Graduate Degree Programs

The Department of Astronomy offers the M.A. and the Ph.D. degrees in astronomy and offers the Ph.D. in astrophysics jointly with the Department of Physics. Students normally spend the first two years taking astronomy and physics graduate courses and exploring possible research projects. During their third and subsequent years, students undertake dissertation research with guidance from a faculty member. Median time to Ph.D. is six years.

Ph.D. in Astronomy

- A minimum of six courses from the astronomy core sequence and sufficient coursework to complete the minor requirements for a related field, e.g., physics, scientific computing, mathematics, chemistry, or geology.
- A written qualifying examination in astronomy.
- A predoctoral candidacy seminar.
- A doctoral dissertation and final oral defense.

Ph.D. in Astrophysics

- Four courses from the astronomy core sequence, four specified courses from the physics core sequence, and other astronomy and physics courses selected in consultation with the graduate advisory committee.
- Half of the written qualifying examination in astronomy and half of the written qualifying examination in physics.
- A predoctoral candidacy seminar.
- A doctoral dissertation and final oral defense.

M.A. in Astronomy

- Three courses from the astronomy core sequence and other astronomy and physics courses selected in consultation with the graduate advisory committee.
- An oral examination.
- A thesis or other demonstration of research accomplishment.

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WIYN 3.5-m telescope located at Kitt Peak near Tucson, AZ.
Students and faculty in the Astronomy Department conduct research on a broad range of theoretical and observational topics. Graduate students have access to several optical telescopes, excellent computing resources, and active instrumentation laboratories. Students often collect data with the WIYN telescopes; IU is a founding member of the WIYN consortium, which operates 3.5m and 0.9m telescopes at Kitt Peak. In addition to these premier facilities, the Department operates 16" and 50" robotic telescopes in the nearby Morgan-Monroe State Forest, as well as three teaching and outreach telescopes on the Bloomington campus. Departmental computing resources include workstations for data reduction, analysis, and hydrodynamics simulations plus two specialized GRAPE6 computer systems for N-body dynamics. Students also have access to “Big Red,” which is one of the fastest university-owned supercomputers.