

Graduate Admission in Physics

Frequently-Asked Questions

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1. *How can I apply for the MS/PhD program (in Physics/Computational Physics)?*

You can apply online by filling up an application form at

<https://www.usm.edu/graduate-admissions/index.php>

You need to upload:

- 1) CV;
- 2) Three letters of support (to be uploaded by your references);
- 3) A statement of purpose, describing your interest and previous research/teaching experience (if any);
- 4) 4-year BS/BSc transcripts. For international applicants with a 3-year BS/BSc degree, first-year MS/MSc transcript is required. Please note that official transcripts are required to complete your application;
- 5) A valid TOEFL or equivalent English proficiency score is required for most international applicants from non-English speaking countries. In addition, as of Fall 2024, you also need a GRE (general) score to apply;
- 6) Application fee;
- 7) A publication list (Optional).

2. *What are the requirements for admission to the MS program in Physics?*

To apply for the Master's Program (in Physics) you need to have a valid TOEFL and a GRE (general) score. In addition, you should have a 4-year undergraduate degree in Physical or Mathematical Sciences (with a minimum of 18 credit hours of UG courses in Physics) with a good academic standing.

3. *I have a Master's degree from elsewhere. Can I apply for the PhD program directly?*

Yes. You can directly apply for the PhD program if you have a Master's degree from elsewhere. However, the admission to PhD program is subject to availability of funding. The department encourages applicants to apply for the MS program in the first instance. Students can join the PhD program after two years, subject to successful completion of MS coursework and the availability of a PhD position in a research group. This way all MS students get the opportunity to work with a prospective mentor/advisor before formally applying to the PhD program. If you decide to apply to the PhD program, please contact an appropriate faculty member of your area of interest and the possible source of funding.

4. *Is it possible to apply for the program without a valid TOEFL score?*

For most overseas applicants, a valid TOEFL or an equivalent English proficiency score is required, even if your medium of instruction is in English. However, the following students may exempt from having a valid TOEFL score:

- a) international applicants who have a terminal degree from the USA, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and Ireland;
- b) applicants who are from the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Ireland, and certain Caribbean Islands.

5. *Can I send my CV and other materials to a faculty member in the department so that he/she can say if I would be accepted for the program with a TA or not?*

You are most welcome to initiate contact with a faculty member concerning your research interest and other queries. However, please understand that a faculty member cannot comment on whether you would be accepted in the program with a teaching assistantship or not. All applications must be merit reviewed and ranked by the admission committee before a decision can be made.

6. *Can I request a waiver for application fee?*

Yes. Such requests are reviewed by the chair/director of the department/school on a case-by-case basis. Generally, an application fee is waived when an applicant can demonstrate that s/he/they has an exceptionally good academic record and does not have the means to pay for the application fee. Since we receive a large number of such requests, we may not be able to review all requests in a timely manner. If you decide to request a fee waiver, please submit all the required documents to the application portal and contact the department of Physics explaining your reasons for requesting such a waiver. Kindly note that your application is incomplete until the requisite fee is paid by you or a fee waiver is granted to you. The department does not have access to your application materials until your application is complete.

7. *I need financial assistance. How can I apply for financial assistance?*

Your application will be automatically considered for a teaching assistantship when you apply for the program.

8. *What is the minimum TOEFL score that I need for application?*

As of 2023, the graduate school sets the minimum TOEFL (iBT) score at 71.

9. *I do not have any valid TOEFL score but IELTS score. Can I apply? Is there a minimum score for IELTS?*

Yes. Your IELTS score will be converted to an equivalent TOEFL score. The minimum IELTS (Academic) score required is 6.5.

10. *Can I apply for Spring semester (starting January)?*

Yes. However, your application will be reviewed in the event a teaching assistant position is available. An applicant who does not require any financial assistance from the University and can support him/her/themselves may apply for the Fall or the Spring semester.

11. *I applied before but I was not selected. Can you use my old application?*

No. You need to apply again to be considered for the program.

12. *Is there a deadline for submitting my application?*

Yes. Your complete application should be received by the Graduate School by April 31 of the calendar year. Late applications may or may not be reviewed depending on the availability of the positions. Please check with the Graduate School/department for further information.

13. *I have been accepted in the program without a teaching assistantship. Is there any way I can receive a teaching assistantship?*

Teaching assistantships (TA) are awarded strictly on the basis of merit. The Admission Committee prepares a merit list of eligible applicants to this end, and the available TA positions are offered to the applicants according to their rank in the list. Since there are a few assistantships available each year, we cannot offer TAs to all candidates selected for admission.

14. *I have applied for the program. When will I get a decision of my application?*

If your application is complete, a decision will be communicated to you by the end of April/May of the Calendar year. If you do not hear from us by this time, please contact us.

15. *I have a query that has not been answered in this page. Is there any contact address?*

If your query is not answered here, you may contact the Graduate Chair of MS/PhD program (Partha.BiswasATusm.edu) or the program lead of Physics (Michael.VeraATusm.edu). Please replace 'AT' by '@' in the e-mail addresses above.

16. *I am interested to work in a particular research group. Is it possible for me to join the research group if I am accepted in the MS/PhD program?*

This is primarily determined by the faculty member leading the group. If you are interested to work with a particular faculty member, you may contact the person directly regarding the availability of a research position in the group. You may also mention your interest in your statement of purpose.