

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS

Graduate Study

The Physics Department offers programs leading to the degrees of Master of Science in Physics and Doctor of Philosophy.

Admission Requirements for Graduate Study

Students intending to pursue graduate work in physics should have as a background the equivalent of the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Physics from MIT. However, students may make up some deficiencies over the course of their graduate work.

Master of Science in Physics

The normal degree program in the department leads to a PhD in Physics. Admission to a master's degree program in Physics is available only in special cases (e.g., US military officers). The requirements for the Master of Science in Physics are the same as the General Degree Requirements (<https://catalog.mit.edu/mit/graduate-education/general-degree-requirements>) listed under Graduate Education. A master's thesis must represent a piece of independent research work in any of the fields described below, and must be carried out under the supervision of a department faculty member. No fixed time is set for the completion of a master's program; two years of work is a rough guideline. There is no language requirement for this degree.

Doctor of Philosophy

Candidates for the Doctor of Philosophy or Doctor of Science are expected to enroll in those basic graduate subjects that prepare them for the general examination, which must be passed no later than in the seventh term after initial enrollment. Students are required to take two subjects in the candidate's doctoral research area (specialty requirement) and two subjects outside the candidate's field of specialization (breadth requirement). In addition, all students in the first year of the PhD program must enroll in two semesters of 8.398, a seminar specifically for first-year students. Half of the breadth requirement may be satisfied through a departmentally approved industrial internship. The doctoral thesis must represent a substantial piece of original research, carried out under the supervision of a department faculty member.

The Physics Department faculty members offer subjects of instruction and are engaged in research in a variety of fields in experimental and theoretical physics. This broad spectrum of activities is organized in the divisional structure of the department, presented below. Graduate students are encouraged to contact faculty members in the division of their choice to inquire about opportunities for research, and to pass through an apprenticeship (by signing up for Pre-Thesis Research) as a first step toward an engagement in independent research for a doctoral thesis.

Research Divisions

Faculty and students in the Department of Physics are generally affiliated with one of several research divisions:

- Astrophysics
- Experimental Nuclear and Particle Physics
- Atomic Physics, Biophysics, Condensed Matter Physics, and Plasma Physics
- Theoretical Nuclear and Particle Physics

Much of the research in the department is carried out as part of the work of various interdisciplinary laboratories and centers, including the Center for Materials Science and Engineering, Francis Bitter Magnet Laboratory, Haystack Observatory, Laboratory for Nuclear Science, Microsystems Technology Laboratories, MIT Kavli Institute for Astrophysics and Space Research, Plasma Science and Fusion Center, Research Laboratory of Electronics, and Spectroscopy Laboratory. Additional information about interdisciplinary laboratories and centers can be found under Research and Study (<https://catalog.mit.edu/mit/research>). These facilities provide close relationships among the research activities of a number of MIT departments and give students opportunities for contact with research carried out in disciplines other than physics.

Inquiries

Additional information on degree programs, research activities, admissions, financial aid, teaching and research assistantships may be obtained by contacting the department office (physics-grad@mit.edu), Room 4-315, 617-253-4851.