Physics, M.S.

Graduate study in physics and astronomy is highly individualized. Each entering graduate student is assigned a faculty advisor, who assists in preparing a plan of study and in guiding the student’s progress.

Learning Outcomes

Graduates will:

• understand the foundational principles that transcend many distinct areas, and learn the technical language, problem-solving skills, and training in technical listening and discussion;
• learn and practice advanced discourse in mathematical aspects that translate to physics;
• become familiar with the state-of-the-art experimental tools and equipment in the field;
• promote aspects of creativity and originality in the field and prepare for adaptability to new discoveries;
• learn and practice advanced discourse in experimental and observational aspects, including data and information mining, translating experimental observations to physical principles and vice versa; and
• learn analysis of data and computational skills as well as become familiar with state-of-the-art techniques for data processing.

Requirements

The Master of Science program in physics requires a minimum of 30 s.h. of graduate credit. All students must earn the required 30 s.h. of graduate credit in courses numbered 4000 or above, with at least 15 s.h. in courses numbered 5000 or above. At least 24 s.h. must be completed under the auspices of the University of Iowa after admission to the Department of Physics and Astronomy. Students must maintain a program g.p.a. of at least 2.75.

Each student’s plan of study should provide for as much advanced work as aptitude and previous preparation permit. Up to one-third of the program of study may be taken in related scientific fields other than physics (e.g., mathematics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, engineering).

The degree is offered with thesis or critical essay. Students who choose the thesis option must write a thesis based on an original experimental or theoretical investigation that they have conducted. Students may earn a maximum of 6 s.h. in PHYS:7990 Research: Physics or PHYS:7992 Individual Critical Study.

Students who choose the critical essay option must conduct an independent study of the literature on a particular area of physics and write a critical essay on that topic. Students may earn a maximum of 4 s.h. in PHYS:7990 Research: Physics or PHYS:7992 Individual Critical Study.

The M.S. may be a terminal degree or a step toward a Ph.D. In either case, the final examination is oral, conducted by a committee of three faculty members.

Admission

Applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College; see the Manual of Rules and Regulations on the Graduate College website.

Financial Support

Students qualified for graduate study are encouraged to apply for fellowships and assistantships. Contact the Department of Physics and Astronomy chair.

Career Advancement

Graduates have opportunities for employment in universities, colleges, and research laboratories in government and industry. Physics graduates have mastered skills that are readily transferable to a number of fields. They might choose to work in engineering, software development, finance, or consulting.

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