck Assistant Professor
Duncan Carlsmith, Professor
Daniel Chung, Professor
Susan Coppersmith, Robert E. Fassnacht Professor and Vilas Professor
Sridhara Dasu, Department Chair & Professor
Jan Egedal, Professor
Mark Eriksson, John Bardeen Professor
Lisa Everett, Professor
Ke Fang, Assistant 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
Shimon Kolkowitz, Assistant Professor
James Lawler, Arthur and Aurelia Schawlow Professor
Alex Levchenko, Professor
Lu Lu, Assistant Professor
Dan McCammon, Professor
Robert McDermott, Professor
Moritz Muenchmeyer, Assistant Professor
Marshall Onellion, Professor
Kimberly Palladino, Assistant Professor
Yibin Pan, Associate Professor
Jeff Parker, Assistant Professor
Brian Rebel, 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, Associate 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
Paul Campagnola, Professor, Biomedical Engineering
Jennifer Choy, Assistant Professor, Engineering Physics
Elena D’Onghia, Associate Professor, Astronomy
Chang-Beom Eom, Professor, Materials Science & Engineering
Chris Hegna, Professor, Engineering Physics
Sebastian Heinz, Professor, Astronomy
Mikhail Kats, Associate Professor, Electrical & Computer Engineering
Jason Kawasaki, Assistant Professor, Materials Science & Engineering
Alexandre Lazarian, Professor, Astronomy
Oliver Schmitz, Professor, Engineering Physics
Carl Sovinec, Professor, Engineering Physics