The Division of the Physical Sciences

Dean
- Edward W. (Rocky) Kolb
Deputy Dean
- Michael D. Hopkins
Dean of Students
- Miranda Swanson

The Division of the Physical Sciences includes the Departments of Astronomy & Astrophysics (http://astro.uchicago.edu), Chemistry (http://chemistry.uchicago.edu), Computer Science (http://www.cs.uchicago.edu), Geophysical Sciences (http://geosci.uchicago.edu), Mathematics (http://www.math.uchicago.edu), Physics (http://physics.uchicago.edu), and Statistics (http://www.stat.uchicago.edu). It also includes the Enrico Fermi Institute (http://efi.uchicago.edu), the James Franck Institute (http://jfi.uchicago.edu), and the (interdivisional) Institute for Biophysical Dynamics (http://ibd.uchicago.edu). Graduate degrees are awarded only by the departments and the Biophysical Sciences (http://biophysics.uchicago.edu) program, but students in physical sciences programs often conduct their research under the auspices of the research institutes.

Undergraduate programs in the physical sciences are administered by the College. Detailed descriptions of programs leading to the bachelor’s degree may be found in The College Catalog (http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu).

Admission to Graduate Programs in the Division

Applicants for admission to graduate studies in a particular branch of the Physical Sciences should refer to individual department entries for specific admissions requirements.

An applicant who has received a bachelor’s degree or the master’s degree from an accredited college or university may be admitted on the basis of his or her previous academic record.

An applicant who has completed at least two years of college work with superior standing in the basic courses of a special field and an adequate record of general studies but who does not have a four year bachelor’s degree may be admitted to the division to study toward a higher degree. However, failure to qualify for a higher degree leaves the student with no degree. Admission on this basis is recommended only for those with high aptitude for their major field and with not more than two deficiencies in general education covering the areas of English, modern foreign languages, humanities, social science, and biological science.
A person may be admitted as a graduate student at large or as a returning scholar for the purpose of studying a definite subject or subjects for which he or she has an adequate background. Admission is considered upon the basis of an abbreviated application, such credentials as may be appropriate, and a clearly defined statement of objectives. Application is made to the Graham School of Continuing Liberal and Professional Studies (https://grahamschool.uchicago.edu).

FINANCIAL AID

Most graduate students at the doctoral level in the Division of the Physical Sciences receive some form of financial support. Almost all advanced students engaged in thesis research have research assistantships and receive stipends from the research sponsor’s contract or grant. A merit tuition scholarship normally accompanies such assistantships. Since teaching experience is a requirement for the Ph.D. degree in all departments, many students, usually in their first and second years of graduate study, serve as teaching assistants in undergraduate courses offered by their departments. Other forms of support include fellowships provided by the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and various private foundations. The University provides a limited number of special scholarships and fellowships for outstanding students from its own student aid funds and from privately endowed funds.

DEGREES

Normally students admitted to a degree program are expected to be in continuous, full time residence until the degree has been conferred.

Since individual departmental degree requirements may change, students should always contact their department for current degree requirements and regulations.

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Master of Science students are required to register full time in the division for a minimum of three quarters, during which time they must satisfactorily complete a minimum of nine individual courses. There are several masters programs in the division for students who want to specialize in specific areas in the physical sciences:

The Department of Computer Science offers a Master of Science in Computer Science (http://csmasters.uchicago.edu).

The Physical Sciences Division together with the Harris School for Public Policy offers a Master of Science in Environmental Science and Policy (http://harrisschool.uchicago.edu/degrees/masters-degree/ms-env-sci-policy).

The Department of Mathematics offers a Master of Science in Financial Mathematics (http://www-finmath.uchicago.edu).

The Physical Sciences Division offers a general Master of Science in the Physical Sciences (http://mspsd-psdsites.uchicago.edu) aimed at students who wish to broaden or deepen their knowledge of the physical and mathematical sciences.
The Department of Statistics offers a Master of Science in Statistics (http://www.stat.uchicago.edu/admissions/MastersDegree.shtml).

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

The degree of Doctor of Philosophy is conferred in recognition of high accomplishment and ability in the candidate’s chosen field. It is understood that the completion of a specified number of courses and a given period of residence do not ensure the granting of this degree. The requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy are as follows:

1. Completion of the University’s residence requirements.
2. Admission to candidacy for the degree. Admission to advanced work in the division does not necessarily imply admission to candidacy for a degree, which is contingent upon the recommendation of the department in which the student is working. At the appropriate time departments will submit to the Dean of Students in the division, on behalf of each student, an application requesting approval of admission to candidacy. Approval of the application certifies that:
   • The candidate has begun investigation for a dissertation.
   • The candidate’s department recommends admission to candidacy (following satisfactory completion of individual examination requirements).
   • The candidate has satisfied any foreign language requirement of his or her department.
3. The passing of final examination(s) in accordance with one of the following plans:
   • A basic examination in the major fields of interest in the department or departments of specialization and a final oral examination in the field covered by the dissertation or;
   • In the absence of a preliminary or basic examination, passing comprehensive examinations covering major fields of interest in the department of specialization, including the field of the dissertation.