Physics, B.S.

Learning Outcomes

Physics majors will be able to:

- demonstrate competency in applying the basic laws of physics in classical and quantum mechanics, electromagnetism, thermodynamics, and statistical physics;
- solve complex, real-world problems using the principles of physics; and
- demonstrate competency in using basic instrumentation and in analyzing the data obtained.

Requirements

The Bachelor of Science with a major in physics requires a minimum of 120 s.h., including at least 58 s.h. of work for the major (minimum of 42 s.h. in physics plus 16 s.h. in supporting coursework). Students must maintain a g.p.a. of at least 2.00 in all courses for the major and in all UI courses for the major. They also must complete the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences GE CLAS Core.

Students must complete several required mathematics courses in addition to their required physics 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.

The B.S. with a major in physics requires the following courses or their equivalents.

### Mathematics Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MATH:1850</td>
<td>Calculus I</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATH:1860</td>
<td>Calculus II</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATH:2700</td>
<td>Introduction to Linear Algebra</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATH:2850</td>
<td>Calculus III</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Introductory Physics Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:1701</td>
<td>Physics I</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:1702</td>
<td>Physics II</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:2703</td>
<td>Physics III</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Physics Core Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:2704</td>
<td>Physics IV</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:3710</td>
<td>Intermediate Mechanics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:3730</td>
<td>Statistical Physics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:3741</td>
<td>Introduction to Quantum Mechanics I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:3742</td>
<td>Introduction to Quantum Mechanics II</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:3756</td>
<td>Intermediate Laboratory</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:3811</td>
<td>Electricity and Magnetism I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:3812</td>
<td>Electricity and Magnetism II</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Upper-Level Elective Courses

Students can only take these courses once: PHYS:3850 Electronics, PHYS:4750 Advanced Laboratory, or ASTR:4850 Astronomical Laboratory.

Undergraduate majors who plan to pursue graduate study are advised to go as far as they can beyond the minimum requirements listed below, including further work in mathematics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:3850</td>
<td>Electronics</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:4750</td>
<td>Advanced Laboratory</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASTR:4850</td>
<td>Astronomical Laboratory</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:4720</td>
<td>Introductory Optics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:4726</td>
<td>Electro Optics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:4728</td>
<td>Introductory Solid State Physics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:4731</td>
<td>Plasma Physics I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:4740</td>
<td>Elementary Physics I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:4750</td>
<td>Advanced Laboratory</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:4761</td>
<td>Mathematical Methods of Physics I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:4762</td>
<td>Mathematical Methods of Physics II</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:4820</td>
<td>Optical Signal Processing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:4860</td>
<td>Computational Physics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:4905</td>
<td>Special Topics in Physics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYS:5905</td>
<td>Special Topics in Physics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASTR:3771</td>
<td>Introduction to Astrophysics I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASTR:3772</td>
<td>Introduction to Astrophysics II</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASTR:4850</td>
<td>Astronomical Laboratory</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In planning this work, they should be guided by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences maximum hours rule: Students earning a B.S. 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 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 grade-point average, but they cannot apply the additional semester hours to the minimum 120 s.h. required for graduation.

Students earning a B.S. with a double major in physics and astronomy may count more than 56 s.h. earned in the Department of Physics and Astronomy to the 120 s.h. required for graduation, but they must earn at least 56 s.h. in coursework outside the department in order to graduate.

**Teacher Licensure**

Students interested in teaching in elementary and/or secondary schools should seek admission to the Teacher Education Program (TEP) in the College of Education.

To qualify for licensure in secondary teaching, students in the TEP complete a degree in education as well as a related College of Liberal Arts and Sciences degree. See Teacher Education Program Application and Admission on the College of Education website for details on requirements and deadlines for applying to the College of Education and about TEP choices of majors leading to licensure.

**Double Major in Physics and Astronomy**

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.

**Combined Programs**

**B.S./M.S. in Business Analytics (Career Subprogram)**

Students majoring in physics who are interested in earning a master’s degree in business analytics with a career subprogram may apply to the combined B.S./M.S. program offered by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Tippie College of Business. The program enables students to begin the study of business analytics before they complete their bachelor’s degree. Students are able to complete both degrees in five years rather than six.

Separate application to each degree program is required. Applicants must be admitted to both programs before they may be admitted to the combined degree program. For information about the finance program, see the M.S. in finance (Tippie College of Business) section of the Catalog.

**Honors**

**Honors in the Major**

Students majoring in physics have the opportunity to graduate with honors in their major. They must maintain a University of Iowa g.p.a. of at least 3.33. They must earn 6-8 s.h. in PHYS:4999 Undergraduate Research Undergraduate Research during their junior and senior years and conduct an investigation under the guidance of a faculty member. Students 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 physics major.

**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:** calculus II and physics II

**Before the fifth semester begins:** physics III-IV, introduction to linear algebra, calculus III, and up to two more courses in the major

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

**Before the eighth semester begins:** two or 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.
Physics, B.S.

Course | Title | Hours
---|---|---
**Academic Career** | | |
Any Semester | Research: students are strongly encouraged to be active participants in research within the department. | |
---|---|---
**First Year** | | |
Fall | | |
PHYS:1701 | Physics I | 4
MATH:1850 | Calculus I | 4
RHET:1030 or ENGL:1200 | Rhetoric or The Interpretation of Literature | 3 - 4
GE CLAS Core: Social Sciences | 3
CSI:1600 | Success at Iowa | 2
--- | --- | ---
Total Hours | 16-17 | |
Spring | | |
PHYS:1702 | Physics II | 4
MATH:1860 | Calculus II | 4
GE CLAS Core: Diversity and Inclusion | 3
RHET:1030 or ENGL:1200 | Rhetoric or The Interpretation of Literature | 3 - 4
--- | --- | ---
Total Hours | 14-15 | |
**Second Year** | | |
Fall | | |
PHYS:2703 | Physics III | 4
GE CLAS Core: Values and Culture | 3
MATH:2700 | Introduction to Linear Algebra | 4
GE CLAS Core: World Languages First Level | 4 - 5
Proficiency or elective course | | |
--- | --- | ---
Total Hours | 15-16 | |
Spring | | |
PHYS:2704 | Physics IV | 4
PHYS:3710 | Intermediate Mechanics | 3
MATH:2850 | Calculus III | 4
GE CLAS Core: World Languages Second Level | 4 - 5
Proficiency or elective course | | |
--- | --- | ---
Total Hours | 15-16 | |
**Third Year** | | |
Fall | | |
PHYS:3811 | Electricity and Magnetism I | 3
PHYS:3741 | Introduction to Quantum Mechanics I | 3
GE CLAS Core: Historical Perspectives | 3
GE CLAS Core: World Languages Second Level | 4 - 5
Proficiency or elective course | | |
Elective course | | |
--- | --- | ---
Total Hours | 14-17 | |
Spring | | |
PHYS:3742 | Introduction to Quantum Mechanics II | 3
PHYS:3812 | Electricity and Magnetism II | 3
PHYS:3850 | Electronics | 4
--- | --- | ---
Total Hours | 15 | |
**Fourth Year** | | |
Fall | | |
PHYS:3730 | Statistical Physics | 3
PHYS:3756 | Intermediate Laboratory | 3
Major: upper-level physics course | 3
GE CLAS Core: Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts | 3
Elective course | 3
--- | --- | ---
Total Hours | 15-15 | |
Spring | | |
GE CLAS Core: International and Global Issues | 3
Major: upper-level physics course | 3
Elective course | 3
Elective course | 3
--- | --- | ---
Total Hours | 15 | |
**Degree Application:** apply on MyUI before deadline (typically in February for spring, September for fall)
--- | --- | ---
Total Hours | 118-126 | |
--- | --- | ---
--- | --- | ---
a | Fulfills a major requirement and may fulfill a GE requirement. | |
b | Enrollment in math courses requires completion of a placement exam. | |
c | GE CLAS Core courses may be completed in any order unless used as a prerequisite for another course. Students should consult with an advisor about the best sequencing of courses. | |
d | Students who have completed four years of a single language in high school have satisfied the GE CLAS Core World Languages requirement. Enrollment in world languages courses requires a placement exam, unless enrolling in a first-semester-level course. | |
e | Students may use elective courses to earn credit towards the total s.h. required for graduation or to complete a double major, minors, or certificates. | |
f | Students who choose PHYS:3850 as one of their two required laboratory courses are advised to take it before they take PHYS:3756 Intermediate Laboratory. | |
g | Please see Academic Calendar, Office of the Registrar website for current degree application deadlines. Students should apply for a degree for the session in which all requirements will be met. For any questions on appropriate timing, contact your academic advisor. For more information visit http://commencement.uiowa.edu/. If applicable search for ‘Early and Late Participation’ to find this page (e.g. participate in graduation ceremony in May, degree conferral in August). | |
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**Career Advancement**

Physics 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.

The degree provides preparation for careers in industry, employment in research laboratories, and graduate study in physics and related sciences.

About 70 percent 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.