

PHYSICS, BS

Banner Code: SC-BS-PHYS

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The Physics, BS prepares students for graduate school and careers in education, business, or industry.

Teacher Licensure

Students who wish to become teachers and plan to seek teacher licensure should consider the following options:

- Secondary Education – Physics (6-12) Undergraduate Certificate
- Physics, BS/Curriculum and Instruction, Accelerated MEd (Secondary Education Physics concentration)

Interested students should attend an information session early in their undergraduate career. For more information, visit the Graduate School of Education's website (<http://gse.gmu.edu>).

Admissions & Policies

Admissions

University-wide admissions policies can be found in the Undergraduate Admissions Policies section of this catalog.

To apply for this program, please complete the George Mason University Admissions Application (<https://www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid/apply-now>).

Policies

Students must fulfill all Requirements for Bachelor's Degrees including the Mason Core.

The intensive writing requirement is fulfilled by taking PHYS 407 Senior Laboratory in Modern Physics (Mason Core) or ASTR 402 RS: Methods of Observational Astronomy (Mason Core), which are also capstone courses for the major.

For policies governing all undergraduate programs, see AP.5 Undergraduate Policies.

Double Majors

Students in the fields of mathematics, science, and engineering who are considering a double major in physics should discuss this option with the respective undergraduate coordinators.

Note that at least 18 credits used to fulfill the Physics, BS cannot be used to fulfill another major or minor. Some course substitutions are allowed for double majors, but these should be discussed in advance.

Alternative Introductory Sequence

Normally, students who intend to major in physics should take the physics introductory sequence:

PHYS 160	University Physics I (Mason Core)	3
PHYS 161	University Physics I Laboratory (Mason Core)	1
PHYS 260	University Physics II (Mason Core)	3
PHYS 261	University Physics II Laboratory (Mason Core)	1

Students who decide to major in physics after completing PHYS 243 College Physics (Mason Core), PHYS 244 College Physics Lab (Mason Core), PHYS 245 College Physics (Mason Core), and PHYS 246 College Physics Lab (Mason Core) are welcome, but are required to obtain written permission from the Department of Physics and Astronomy.

Requirements

Degree Requirements

Total credits: minimum 120

Students should refer to the Admissions & Policies tab for specific policies related to this program.

Students must complete a total of 75 credits in the major (69 credits if completing a second major), including at least 11 credits in mathematics, with a minimum GPA of 2.00.

Students must complete the coursework described below and either select a concentration or select the "BS without Concentration" option:

Physics Core Courses

PHYS 160	University Physics I (Mason Core)	3
PHYS 161	University Physics I Laboratory (Mason Core)	1
PHYS 251	Introduction to Computer Techniques in Physics (Mason Core)	3
PHYS 260	University Physics II (Mason Core)	3
PHYS 261	University Physics II Laboratory (Mason Core)	1
PHYS 301	Analytical Methods of Physics	3
PHYS 303	Classical Mechanics	3
PHYS 305	Electromagnetic Theory ¹	3
PHYS 307	Thermal Physics	3
PHYS 308	Modern Physics with Applications	3
PHYS 402	Introduction to Quantum Mechanics and Atomic Physics	3
PHYS 416	Special Topics in Modern Physics	1

Total Credits 30

¹ Students double majoring in engineering and physics may substitute ECE 305 Electromagnetic Theory for PHYS 305 Electromagnetic Theory.

Mathematics

MATH 113	Analytic Geometry and Calculus I (Mason Core)	4
MATH 114	Analytic Geometry and Calculus II	4
MATH 213	Analytic Geometry and Calculus III	3
Total Credits		11

BS without Concentration**Mathematics/Computational Physics** 6

Select 6 credits from the following:

PHYS 410	Computational Physics I
MATH 203	Linear Algebra
MATH 214	Elementary Differential Equations

Intermediate Laboratory 6

PHYS 311	Instrumentation
PHYS 312	Wave and Optics

Research, Internship, or Independent Study 3

Select 3 credits from the following:

PHYS 326	Problems in Physics II
PHYS 405	Honors Thesis in Physics
PHYS 406	Honors Thesis in Physics
PHYS 408	Senior Research
PHYS 409	Physics Internship

Capstone 4

PHYS 407	Senior Laboratory in Modern Physics (Mason Core) ¹
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Physics Theory 9-15

All students complete the following 9 credits:

PHYS 306	Wave Motion and Electromagnetic Radiation
PHYS 403	Quantum Mechanics II
PHYS 428	Relativity

Only students who are not completing a second major must select 6 additional credits from the following:

ASTR 210	Introduction to Astrophysics
ASTR 328	Stars and Interstellar Medium
ASTR 403	Planetary Sciences
ASTR 404	Galaxies and Cosmology
PHYS 370	Molecular Biophysics
PHYS 412	Solid State Physics and Applications
PHYS 440	Nuclear and Particle Physics
PHYS 465	Planetary Atmospheres and Ionospheres
PHYS 475	Atmospheric Physics

Total Credits 28-34

¹ Fulfills the writing intensive requirement.**Applied and Engineering Physics Concentration (PHAE)****Mathematics/Computational Physics** 3

PHYS 410	Computational Physics I
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Intermediate Laboratory 6

PHYS 311	Instrumentation
PHYS 312	Wave and Optics

Physics Theory 9

PHYS 306	Wave Motion and Electromagnetic Radiation
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Select 6 credits from the following:

PHYS 370	Molecular Biophysics
PHYS 403	Quantum Mechanics II
PHYS 412	Solid State Physics and Applications

Capstone 4

PHYS 407	Senior Laboratory in Modern Physics (Mason Core) ¹
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Practical Work 6-12

Students who are not completing a second major should select 12 credits from the following. Students who are completing a second major should select 6 credits:

PHYS 405	Honors Thesis in Physics
PHYS 406	Honors Thesis in Physics
PHYS 408	Senior Research
PHYS 409	Physics Internship
BENG 320	Bioengineering Signals and Systems

Or other approved 300 or 400-level Volgenau School of Engineering courses

Total Credits 28-34

¹ Fulfills the writing intensive requirement.**Astrophysics Concentration (PHAP)****Mathematics/Computational Physics** 3

Select 3 credits from the following:

ASTR 401	Computer Simulation in Astronomy
PHYS 410	Computational Physics I
MATH 214	Elementary Differential Equations

Intermediate Laboratory 6

PHYS 311	Instrumentation
PHYS 312	Wave and Optics

Research, Internship, or Independent Study 3

Select 3 credits from the following:

ASTR 405	Honors Thesis in Astronomy I
ASTR 406	Honors Thesis in Astronomy II
ASTR 408	Senior Research
ASTR 409	Astronomy Internship
PHYS 326	Problems in Physics II
PHYS 405	Honors Thesis in Physics
PHYS 406	Honors Thesis in Physics
PHYS 408	Senior Research
PHYS 409	Physics Internship

Capstone 4

Select 4 credits from the following:

ASTR 402	RS: Methods of Observational Astronomy (Mason Core)
PHYS 407	Senior Laboratory in Modern Physics (Mason Core) ¹

Physics and Astronomy Theory 12-18

Students who are not completing a second major must complete the following:

ASTR 210	Introduction to Astrophysics
ASTR 328	Stars and Interstellar Medium
ASTR 403	Planetary Sciences
ASTR 404	Galaxies and Cosmology
PHYS 306	Wave Motion and Electromagnetic Radiation
PHYS 428	Relativity

Students who are completing a second major must complete the following:

ASTR 210	Introduction to Astrophysics
ASTR 328	Stars and Interstellar Medium
Additionally, select 3 credits from the following:	
PHYS 306	Wave Motion and Electromagnetic Radiation
PHYS 428	Relativity
Lastly, select 3 credits from the following:	
ASTR 403	Planetary Sciences
ASTR 404	Galaxies and Cosmology

Total Credits 28-34

¹ Fulfills the writing intensive requirement.

Computational Physics Concentration (PHCP)

Mathematics/Computational Physics 15

PHYS 410	Computational Physics I
MATH 203	Linear Algebra
MATH 214	Elementary Differential Equations
Additionally, select 6 credits from the following:	
ASTR 401	Computer Simulation in Astronomy
CDS 302	Scientific Data and Databases
CDS 303	Scientific Data Mining
MATH 446	Numerical Analysis I
MATH 447	Numerical Analysis II

Intermediate Laboratory 3

PHYS 311	Instrumentation
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Research, Internship, or Independent Study 3

Select 3 credits from the following:

PHYS 326	Problems in Physics II
PHYS 405	Honors Thesis in Physics
PHYS 406	Honors Thesis in Physics
PHYS 408	Senior Research
PHYS 409	Physics Internship

Capstone 4

Select 4 credits from the following:

ASTR 402	RS: Methods of Observational Astronomy (Mason Core) ¹
PHYS 407	Senior Laboratory in Modern Physics (Mason Core) ¹

Physics and Astronomy Theory 3-9

Students who are not completing a second major must select 9 credits of the following. Students who are completing a second major must select 3 credits from the following:

ASTR 210	Introduction to Astrophysics
ASTR 328	Stars and Interstellar Medium

ASTR 403	Planetary Sciences
PHYS 306	Wave Motion and Electromagnetic Radiation
PHYS 412	Solid State Physics and Applications

Total Credits 28-34

¹ Fulfills the writing intensive requirement.

Mason Core and Elective Credits

In order to meet a minimum of 120 credits, this degree requires 45 (or 51 if completing a second major) additional credits, which may be applied toward any remaining Mason Core requirements (outlined below), Requirements for Bachelor's Degrees, and elective courses. Students are strongly encouraged to consult with their advisors to ensure that they fulfill all requirements.

Mason Core

Note: Some Mason Core requirements may already be fulfilled by the major requirements listed above. Students are strongly encouraged to consult their advisors to ensure they fulfill all remaining Mason Core requirements.

Code	Title	Credits
Foundation Requirements		
Written Communication		6
Oral Communication		3
Quantitative Reasoning		3
Information Technology		3-7
Core Requirements		
Arts		3
Global Understanding		3
Literature		3
Natural Science		7
Social and Behavioral Sciences		3
Western Civilization/World History		3
Synthesis/Capstone Requirement ¹		
Synthesis/Capstone		3
Total Credits		40

¹ minimum 3 credits

Honors

Honors in the Major

Physics majors who have maintained an overall GPA of at least 3.50 in physics courses and a GPA of 3.50 in all courses taken at George Mason University may apply to the physics honors program when they complete the first semester of their junior year.

To graduate with honors in physics, a student is required to maintain a minimum GPA of 3.00 in physics courses and successfully complete PHYS 405 Honors Thesis in Physics and PHYS 406 Honors Thesis in Physics with a GPA of at least 3.50 and a grade of at least 'A-' in PHYS 406 Honors Thesis in Physics.

Accelerated Master's

Physics, BS/Curriculum and Instruction, Accelerated MEd (Secondary Education Physics concentration)

Overview

Highly-qualified undergraduates may be admitted to the bachelor's/accelerated master's program and obtain both a BS in Physics and an MEd in Curriculum and Instruction, Secondary Education Physics Concentration in an accelerated time-frame after satisfactory completion of 149 credits. See AP.6.7 Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Degrees for policies related to this program.

This accelerated option is offered jointly by the department of Physics and Astronomy and the Graduate School of Education.

Students in an accelerated degree program must fulfill all university requirements for the master's degree. For policies governing all graduate degrees, see AP.6 Graduate Policies.

Application Requirements

Applicants to all graduate programs at George Mason University must meet the admission standards and application requirements for graduate study as specified in Graduate Admissions Policies. For information specific to this accelerated master's program, see Application Requirements and Deadlines (<https://cehd.gmu.edu/bachelors-accelerated-masters-program>).

Accelerated Option Requirements

Students complete the following courses in their senior year:

Senior			
Fall Semester	Credits	Spring Semester	Credits
EDCI 573	3	EDCI 673	3
EDUC 672	3	EDRD 619	3
	6		6

Total Credits 12

While undergraduate students, accelerated master's students are able to apply two of the courses listed above to both the bachelor's and master's degrees. These courses are considered advanced standing for the MEd. A minimum grade of B must be earned to be eligible to count as advanced standing. The other two courses are taken as reserve graduate credit and do not apply to the undergraduate degree. Early in their final undergraduate semester, students must submit the Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Transition Form to the CEHD Admissions Office and specify which of the four courses are to be designated as advanced standing and reserve graduate credit.

Physics, BS/Applied and Engineering Physics, Accelerated MS

Overview

This program allows academically strong undergraduates with a demonstrable commitment to research to obtain the Physics, BS and Applied and Engineering Physics, MS degrees by successfully completing

144 credits. Upon completion, students are well-prepared for entry into a professional school or a PhD program in physics or a related discipline.

Admitted students take selected graduate courses during their senior year and are able to use up to 6 graduate credits in partial satisfaction of requirements for the undergraduate degree. Upon completion and conferral of the bachelor's degree and with satisfactory performance (grade of 'B' or better) in each of the graduate courses, students are given advanced standing in the master's program and complete an additional 24 credits to receive the master's degree.

For more detailed information, see AP.6.7 Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Degrees. For policies governing all graduate degrees, see AP.6 Graduate Policies.

Application Requirements

Applicants to all graduate programs at George Mason University must meet the admission standards and application requirements for graduate study as specified in the Graduate Admission Policies section of this catalog.

Successful applicants will have completed at least 90 credits toward their undergraduate degree and 45 credits in physics major coursework. The physics major GPA must be at least 3.50. One or more recommendation letters from one or more research supervisors are also required. Interested applicants should submit a letter to the undergraduate physics coordinator requesting admission along with the aforementioned recommendation letter(s). Contact the physics undergraduate or graduate coordinator for further details.

Accelerated Option Requirements

At the beginning of the student's final undergraduate semester, students must submit a bachelor's/accelerated master's transition form (<http://registrar.gmu.edu/forms>) to the College of Science's Office of Academic and Student Affairs (<https://cos.gmu.edu/about/contact-us>). Students must begin their master's program in the semester immediately following conferral of the bachelor's degree.

Students must maintain an overall GPA of 3.00 or higher in graduate coursework.

Reserve Graduate Credit

While still in undergraduate status, a maximum of 6 additional graduate credits may be taken as reserve graduate credit and applied to the master's program. Reserve graduate credits do not apply to the undergraduate degree.