

PHYSICS: BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE, BA

Physics and astronomy are fundamental sciences aimed at discovering the basic principles that govern our universe. Physicists study the interplay between space, time, matter, and energy. Complex behavior in nature is explained in terms of elementary relations between constituent elements and the forces that bind them, over distances ranging from subatomic to cosmic scale. Astronomy encompasses the entire physical universe beyond the earth: the solar system, stars, galaxies, galaxy clusters and superclusters, quasars, and the large-scale structure of the universe. The basic tools in physics and astronomy are mathematics and experimental investigation and observation of the world around us.

At Penn, the curriculum for undergraduate Physics majors, which includes extensive laboratory experience, is based on faculty strengths in Condensed Matter Physics, Elementary Particle Physics, and Astrophysics. Undergraduate teaching is linked to faculty research efforts in these areas, and participation by undergraduates in research is strongly encouraged.

This concentration reflects increasing contributions of physicists (including members of our faculty) to implications of Physics to Biological Sciences. Undergraduate students choosing this concentration will prepare themselves for careers in scientific research or professional Medical Physics programs that have been instituted at Penn and other universities, among other possibilities.

The proposed concentration is distinct from the existing Biophysics Major, although the two share several required courses. The Biophysics Major requires much more chemistry, making it appropriate for students interested in protein science and other topics within the well-established field of Biophysics. The Physics major with a Concentration in Biological Science targets students with interests in the emerging field of Biological Physics, where researchers directly apply physical concepts and techniques to investigate biological systems; the emphasis is on developing new insights regarding biological systems from a perspective strongly rooted in Physics.

The minimum total course units (<https://www.college.upenn.edu/credits-needed-major/>) for graduation in this major is 36. Double majors may entail more course units.

For more information: <http://www.physics.upenn.edu/>

For information about the General Education requirements, please visit the College of Arts & Sciences Curriculum (<https://www.college.upenn.edu/curriculum/>) page.

Code	Title	Course Units
College General Education Requirements and Free Electives		
Foundational Approaches + Sectors ¹ + Free Electives		16.5
Major Requirements		
<i>Core Requirements</i>		
MATH 1400	Calculus, Part I	1
MATH 1410	Calculus, Part II	1
MATH 2400	Calculus, Part III	1
MATH 2410	Calculus, Part IV	1

PHYS 1230	Principles of Physics III: Vibrations and Waves, Special Relativity, and Thermal Physics	1
PHYS 1240	Principles of Physics IV: Modern Physics (without laboratory) ²	1
PHYS 3361	Electromagnetism I: Electricity and Potential Theory	1
PHYS 3362	Electromagnetism II: Magnetism, Maxwell's Equations, and Electromagnetic Waves	1
PHYS 4411	Introduction to Quantum Mechanics I	1
PHYS 0150	Principles of Physics I: Mechanics and Wave Motion	1.5
or PHYS 0170	Honors Physics I: Mechanics and Wave Motion	
PHYS 0151	Principles of Physics II: Electromagnetism and Radiation	1.5
or PHYS 0171	Honors Physics II: Electromagnetism and Radiation	
<i>Concentration Requirements</i>		
BIOL 1121	Introduction to Biology - The Molecular Biology of Life	1
BIOL 1123	Introductory Molecular Biology Laboratory	0.5
BIOL 2810	Biochemistry	1
or BIOL 2010	Cell Biology	
BIOL 2210	Molecular Biology and Genetics	1
PHYS 2280	Physical Models of Biological Systems	1
or PHYS 5580	Biological Physics	
PHYS 4401	Thermodynamics and the Introduction to Statistical Mechanics and Kinetic Theory	1
Select 2 course units of Approved Electives		2
Total Course Units		36

¹ You may count no more than one course toward both a Major and a Sector requirement. For Exceptions, check the Policy Statement (<http://www.college.upenn.edu/sectors-policy/>).

² PHYS 1250 Principles of Physics IV: Modern Physics recommended.

Honors

Applicants must have a minimum GPA of 3.3 in major-related courses.

Code	Title	Course Units
PHYS 4498	Senior Honor Thesis (Semester 1)	1
PHYS 4498	Senior Honor Thesis (Semester 2)	1
Thesis Accepted		

The degree and major requirements displayed are intended as a guide for students entering in the Fall of 2024 and later. Students should consult with their academic program regarding final certifications and requirements for graduation.