

# **SU Physics PhD Program: General Admissions Questions & Answers**

## **Do I have to have a prior Undergraduate (or MS) degree in Physics to be considered for admission?**

Any application submitted for a doctorate in Physics will be considered for admission. A prior degree in physics will provide support for your application, but it is not required and we will accept applications from students with backgrounds in other fields.

## **Are GRE scores required? What is the minimum acceptable score?**

We ask all applicants to submit scores for the GRE & Physics GRE with your application. Good scores will enhance your application greatly, but there are no minimum scores required for any of the tests listed. The average score for accepted students varies considerably from one year to the next, based upon the applicant pool.

**\*\*Note:** Your application will still be considered if you do not submit Physics GRE scores, but your chances of admission will be smaller.

## **Are official score reports required at the time of application submission?**

The admissions committee will base their decision off your unofficial score reports, if that is all that is available by you at the time your application is submitted. However, if you are extended an offer, the official scores must just be received by the university before you will be allowed to accept it.

## **What is the deadline to submit my application?**

For Fall 2018, please note that the application deadline for highest consideration will be January 15, 2018.

## **It is past the January 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. Will you still accept my application?**

We will still accept applications after that date, but your chances of admission will be smaller.

## **What materials do I need to include with my application?**

You should include information about your research interests and experience in the personal statement and CV that you submit with your application.

We also recommend you look through the research groups listed on our department's website, and specifically mention research areas and/or faculty members you'd be interested in working with (and why).

See <http://web.physics.syr.edu/research/index.html> for the research areas offered within our department, or see <http://physicsapply.syr.edu> for more information about application requirements.

**Does my personal statement need to be limited to 500 words or less?**

We have no set requirement on the number of words, but please keep your personal statement 1-2 pages, maximum. You should upload it as a PDF into your application in the online application program.

**How do I apply for financial support from the department?**

Every new student who is accepted to the Physics graduate program within our department is offered some form of fellowship or graduate assistantship (TA or RA) for at least their first year, except in very rare cases.

**Can my scores be evaluated in advance, so I can know my chances of admission?**

Unfortunately, no. Your scores can only be evaluated in comparison to the rest of the applicant pool before we can advise about your chances of admission for the upcoming year.

Please note, however, that theoretical spots are more competitive than experimental spots. So, in general, higher scores on the GRE, Physics GRE, GPA, etc. will be required for admission into a theoretical research area.

**What are the average scores of students accepted into your program?**

Your application data will have to be considered in comparison to the rest of the applicant pool, so we cannot give you an answer to this question since it can vary greatly from year to year. What is considered to be a “good” score can also vary quite a bit depending upon the field you are interested in, and whether or not it is experimental or theoretical work you plan to pursue. Spots within theoretical fields are more competitive than experimental spots.

**Which Faculty members will be taking on students in the upcoming year?**

Unfortunately, the faculty will not report what openings they will have to the admissions committee for several months yet. But, if you contact a faculty member directly that you would be interested in working with and describe your research interests and experience, they may be able to answer that question for you.

**How do I complete the part of my application that asks for proof of funding/support?**

You can submit your application without the proof of funding information. If you receive an admission offer from the Physics department, it would be coupled with either a fellowship or teaching assistantship offer that would automatically fulfill the funding requirement in the application.

**Is an unofficial/scanned in transcript acceptable?**

Scanned copies of official transcripts are acceptable at the time of application, but if you are accepted into the program you would need to provide official copies to the graduate school before the end of your first year of study.

**Can I include additional materials, like a copy of a paper which I coauthored, to be reviewed by the committee?**

You have the option to do so, but it is not required. Anything you submit will be reviewed and factored into the decision that the admissions committee makes in regards to your application. However, a personal statement reflecting upon your research interests and experience *is* required.

**I am interested in the Physics MS program. Are you accepting MS candidates?**

Any application submitted for a *doctorate* in Physics will be considered for admission. Our department does not accept applicants who are only interested in applying the Master's program. We only accept those whose focus is to earn their Ph.D.

**Do you conditionally admit students prior to the official admission cycle?**

Unfortunately, no. Our department does not offer conditional admission to our Ph.D. program.

**I am interested in applying for the SPRING semester. How do I do so?**

Unfortunately, we do not accept applications for spring admission. We only accept graduate students on the fall cycles.

**Do you accept transfer students into the Physics PhD program?**

We will consider your application for admission, but your chances of admission will be smaller. Please note on your application or in your personal statement that you are currently attending another university, and that you are looking to transfer. Also, explain and *why* you are looking to transfer after enrolling in another program. This could play a large role when the admissions committee evaluates your application.

**When will admissions decisions be made?**

The faculty do not typically begin reviewing applications until late January, and admissions decisions will not be made until the months of February through April. You will be contacted via email once a final decision has been made.

## **I am an international applicant...**

### **Are TOEFL scores required?**

We ask all international applicants to submit TOEFL scores with your application. Good scores will enhance your application greatly, but there are no minimum scores required for consideration.

### **What is the minimum acceptable TOEFL score?**

The average score accepted varies considerably from one year to the next, based upon the applicant pool.

### **Will you accept IELTS scores, in place of TOEFL?**

Although the admissions committee prefers using TOEFL scores as a source for comparison among applicants, our admissions committee will accept IELTS scores in place of TOEFL if that is the only test you have taken.

### **I have already earned a prior degree in the US. Do I need to submit TOEFL scores?**

In your case, a TOEFL score report is not necessary if you have several years' experience at US institution. If you completed any English language courses at your prior institution and received a letter verifying your English proficiency, however, including a copy of said letter in your application would be helpful. If you have not completed a course, please inform me once you have submitted your application by emailing [pawhitmo@syr.edu](mailto:pawhitmo@syr.edu) so that I can add a note to your file that TOEFL will not be required in your case.

### **Is my foreign transcript acceptable?**

You need to include a document listing the classes you have completed, the grades you have earned, and any degrees you have earned. If this information is not listed in the standard transcript, please include an official university document that does include this information.

### **How do I convert the scores on my (international) transcript to a 4.0 scale?**

We ask applicants to do their best to judge where their performance would fall on the following grade scale(s), to the best of their abilities:

<b>Grades</b>	<b>Grade Points per Credit</b>
A	4.0
A-	3.667
B+	3.333
B	3.0
B-	2.667
C+	2.333
C	2.0
C-	1.667
D	1.0
D-	.667
F	0

<b>Percent</b>	<b>Letter Grade Undergraduate level courses</b>	<b>Letter Grade Graduate level courses</b>
95+	A	A
90 – 94.99	A-	A-
87 – 89.99	B+	B+
83 – 86.99	B	B
80 – 82.99	B-	B-
77 – 79.99	C+	C+
73 – 76.99	C	C
65 – 72.99	C-	C-
60 – 64.99	D	F
< 60	F	F

Please keep in mind that the admissions committee will realize it is an estimate, and look at your transcripts when making their final decisions.