

# PHYSICS

## Undergraduate Program Information

A bachelor's degree in physics or engineering physics provides the basis for careers in industry, teaching, the military, government or for study toward advanced degrees in physics or engineering. It should also provide the skills that recipients of physics degrees have listed as among the most important in obtaining their current positions, including problem solving ability, computer skills, mathematical skills, and laboratory skills, as well as knowledge of physics.

Further information about the department may be found on the web at [phys.nmsu.edu](https://phys.nmsu.edu) (<https://phys.nmsu.edu>). All incoming (new or transfer) students must schedule an orientation meeting with the department head and/or the undergraduate program head before their first semester at NMSU. All students will be assigned a faculty advisor in the physics department to discuss course selection, career resources, internships and coops, and other topics.

## Graduate Program Information

The Department of Physics offers programs in many areas of emphasis leading to the MS and Ph.D. degrees. Admission to these programs is competitive and selection of applicants is based on undergraduate and/or previous graduate grade-point averages, performance on the general and subject Graduate Record Examination, other evidence of prior academic and research accomplishments submitted by the applicant, and reference letters, as well as, in the case of applicants for the doctoral program, matching of the applicant's research interests, as described by the student's statement of purpose, to the Department's research activities.

All degree-seeking graduate students must satisfy the relevant Graduate School requirements, successfully complete a 3-credit, 500-level laboratory, and demonstrate or develop knowledge of computer programming. All Ph.D. students and non-thesis Master's students must pass a qualifying examination based on undergraduate physics courses at the 400 level. Additional course requirements are described below; courses taken S/U may not be used to satisfy any of the degree requirements, including the lab requirement for Master's and Ph.D. students.

The qualifying and comprehensive examination outcomes are decided by vote of the entire faculty, based on the recommendations of the corresponding examination committees. For the qualifying examination, the faculty may decide that

- a student pass at the doctoral level;
- pass at the master's level;
- be requested to retake the exam at the next available opportunity; or
- terminate graduate study.

For the written part of the comprehensive examination, the faculty may decide that

- a student be given an unconditional pass;
- be given a conditional pass, with the requirement that the student produce additional evidence of research accomplishments during the oral part of the exam before being granted admission to candidacy;

- repeat the written part the next time it is offered; or
- terminate graduate study.

In addition, the faculty may decide to discontinue financial support to a student based on the student's performance on the qualifying or comprehensive examination. Students will receive written notification of the exam's outcome from the Graduate Physics Program Head within 30 days of the exam. Appeals must be addressed to the Physics Department Head within 30 days of receiving written notification of the exam's outcome and will be decided by the physics faculty.

A student granted an unconditional or conditional pass on the written part of the comprehensive examination must take the oral part in the same semester that the written part was taken; the student's Ph.D. committee makes the final decision, following the oral part of the comprehensive examination, on admission of the student to the candidacy to the doctoral degree.

Students may choose areas of emphasis from a variety of experimental, theoretical and computational research programs in the department. The current major research areas of the department include condensed matter physics and materials science, geophysics, optics, particle and nuclear physics, and others. These research projects are supported by multimillion-dollar funding by various federal agencies and two national laboratories within the state of New Mexico: Los Alamos National Laboratory and Sandia National Laboratories. In addition to the in-house research, the department conducts collaborative research programs with

- The Brookhaven National Laboratory,
- The Center for Integrated NanoTechnologies,
- Los Alamos National Laboratory,
- Sandia National Laboratories,
- The Thomas Jefferson Laboratory,
- Fermilab,
- Air Force Research Laboratory and
- other national and international laboratories.

The MS in Physics with a concentration in Space Physics program provides students with a strong foundation in physics with an intensive focus on space physics. Graduate study in space physics at the master's level prepares graduates for continued and specialized study toward the doctorate program in space-related fields as well as for challenges they will confront in space industrial and government settings.

The department is housed in a newly-renovated building which contains research laboratories, classrooms, offices and a computational laboratory.