

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 careers 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 – examples include teaching and medicine – and anyone seeking to include astronomy and physics as part of their general education. The department offers B.A. degrees in astronomy and physics and B.S. 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 primary degree offered is a B.S. in Physics. In addition to this standard B.S. in Physics, there are also interdisciplinary, and physics teacher education concentrations of the B.S. in Physics degree. The interdisciplinary concentration allows students to take elective courses in other STEM disciplines. The courses that constitute the physics teacher education concentration are part of the STEMTeach KU program. We also offer minors in astronomy and physics. We involve our undergraduate majors in cutting-edge research practically from the day they join the department; research is a requirement of both the B.S. Astronomy and B.S. 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 locales such as Antarctica, Chile, and Switzerland).

Undergraduate Admission

Admission to KU

All students applying for admission must send high school and college transcripts 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 the University Registrar (<https://registrar.ku.edu/credittransfer/>) website.

Requirements for the B.S. Degree in Physics

Code	Title	Hours
Core 34 General Education		34
The KU Core 34 is comprised of 34-35 credit hours typically completed during the first two years of study. The Core 34 consists of the following requirements: English (6), Communications (3), Math & Statistics (3), Natural & Physical Sciences with lab (4-5), Social & Behavioral Sciences (6 in two different disciplines), Arts & Humanities (6 in two different disciplines), US Culture (3), and Global Culture (3)		
MATH 125 Calculus I is the "math pathway" course. If a student is not ready to start in Calculus 1, this degree will take more than 4 years to complete. This course will fulfill your Core 34 Math and Statistics requirement.		
Major Requirements		
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.		
MATH 125	Calculus I	
	or MATH 144 Calculus I, Honors	
MATH 126	Calculus II	4
	or MATH 146 Calculus II, Honors	
PHSX 150	Seminar in Physics, Astronomy and Engineering Physics	1
PHSX 211 & PHSX 216	General Physics I and General Physics I Laboratory	5
	or PHSX 213 General Physics I Honors	
PHSX 212 & PHSX 236	General Physics II and General Physics II Laboratory	4
	or PHSX 214 General Physics II Honors	
CHEM 130	General Chemistry I	5
	or CHEM 150 Chemistry for Engineers	
	or CHEM 170 Chemistry for the Chemical Sciences I	
	or CHEM 190 Foundations of Chemistry I, Honors	
	& CHEM 191 Foundations of Chemistry I Laboratory, Honors	
MATH 127	Calculus III	4
	or MATH 147 Calculus III, Honors	
MATH 290	Elementary Linear Algebra	2
	or MATH 291 Elementary Linear Algebra, Honors	
MATH 320	Elementary Differential Equations	3
	or MATH 220 Applied Differential Equations	
	or MATH 221 Applied Differential Equations, Honors	
PHSX 313	General Physics III	3

PHSX 316	Intermediate Physics Laboratory I	1
PHSX 611	Introductory Quantum Mechanics	3
PHSX 521	Mechanics I	3
PHSX 531	Electricity and Magnetism	3
PHSX 671	Thermal Physics	3
EECS 138	Introduction to Computing: _____	3
PHSX 315	Introduction to Computation for Physics and Astronomy	3

Concentration Coursework

Majors must complete the coursework for the BS in Physics or one of the concentrations listed below.

General Electives 10-1

Students will need to complete additional general elective credits to reach the required 120 hours.

Total Hours 120

Code	Title	Hours
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BS in Physics

PHSX 621	Mechanics II	3
PHSX 631	Electromagnetic Theory	3
PHSX 711	Quantum Mechanics I	3
PHSX 536	Electronic Circuit Measurement and Design	4
PHSX 616	Physical Measurements	4

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 3

Math Elective. Satisfied by one of the following: 3

PHSX 518	Mathematical Physics	
PHSX 718	Mathematical Methods in Physical Sciences	
MATH 526	Applied Mathematical Statistics I	
MATH 558	Introductory Modern Algebra	
MATH 581	Numerical Methods	
MATH 590	Linear Algebra	
MATH 627	Probability	
MATH 646	Complex Variable and Applications	
MATH 647	Applied Partial Differential Equations	
MATH 648	Calculus of Variations and Integral Equations	
MATH 660	Geometry I	
	any 700-level MATH lecture course	

Capstone Course 3

PHSX 503	Undergraduate Research	
PHSX 501	Honors Research	

Total Hours 26

Physics Major Hours & Major GPA

While completing all required courses, majors must also meet each of the following hour and grade-point average minimum standards:

Major Hours in Residence

Satisfied by a minimum of 15 hours of KU resident credit in the major.

Major Junior/Senior (300+) Hours

Satisfied by a minimum of 12 hours from junior/senior courses (300+) in the major.

Major Junior/Senior (300+) Graduation GPA

Satisfied by a minimum of a 2.0 KU GPA in junior/senior courses (300+) in the major. GPA calculations include all junior/senior courses in the field of study including F's and repeated courses. See the Semester/Cumulative GPA Calculator (<https://sis.ku.edu/gpa-calculator/>).

Interdisciplinary Concentration

Code	Title	Hours
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Advanced Physics Lab. Satisfied by one of the following: 4

PHSX 536	Electronic Circuit Measurement and Design	
PHSX 616	Physical Measurements	

Advanced Physics. Satisfied by two of the following: 6-8

PHSX 621	Mechanics II	
PHSX 631	Electromagnetic Theory	
PHSX 711	Quantum Mechanics I	
PHSX 536	Electronic Circuit Measurement and Design ¹	
PHSX 616	Physical Measurements ¹	

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. 3

Math Elective. Satisfied by one of the following: 3

PHSX 518	Mathematical Physics	
MATH 526	Applied Mathematical Statistics I	
MATH 558	Introductory Modern Algebra	
MATH 581	Numerical Methods	
MATH 590	Linear Algebra	
MATH 627	Probability	
MATH 646	Complex Variable and Applications	
MATH 647	Applied Partial Differential Equations	
MATH 660	Geometry I	
	any 700-level MATH lecture course	

Interdisciplinary Sequence 11-14

Satisfied by the completion of one of the below sequences.

CHEM 135	General Chemistry II	
& CHEM 330	and Organic Chemistry I	
& CHEM 335	and Organic Chemistry II	
CHEM 135	General Chemistry II	
& CHEM 530	and Physical Chemistry I	
& CHEM 535	and Physical Chemistry II	
GEOL 101	The Way The Earth Works	
& GEOL 311	and Mineralogy and Structure of the Earth	
& GEOL 360	and Field Investigation	
& GEOL 561	and Field Geology	
EECS 202	Circuits I	
& EECS 220	and Electromagnetics I	
& EECS 628	and Fiber Optic Communication Systems	
& EECS 728	and Fiber-optic Measurement and Sensors	

Capstone Course 3

PHSX 503	Undergraduate Research	
PHSX 501	Honors Research	

Total Hours 30-35

¹ This course will not count as one of the two Advanced Physics Courses if it has already counted toward the one required Advanced Physics Lab.

Physics Teacher Concentration

Code	Title	Hours
Physics Teacher Preparation Concentration		
PHSX 536	Electronic Circuit Measurement and Design	4
PHSX 616	Physical Measurements	4
PHSX 621	Mechanics II	3
PHSX 711	Quantum Mechanics I	3
PHSX 598	Research Methods	3
Education Courses. Satisfied by the following:		
C&T 290	Introduction to Secondary Science and Mathematics Teaching	1
C&T 291	Introduction to Science and Mathematics Teaching 2 (STEM Teach 2)	1
C&T 360	Knowing and Learning in Mathematics and Science	3
C&T 366	Classroom Interactions in Mathematics and Science	3
C&T 448	Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum	3
C&T 460	Project Based Instruction in Mathematics and Science	3
C&T 490	Student Teaching	6-7
History of scientific and technological knowledge		
HIST 363	Perspectives on Science, Engineering and Mathematics	3
Capstone Course		
C&T 495	Seminar: Developing the Teaching Portfolio	3
Total Hours		43-44

Code	Title	Hours
The following courses are required for licensure for students pursuing the Co-Major in Science Education.		
MATH 125	Calculus I	4
MATH 126	Calculus II	4
MATH 127	Calculus III	4
MATH 220	Applied Differential Equations	3
or MATH 320	Elementary Differential Equations	
MATH 290	Elementary Linear Algebra	2
PHSX 150	Seminar in Physics, Astronomy and Engineering Physics	1
PHSX 213	General Physics I Honors	5
or PHSX 211	General Physics I	
PHSX 214	General Physics II Honors	4
or PHSX 212 & PHSX 236	General Physics II and General Physics II Laboratory	
PHSX 313 & PHSX 316	General Physics III and Intermediate Physics Laboratory I	4
PHSX 315	Introduction to Computation for Physics and Astronomy	3
PHSX 521	Mechanics I	3
PHSX 531	Electricity and Magnetism	3

PHSX 611	Introductory Quantum Mechanics	3
PHSX 621	Mechanics II	3
PHSX 616	Physical Measurements	4
PHSX 536	Electronic Circuit Measurement and Design	4
or PHSX 601	Design of Physical and Electronic Systems	
PHSX 671	Thermal Physics	3
PHSX 711	Quantum Mechanics I	3
CHEM 130	General Chemistry I	5

Sample 4-year plans for the B.S. degree in Physics with the following concentrations can be found here: BS in Physics (<https://catalog.ku.edu/liberal-arts-sciences/physics-astronomy/bs-physics/physics/>) (no concentration), concentration in Interdisciplinary Physics (<https://catalog.ku.edu/liberal-arts-sciences/physics-astronomy/bs-physics/interdisciplinary-physics-conc/>), concentration in Physics Teacher Education (<https://catalog.ku.edu/liberal-arts-sciences/physics-astronomy/bs-physics/physics-teacher-education-conc/>) or by using the left-side navigation.

At the completion of this program, students will be able to:

- **Physics Content Knowledge:** Physics content knowledge within the undergraduate PHSX BS degree program is divided into the following four categories: classical mechanics, electricity & magnetism, quantum mechanics, and statistical mechanics. Topics within and between these categories interact with and build upon one another, resulting in an ordered schedule in which these topics are introduced, practiced, and developed throughout the curriculum.
- **Experimental Skills:** Physics is an experimental science. As such, the development of experimental skills is both essential to success in the discipline and linked with the development of physics content knowledge. To accommodate this progression, we require our students to complete introductory, intermediate, and advanced laboratory courses, with corresponding expectations for introductory, intermediate, and advanced proficiency with skills of experimental physics
- **Computational Skills:** Mathematics is the language of the physical sciences. As such, the development of fluency with a variety of mathematical concepts and techniques is necessary for success in the discipline. Because of this, we require our students to complete several mathematics and computing courses, arranged so that their content aligns with the expectations and needs of physics courses taken concomitantly or subsequently, during which these mathematical skills are reinforced and further developed.
- **Discipline Specific Research Skills:** Physics is a diverse field spanning topics ranging in size from smaller than the nucleus of an atom to a galaxy, and on timescales ranging from attoseconds to the age of the universe. Preparing our students for success in their chosen specialty therefore requires a broad background in fundamental physics, coursework focused on a narrower range of topics, and experience conducting research. Success as a scientist also requires proficiency in describing your work to others, especially with respect to writing scientific papers.

Departmental Honors in Physics and Astronomy

Qualified students earning either a B.A. or a B.S. degree in the College of Liberal Arts & 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 3.5 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 501, ASTR 503, PHSX 501 or PHSX 503. A grade of B or better must be earned in one of the following: ASTR 501, ASTR 503, PHSX 501 or PHSX 503. All of our department's honors requirements include student research, for which results shall be presented in either: (1) a written research summary, read by 3 faculty members in physics and astronomy or related fields or authorship on a peer-reviewed manuscript; or (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. Students planning to graduate with honors in physics and astronomy must file a Declaration of Intent Form with the Departmental Honors Coordinator, preferably during their junior year but no later than enrollment for the final undergraduate semester.