Astrophysics, PhD

Program Description

Degree Awarded: PHD Astrophysics

The PhD program in astrophysics is designed to develop creative scholarship and prepare students for professional careers in astrophysics, astronomy or related fields.

Students in this program take graduate-level courses in stars and interstellar media, galaxies, and cosmology; obtain quantitative skills through analysis and modelling; may have observing opportunities through regional and international telescope observatories; and conduct independent, fundamental, astrophysical research. Graduate students work closely with a research advisor on a wide range of topics including theoretical physics, cosmology, galaxy dynamics, stellar evolution, exoplanets, and developing and building instrumentation. Graduate students in astrophysics become leaders in observational and theoretical research; they participate in NASA- and NSF-funded space missions and study topics such as how stars are born and die, how galaxies interact and evolve, and how the universe changed as it developed from its earliest beginnings.

The program's world-class faculty have research expertise across the full breadth of astrophysics including the solar system, stars and galaxies from the Milky Way to the most distant galaxies in the universe. Current ASU research applies both computational and observational approaches to the exploration of a range of topics such as fundamental cosmology and whether there is life on exoplanets.

At a Glance
Degree Requirements

84 credit hours, a written comprehensive exam, an oral comprehensive exam, a prospectus and a dissertation

Required Core (1 credit hour)
SES 502 Exploring SESE Research (1)

Electives or Research (51 credit hours)

Other Requirements (20 credit hours)*
AST 521 Stars and Interstellar Medium I (3)
AST 522 Stars and Interstellar Medium II (3)
AST 523 Stars and Interstellar Medium III (3)
AST 531 Galaxies and Cosmology I (3)
AST 532 Galaxies and Cosmology II (3)
AST 533 Galaxies and Cosmology III (3)
AST 591 Seminar: Astrophysics (1)
SES 501 SESE Colloquium (1)

Culminating Experience (12 credit hours)
SES 799 Dissertation (12)

Additional Curriculum Information
When approved by the student's supervisory committee and the Graduate College, this program allows 30 credit hours from a previously awarded master's degree in a related field to be used for this degree.

*Substitutions for Other Requirements may be made per departmental approval.

Admission Requirements

Applicants must fulfill the requirements of both the Graduate College and The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Applicants are eligible to apply to the program if they have earned a bachelor's or master's degree, in any field, from a regionally accredited institution.

Applicants must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 (scale is 4.00 = "A") in the last 60 hours of their first bachelor's degree program, or applicants must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 (scale is 4.00 = "A") in an applicable master's degree program.
All applicants must submit:

1. graduate admissions application and application fee
2. official transcripts
3. statement of purpose
4. three letters of recommendation
5. proof of English proficiency

Additional Application Information
An applicant whose native language is not English must provide proof of English proficiency regardless of current residency.

Applicants should see the program website for application deadlines.

Application Deadlines

Fall expand
Spring expand

Career Opportunities

Professionals with expertise in astrophysics are in high demand across all sectors and industries, including remote sensing, data science, instrument building, computational science, defense industries and scientific research. Coding and numerical modeling skills translate across many domains, even beyond astrophysics. Skills in the measurement and analysis of data related to the physics, chemistry, structure of the universe and exoplanetary systems are valuable to businesses and institutions relying on data-driven strategies to explore beyond the Earth and solar system.

The doctoral degree in astrophysics is required for some careers in post-secondary education and research.

Career examples include:

- astrophysics professor
- data scientist
- instrument builder
- project manager
- research astronomer
- telescope operator

Contact Information

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Admission Deadlines