Admissions to the Physics PhD Program


Realizing the challenges of teaching, learning, and assessing academic performance during the global COVID-19 pandemic, UW physics has adopted the following principle:

The University of Washington Department of Physics will not consider nor accept GRE (General or Subject) scores this year.

We will take into account the significant disruptions and challenges associated with the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic when reviewing applicants’ academic transcripts and other application materials as part of the UW physics program’s ongoing practice of performing individualized, holistic reviews of each applicant.

In particular, as we review applications now and in the future, we will respect decisions regarding the adoption of Pass/No Record (or Credit/No Credit or Pass/Fail) and other grading options during the unprecedented period of COVID-19 disruptions, whether those decisions were made by institutions or by individual students.

The admission committee understands that during this challenging time some applicants may not be able provide all requested supporting materials. All applications submitted by the admission deadline will be reviewed. Applicants are invited to describe their individual experiences during the pandemic to provide context to inform the application review process, as such, they will be considered with the entirety of a student’s record.

Questions about this statement may be directed to the UW Physics department graduate advisor (cuala@uw.edu).

Application Submission Deadline

ALL APPLICATION MATERIALS MUST BE RECEIVED ELECTRONICALLY BY JANUARY 5TH, 2021 TO BE CONSIDERED FOR ADMISSION FOR THE FOLLOWING AUTUMN QUARTER

Applications are accepted for the AUTUMN QUARTER ONLY.

JANUARY 5 DEADLINE – We advise applicants to start the online application process by early December.

Applicants unable to submit all requested application materials at this time can submit their application but must indicate the reasons on their Personal Statement. Contact the UW Physics department graduate advisor (cuala@uw.edu) if your application will be late.

Admission Requirements

Students entering the doctoral program are expected to have a strong undergraduate preparation in physics. Courses in electricity
and magnetism, optics, mechanics, atomic and nuclear physics, statistical physics, quantum mechanics, mathematical physics, differential equations, and analysis are essential. Any deficiency in these areas may delay degree completion by as much as a year. (Students are expected to make up any deficiencies during the first year of graduate study.)

The Graduate Admissions Committee reviews all submitted applications and takes a holistic approach taking into account all aspects presented in the application materials.

A few approximate averages for recent years.

- Average size of entering class: 25
- Average number of Students offered admission: 100
- Average number of Student applications: 600
- Average total PhD student population: 145
- Average gender diversity: 23%
- Average time to PhD: 6.2 years
- Average retention rate: 80%

Application Materials

Following is a list of all application materials required. The online application process provides more details. In Physics we do not require an additional application for teaching or research assistantships; all applicants are automatically considered for such positions.

- Electronic Application and fee (see link at bottom of this page)
- Resume or curriculum vitae: including current position or activities, professional experience, honors awarded or scholarships, special skills, publications and research presentations.
- Statement of Purpose: one page (200 to 300 words) stating academic purpose and goals.
- Personal History Statement (Optional): describing how experiences within your personal history (family, educational, cultural, and economic background) have influenced your intellectual development, interests, career plans, and goals. Responses should be no more than two pages in length.
- Three letters of recommendation: Submit recommender email addresses into the electronic application form at least one month ahead of the deadline in order to give recommenders sufficient time to submit letters.
- Transcripts (Unofficial): From all prior relevant undergraduate and graduate institutions attended. Admitted applicants must provide official transcripts.

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Additional Criteria for INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- TOEFL official test scores must be sent by ETS directly to the University of Washington and must be received by the University of Washington within two years of the test date. TOEFL test takers should consult the Educational Testing Service. Scores should be sent to the University of Washington, institution code 4854. Refer to Understanding the Application Process for additional information.
- Teaching Assistant Eligibility - See Memo #15 for details.

Please email inquiries to the Physics graduate advisor, Catherine Provost or the faculty graduate admission coordinator, Jun-Haw.
For additional information about graduate study at the University of Washington, please visit the Graduate School Home Page.

The University of Washington reaffirms its policy of equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or Vietnam era veteran in accordance with University policy and applicable federal and state statutes and regulations.

Department of Physics  
University of Washington  
Physics-Astronomy Building, Rm. C121  
Box 351560  
Seattle, WA 98195-1560

Phone: (206) 543-2770  
Fax: (206) 685-0635  
physrecp@uw.edu

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