

Guidelines for Physics Graduate Students (Tulane University)

1. Each Student is expected to become familiar with the requirements of the Graduate School and the Physics Department, as set forth in the Graduate School catalog. These “Guidelines” supplement those requirements.
2. The students should see the graduate advisor before pre-registering for courses and when they have questions about the program. Students enrolled in Physics 791-794 will also have a research director.
3. Until he/she signs up for dissertation research, each graduate student is required to enroll in Research I-IV, Physics 791-794, for three credits. Each student should find a professor who will teach this course and serve as the student’s research director. The student may change professors between semesters.
4. Foreign students with any form of financial aid must master spoken English at a level which will qualify them to be teaching assistants. The Department may require these students to enroll in a course such as “English for Teaching Assistants.”
5. Each full-time student is required to register for 12 semester hours of approved courses each semester, until he/she begins Thesis or Dissertation research. Exceptions may be granted by agreement between the student’s research director, graduate advisor and the Chair. Grades of B or better are required by the Graduate School. Students should be aware of academic and language requirements described in the catalog.
6. Students on teaching assistantships provided by the Physics Department are not allowed to complete the requirements for a master’s degree in another department. Exceptions require the approval of the research director, graduate student advisor, and the Chair.
7. The core courses (601, 602, 706, 710, 717, 718, 723, 724) are offered once every two years. In order to prepare for the qualifying examination and graduate research, students are urged to take these courses as soon as possible.
8. Students are expected to attend all departmental seminars.
9. Each TA is required to do some teaching (e.g., lab or grading) and departmental service (e.g., helping to maintain teaching lab equipment, and departmental infrastructure, or proctoring exams).
10. Financial aid (including teaching and research assistantships, Fellowships, and tuition waivers) is awarded and renewed on the basis of merit to students who maintain good academic standing and make timely progress. Graduate students receiving financial aid from Tulane should not accept concurrent employment without the approval of their research director and the Chair of the Department.
11. A limited number of teaching assistantships are usually available over the summer. Preference will be given to students with a research advisor and a commitment to remain in our programs.

12. Candidates for the Ph.D. degree must pass a qualifying examination, a prospectus defense, and a dissertation defense.
13. The qualifying examination for the Ph.D. degree consists of two phases: (1) a written core examination in two parts (classical and modern physics), (2) an oral specialty examination over the general area of the student's research interests. The core exam is offered as needed early in the Spring semester and early in the Fall semester. Students taking the core exam for the first time must take both parts. The core examination must be passed by the end of the student's third year. In the third year the student is given a month free from research to study for the core exam. The student may take the exam in the first year with the consent of the research director and graduate advisor, or in the second year. Each of the two parts of the core exam will be passed or failed individually, and one or both parts, as required, will be repeated by the end of the third year. (Sample core exams are available from the Graduate Student Advisor). The oral part of the exam is considered part of the prospectus defense.
14. In order to remain eligible for financial aid from the Graduate School beyond the third year, a student must, before February 15, of his/her third year, (a) pass the written core examination, and (b) form a thesis or dissertation committee. Failure to achieve conditions (a) and (b) constitutes grounds for termination of financial aid.
15. Any proposal for a special interdisciplinary degree with a physics component must be cleared through the departmental Graduate Committee before it is sent to the Graduate Council.
16. The student writing a thesis or dissertation is expected to recruit a faculty research director, who should nominate the rest of the committee. The thesis or dissertation committee is officially formed via a letter of appointment from the Chair of the Department. Ordinarily a student will not be encouraged to do research with someone outside the Physics Department.
17. The dissertation should represent original, publishable research. The dissertation may be based upon one or more papers accepted for publication in a refereed journal. The defense of the dissertation is an oral examination governed by the student's committee but open to all Physics faculty (and other invited parties).
18. Most students should complete a Ph.D. in 4-6 years. Seven years is the maximum time normally allowed by the Graduate School. The Graduate School will no longer provide teaching assistantships to students who have received five or more years of financial aid (teaching assistant, grant-supported research assistant, ...).
19. A request by a graduate student to take a course outside the department will be reviewed carefully by the student's research director, graduate student advisor, and the Chair.

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