

Astronomy, BS

Learning Outcomes

Astronomy majors will be able to:

- demonstrate understanding of the fundamental concepts in astrophysics such as gravity, the nature of light, the physical characteristics of matter, and the motions of astronomical objects in the night sky;
- demonstrate proficiency in each of the major areas of astronomy—cosmology, galaxies, accretion and compact objects, the life cycle, and properties of stars and solar system science;
- show a working knowledge of a broad array of astrophysical phenomena that are based upon fundamental concepts; and
- gain familiarity with astronomical observations, instrumentation, computational methods, and software.

Requirements

The Bachelor of Science with a major in astronomy requires a minimum of 120 s.h., including at least 60 s.h. of work for the major. The program provides balanced and integrated coursework in astronomy, mathematics, and physics that prepares students for graduate studies in astronomy, astrophysics, or related science disciplines. Students must maintain a grade-point average (GPA) of at least 2.00 in all courses for the major and in all UI courses for the major. They must also complete the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences GE CLAS Core.

Students must complete several required mathematics courses in addition to the required physics and astronomy core. The department offers a wide range of upper-level electives and students are encouraged to explore different research areas. All students are strongly encouraged to get involved with research.

In planning coursework, students should be guided by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences maximum hours rule: students earning a BS may apply a maximum of 56 s.h. earned in one department to the minimum 120 s.h. required for graduation, whether or not the coursework is accepted toward the requirements for the major. Students who earn more than 56 s.h. from one department may use the additional semester hours to satisfy requirements for the major (if the department accepts them), and the grades they earn become part of their GPA, but they cannot apply the additional semester hours to the minimum 120 s.h. required for graduation.

Students who want to earn a double major in astronomy and physics must choose their coursework carefully; see the following section titled "Double Major in Physics and Astronomy."

The BS with a major in astronomy requires the following coursework. Substitutions may be allowed by exception through the department.

Requirements	Hours
Mathematics Courses	13-16
Physics Core Courses	24-28
Astronomy Core Courses	17

Upper-Level Physics Courses 6-7

Optional Upper-Level Elective Courses

Mathematics Courses

Course #	Title	Hours
All of these:		
MATH:1850	Calculus I	4
MATH:1860	Calculus II	4
MATH:2700	Introduction to Linear Algebra	4
MATH:2850	Calculus III	4
Or all of these:		
MATH:1550	Engineering Calculus I	4
MATH:1560	Engineering Calculus II	4
MATH:2550	Engineering Matrix Algebra	2
MATH:3550	Engineering Vector Calculus	3

Physics Core Courses

Course #	Title	Hours
These three courses:		
PHYS:1701	Physics I	4
PHYS:1702	Physics II	4
PHYS:2703	Physics III	4
Or these two courses:		
PHYS:1611	Introductory Physics I	4
PHYS:1612	Introductory Physics II	4
All of these:		
PHYS:2704	Physics IV	4
PHYS:3710	Intermediate Mechanics	3
PHYS:3741	Introduction to Quantum Mechanics I	3
PHYS:3811	Electricity and Magnetism I	3
PHYS:3812	Electricity and Magnetism II	3

Astronomy Core Courses

Course #	Title	Hours
All of these:		
ASTR:1771	Fundamental Astronomy I: The Solar System and Exoplanets	4
ASTR:1772	Fundamental Astronomy II: Evolution of Stars, Galaxies, and the Universe	4
ASTR:3771	Introduction to Astrophysics I (offered every other year)	3
ASTR:3772	Introduction to Astrophysics II (offered every other year)	3
ASTR:4850	Observational Techniques in Astronomy (offered every other year)	3

Upper-Level Physics Courses

Course #	Title	Hours
One of these:		
PHYS:3756	Intermediate Laboratory	3
PHYS:3850	Electronics	4
One of these:		

PHYS:3742	Introduction to Quantum Mechanics II	3
PHYS:4731	Plasma Physics I	3

Optional Upper-Level Elective Courses

Undergraduate majors who plan to pursue graduate study are advised to go as far as they can beyond the requirements by taking one or more of these elective courses.

Course #	Title	Hours
PHYS:3730	Statistical Physics	3
PHYS:3742	Introduction to Quantum Mechanics II	3
PHYS:4720	Introductory Optics	3
PHYS:4731	Plasma Physics I	3
PHYS:4740	Elementary Particles and Nuclear Physics	3
PHYS:4761	Mathematical Methods of Physics I	3
PHYS:4762	Mathematical Methods of Physics II	3
PHYS:4905	Special Topics in Physics	arr.

Double Major in Physics and Astronomy

Students who are earning two majors from the same department (e.g. astronomy and physics) may apply more than 56 s.h. from their home department toward their degree, but they must earn at least 56 s.h. of credit in courses outside their home department in order to graduate. Students working toward a Bachelor of Science with a double major in physics and in astronomy must complete all requirements for both majors and must earn a minimum of 56 s.h. outside the Department of Physics and Astronomy in order to graduate. Students interested in earning a double major should consult with their advisors. See Requirements for a Bachelor's Degree on the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences website.

Honors

Honors in the Major

Students majoring in astronomy have the opportunity to graduate with honors in their major. They must maintain a University of Iowa grade-point average (GPA) of at least 3.33. During their junior and senior years, students must conduct an investigation under the guidance of a faculty member. They must present a written report of their research (honors thesis) and describe their research results at a departmental seminar.

University of Iowa Honors Program

In addition to honors in the major, students have opportunities for honors study and activities through membership in the University of Iowa Honors Program. Visit Honors at Iowa to learn about the university's honors program.

Membership in the UI Honors Program is not required to earn honors in the astronomy major.

Career Advancement

Astronomy graduates have mastered skills that are readily transferable to a number of fields. They might choose to work in research, engineering, software development, teaching, finance, biomedical research, or consulting.

About 70% of physics and astronomy graduates go on to graduate school. With help from the department's in-house recruiting office, they win acceptance to some of the best graduate programs in the country.

The Pomerantz Career Center offers multiple resources to help students find internships and jobs.

Academic Plans

Four-Year Graduation Plan

The following checkpoints list the minimum requirements students must complete by certain semesters in order to stay on the university's Four-Year Graduation Plan. Courses in the major are those required to complete the major; they may be offered by departments other than the major department.

Before the third semester begins: MATH:1850 Calculus I, MATH:1860 Calculus II, and PHYS:1702 Physics II.

Before the fifth semester begins: all of the remaining required math courses, PHYS:2703 Physics III, PHYS:2704 Physics IV, and two other courses in the major.

Before the seventh semester begins: four more courses in the major and at least 90 s.h. earned toward the degree.

Before the eighth semester begins: three more courses in the major.

During the eighth semester: enrollment in all remaining coursework in the major, all remaining GE CLAS Core courses, and a sufficient number of semester hours to graduate.

Sample Plan of Study

Sample plans represent one way to complete a program of study. Actual course selection and sequence will vary and should be discussed with an academic advisor. For additional sample plans, see MyUI.

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This sample plan is currently being reviewed and will be added at a later date.