Bachelor of Science in Physics

Why study physics and astronomy?

Our goal is to understand the physical universe. The questions addressed by our department’s research and education missions range from the applied, such as an improved understanding of the materials that can be used for solar cell energy production, to foundational questions about the nature of mass and space and how the Universe was formed and subsequently evolved, and how astrophysical phenomena affected the Earth and its evolution. We study the properties of systems ranging in size from smaller than an atom to larger than a galaxy on timescales ranging from billionths of a second to the age of the universe. Our courses and laboratory research experiences help students hone their problem solving and analytical skills and thereby become broadly trained critical thinkers. While about half of our majors move on to graduate studies in STEM, many find employment in the private sector in diverse situations ranging from financial analysts to physicians. Graduates of all our degree programs can be found in key positions regionally, nationally, and internationally. In this way, our department is at the forefront of telling the academic story of the University of Kansas to people around the state and around the world.

Undergraduate program in physics and astronomy

We welcome all students curious about the universe around them. This includes not only students planning on graduate study in STEM, but also students from other disciplines where a background in foundational physical science and critical thinking can be useful – teaching, medicine, e.g. – and anyone seeking to include astronomy and physics as part of their general education. The department offers BA degrees in astronomy and physics and BS degrees in astronomy, physics, and engineering physics; degrees in astronomy and physics are granted through the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences whereas engineering physics degrees are granted through the School of Engineering. The BS physics degree includes an interdisciplinary track that allows students to take elective courses in other STEM disciplines and a pre-medicine emphasis for students interested in health professions. We also offer minors in astronomy and physics and a certificate in astrophysics of origins. We involve our undergraduate majors in cutting-edge research practically from the day they join the department; research is a requirement of both the BS Astronomy and BS Physics degrees. The breadth of our research program affords our students exposure to a number of different fields and we are justifiably proud of our undergraduate researchers who routinely publish papers, attend conferences, and/or conduct research abroad (in Antarctica, Chile, CERN, e.g.).

Undergraduate Admission

Admission to KU

All students applying for admission must send high school and college transcripts to the Office of Admissions. Unless they are college transfer students with at least 24 hours of credit, prospective students must send ACT or SAT scores to the Office of Admissions. Prospective first-year students should be aware that KU has qualified admission requirements that all new first-year students must meet to be admitted. Consult the Office of Admissions (http://admissions.ku.edu) for application deadlines and specific admission requirements.

Visit the International Support Services (http://www.iss.ku.edu) for information about international admissions.

Students considering transferring to KU may see how their college-level course work will transfer on the Office of Admissions (http://credittransfer.ku.edu) website.

Admission to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Admission to the College is a different process from admission to a major field. Some CLAS departments have admission requirements. See individual department/program sections for departmental admission requirements.

Requirements for the B.S. Degree in Physics

Physics Bachelor of Science (B.S.) General Education Requirements

All students pursuing the Bachelor of Science in Physics must complete the KU Core requirements in addition to the degree and major requirements. For details regarding the KU Core requirements, please see the KU Core section of the catalog.

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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<td>Foundational Physics and Mathematics</td>
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<td>Majors must complete courses as specified in each of the following areas. Majors are advised to take honors courses when eligible. All honors equivalents are also acceptable to fulfill PHSX major requirements. These hours do not contribute to the minimum number of hours required for the major.</td>
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<td>MATH 125 Calculus I</td>
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<td>Seminar in Physics, Astronomy, &amp; Engineering Physics. Satisfied by:</td>
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<td>General Science Requirements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CHEM 130 General Chemistry I</td>
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<td>or CHEM 150 Chemistry for Engineers</td>
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<td>or CHEM 170 Chemistry for the Chemical Sciences I</td>
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Advanced Mathematics

Vector Calculus. Satisfied by:
MATH 127 Calculus III 4
or MATH 147 Calculus III, Honors
Elementary Linear Algebra. Satisfied by:
MATH 290 Elementary Linear Algebra 2-3
or MATH 291 Elementary Linear Algebra, Honors
or MATH 590 Linear Algebra

Differential Equations. Satisfied by:
MATH 320 Elementary Differential Equations 3

Advanced Physics

Majors must complete a course in each of the following areas:

General Physics III. Satisfied by:
PHSX 313 General Physics III 3
Intermediate Physics Lab. Satisfied by:
PHSX 316 Intermediate Physics Laboratory I 1
Introductory Quantum Mechanics. Satisfied by:
PHSX 511 Introductory Quantum Mechanics 3
Mechanics I. Satisfied by:
PHSX 521 Mechanics I 3
Electricity and Magnetism. Satisfied by:
PHSX 531 Electricity and Magnetism 3
Thermal Physics. Satisfied by:
PHSX 671 Thermal Physics 3

Undergraduate Research or Honors Research. Satisfied by:
PHSX 503 Undergraduate Research 1-4
or PHSX 501 Honors Research

Required Electives (Majors must complete one of the following options, Preprofessional, Interdisciplinary, or Pre-Medicine) 25-45

Preprofessional Option

Computing and Programming. Satisfied by:
EECS 138 Introduction to Computing: _____
or EECS 168 Programming I
or EECS 168 Programming I: Honors

Mechanics II. Satisfied by:
PHSX 621 Mechanics II

Electromagnetic Theory. Satisfied by:
PHSX 631 Electromagnetic Theory

Quantum Mechanics. Satisfied by:
PHSX 711 Quantum Mechanics I
Advanced Physics Labs. Satisfied by both of the following:
PHSX 516 Physical Measurements
PHSX 536 Electronic Circuit Measurement and Design

Physics Elective. Satisfied by any PHSX lecture or laboratory course numbered 500 or higher and not part of the other specific requirements for the major.
Math Elective. Satisfied by one of the following:
MATH 558 Introductory Modern Algebra
MATH 581 Numerical Methods
MATH 590 Linear Algebra
MATH 628 Mathematical Theory of Statistics
MATH 646 Complex Variable and Applications
MATH 647 Applied Partial Differential Equations
MATH 648 Calculus of Variations and Integral Equations
MATH 660 Geometry I
MATH 661 Geometry II

Interdisciplinary Option 25-30

Computing and Programming. Satisfied by:
EECS 138 Introduction to Computing: _____
or EECS 168 Programming I
or EECS 168 Programming I: Honors

Advanced Physics Labs. Satisfied by one of the following:
PHSX 516 Physical Measurements
PHSX 536 Electronic Circuit Measurement and Design

Advanced Physics. Satisfied by two of the following:
PHSX 621 Mechanics II
PHSX 631 Electromagnetic Theory
PHSX 711 Quantum Mechanics I
PHSX 516 Physical Measurements
PHSX 536 Electronic Circuit Measurement and Design

Physics Elective. Satisfied by any PHSX lecture or laboratory course numbered 500 or higher and not part of the other specific requirements for the major.
Math Elective. Satisfied by one of the following:
PHSX 516 Mathematical Physics
PHSX 711 Mathematical Methods in Physical Sciences
MATH 526 Applied Mathematical Statistics I
MATH 530 Mathematical Models
MATH 558 Introductory Modern Algebra
MATH 581 Numerical Methods
MATH 590 Linear Algebra
MATH 628 Mathematical Theory of Statistics
MATH 646 Complex Variable and Applications
MATH 647 Applied Partial Differential Equations
MATH 648 Calculus of Variations and Integral Equations
MATH 660 Geometry I
MATH 661 Geometry II

Allied Science Fields. Satisfied by the completion of 2 advanced courses in 1 allied science field chosen from the following:
Biology. Satisfied by two of the following:
BIOI 400 Fundamentals of Microbiology
BIOI 412 Evolutionary Biology
BIOI 416 Cell Structure and Function
BIOI 595 Human Genetics
BIOI 600 Introductory Biochemistry, Lectures
BIOI 636 Biochemistry I
Pre-Medicine Option

Chemistry. Satisfied by two of the following:
- CHEM 598 Research Methods (UKanTeach students only)
- CHEM 310 Fundamentals of Organic Chemistry
- CHEM 330 Organic Chemistry I
- CHEM 335 Organic Chemistry II
- CHEM 530 Physical Chemistry I
- CHEM 535 Physical Chemistry II

Organic Chemistry. Satisfied by:
- CHEM 135

General Chemistry II. Satisfied by:
- BIOL 601
- BIOL 350
- BIOL 400

Biochemistry. Satisfied by the following:
- BIOL 546
- BIOL 503
- BIOL 400

Advanced Biology. Satisfied by:
- BIOL 400
- BIOL 503
- BIOL 546

Biochemistry. Satisfied by the following:
- BIOL 600
- BIOL 601

General Chemistry II. Satisfied by:
- CHEM 135
- CHEM 175
- CHEM 195

Organic Chemistry. Satisfied by:
- CHEM 330
- CHEM 331
- CHEM 335
- CHEM 336

Physical Chemistry. Satisfied by:
- CHEM 520
- BIOL, MATH, or PHSX Elective (above 400 level)

Social Science Courses (recommended but not required): Both courses satisfy KU Core Goal 3S.

Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. Satisfied by two of the following:
- EECS 622 Microwave and Radio Transmission Systems
- EECS 628 Fiber Optic Communication Systems
- EECS 670 Introduction to Semiconductor Processing
- EECS 713 High-Speed Digital Circuit Design
- EECS 721 Antennas
- EECS 728 Fiber-optic Measurement and Sensors

Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. Satisfied by two of the following:
- EECS 622
- EECS 628
- EECS 670
- EECS 713
- EECS 721
- EECS 728

Departmental Honors in Physics and Astronomy

Qualified students earning either a B.A. or a B.S. degree in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences with a major in astronomy or physics may graduate with Honors in Physics & Astronomy by fulfilling the following requirements: (1) By the end of the candidate's final semester, achieve a minimum GPA of 3.25 overall and 3.5 in the major, in all courses taken in residence and elsewhere; and (2) Complete at least 24 semester hours of astronomy and physics courses numbered 500 or above, including undergraduate research represented by two hours of credit in ASTR 597, ASTR 503, PHSX 501 or PHSX 503. A grade of B or better must be earned in one of the following: ASTR 597, ASTR 503, PHSX 501 or PHSX 503. In addition, all our all of our department's honors requirements include student research, for which results shall be presented in at least one of the following forms: (1) a written research summary, read by 3 faculty members in physics and astronomy or related fields or authorship on a peer-reviewed manuscript; (2) a research-based oral presentation at an appropriate venue (e.g., Undergraduate Research symposium, a presentation in an advanced department seminar class, a discipline specific meeting); or (3) presentation of a poster at an appropriate venue. A student who plans to graduate with honors in physics and astronomy must file a Declaration of Intent Form with the Departmental Honors Coordinator, preferably during his/her junior
year but in any case no later than enrollment for the final undergraduate semester.