

ASTRONOMY, BS

Banner Code: SC-BS-ASTR

Undergraduate Astronomy Advisor

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Fairfax Campus

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This program prepares students for graduate school, a career in research or teaching, or employment in industry, business, or education fields where analytical skills and a scientific background are advantageous. Students who are considering a double major should talk to the undergraduate coordinator.

Admissions & Policies

Admissions

University-wide admissions policies can be found in Undergraduate Admissions Policies (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/undergraduate-policies/>).

To apply for this program, please complete the George Mason University Admissions Application (<https://www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid/apply-now/>).

Policies

Students must fulfill all Requirements for Bachelor's Degrees (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/undergraduate-policies/#ap-5-3-2>) including the Mason Core (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/>).

At least 18 credits used to fulfill an Astronomy, BS cannot be used to fulfill another major or minor. Some course substitutions are allowed for double majors, subject to approval from the Department of Physics and Astronomy (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/colleges-schools/science/physics-astronomy/>).

By taking ASTR 402 RS: Methods of Observational Astronomy (Mason Core) (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/>), astronomy majors satisfy the university's writing-intensive requirement.

For policies governing all undergraduate programs, see AP.5 Undergraduate Policies (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/undergraduate-policies/>).

Requirements

Degree Requirements

Total credits: minimum 120

Students should refer to the Admissions & Policies tab for specific policies related to this program.

Students must complete a total of 58 credits in physics and astronomy and 14 credits in mathematics with a minimum GPA of 2.00.

Required Astronomy Courses

Code	Title	Credits
ASTR 124	Introduction to Observational Astronomy	1
ASTR 210	Introduction to Astrophysics	3
ASTR 328	Stars	3
ASTR 401	Computer Simulation in Astronomy	3
ASTR 402	RS: Methods of Observational Astronomy (Mason Core) (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/) ¹	4
Total Credits		14

¹ Fulfills the writing intensive requirement.

Required Physics Courses

Code	Title	Credits
Choose one of the following two sequences:		8
Sequence One		
PHYS 160 & PHYS 161	University Physics I (Mason Core) (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/) and University Physics I Laboratory (Mason Core) (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/) (the lab can be taken with, or any time after, PHYS 160)	
PHYS 260 & PHYS 261	University Physics II (Mason Core) (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/) and University Physics II Laboratory (Mason Core) (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/) (the lab can be taken with, or any time after, PHYS 260)	
Sequence Two		
PHYS 170 & PHYS 161	Introductory and Modern Physics I (Mason Core) (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/) and University Physics I Laboratory (Mason Core) (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/) (the lab can be taken with, or any time after, PHYS 170)	
PHYS 270 & PHYS 261	Introductory and Modern Physics II (Mason Core) (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/) and University Physics II Laboratory (Mason Core) (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/) (the lab can be taken with, or any time after, PHYS 270)	
PHYS 251	Introduction to Computer Methods in Physics (Mason Core) (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3
PHYS 262	University Physics III (Mason Core) (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	3

PHYS 301	Analytical Methods of Physics	3
PHYS 303	Classical Mechanics	3
PHYS 305	Electromagnetic Theory	3
Total Credits		23

Required Math Courses

Code	Title	Credits
MATH 113	Analytic Geometry and Calculus I (Mason Core) (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/)	4
MATH 114	Analytic Geometry and Calculus II	4
MATH 213	Analytic Geometry and Calculus III	3
MATH 214	Elementary Differential Equations	3
Total Credits		14

Additional Coursework

Code	Title	Credits
Select 21 credits from the following:		21
ASTR 301	Astrobiology	
ASTR 403	Planetary Science	
ASTR 404	Galaxies and Cosmology	
ASTR 408	Senior Research	
or ASTR 409	Astronomy Internship	
ASTR 420	Exoplanets	
ASTR 480	The Interstellar Medium	
PHYS 306	Wave Motion and Electromagnetic Radiation	
PHYS 307	Thermal Physics	
PHYS 308	Modern Physics	
PHYS 311	Instrumentation	
PHYS 312	Waves and Optics	
PHYS 325	Intermediate Computer Methods in Physics	
PHYS 402	Introduction to Quantum Mechanics and Atomic Physics	
PHYS 403	Quantum Mechanics II	
PHYS 428	Relativity	
PHYS 440	Nuclear and Particle Physics	
PHYS 465	Planetary Atmospheres and Ionospheres	
PHYS 475	Atmospheric Physics	
Total Credits		21

Mason Core and Elective Credits

In order to meet a minimum of 120 credits, this degree requires an additional 48 credits, which may be applied toward any remaining Mason Core (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/>) requirements (outlined below), Requirements for Bachelor's Degrees (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/undergraduate-policies/#ap-5-3-2>), and electives. Students are strongly encouraged to consult with their advisors to ensure that they fulfill all requirements.

Mason Core

Some Mason Core (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/>) requirements may already be fulfilled by the major requirements listed above. Students are strongly encouraged to consult their advisors to ensure they fulfill

all remaining Mason Core (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/>) requirements.

Students who have completed the following credentials are eligible for a waiver of the Foundation and Exploration (lower level) requirement categories. The Integration category (upper level) is not waived under this policy. See Admissions (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/undergraduate-policies/#transfertext>) for more information.

- VCCS Uniform Certificate of General Studies
- VCCS or Richard Bland Associate of Science (A.S.), Associate of Arts (A.A.), Associate of Arts and Sciences (A.A.&S.), or Associate of Fine Arts (A.F.A.)

Code	Title	Credits
Foundation Requirements		
	Written Communication (lower-level) (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#written)	3
	Oral Communication (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#oral)	3
	Quantitative Reasoning (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#quantitative)	3
	Information Technology and Computing (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#information-technology)	3
Exploration Requirements		
	Arts (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#arts)	3
	Global Contexts (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#global-contexts)	3
	Global History (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#global-history)	3
	Literature (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#literature)	3
	Natural Science (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#natural-science)	7
	Social and Behavioral Sciences (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#social-behavioral-science)	3
	Just Societies (optional) (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#justsocieties) ¹	
Integration Requirements		
	Written Communication (upper-level) (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#written)	3
	Writing Intensive (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#wi) ²	3
	Mason Apex (https://catalog.gmu.edu/mason-core/#apex) ³	3
Total Credits		40

¹ In addition to covering content related to the designated category, Exploration level courses marked with a Just Societies "flag" are specifically designed to help students learn how to interact effectively with others from all walks of life, including those with backgrounds and beliefs that differ from their own. Students who wish to increase their knowledge and skills in this area may choose to enroll in a Just Societies-flagged course. Students interested in this approach to completing their Mason Core Exploration Requirements should work closely with their advisor to identify the appropriate Just Societies-flagged courses.

² Most programs include the writing-intensive course designated for the major as part of the major requirements; this course is therefore not counted towards the total required for Mason Core.

³ Minimum 3 credits required.

Honors

Honors in the Major

Eligibility

Astronomy majors who have completed the prerequisites for ASTR 405 Honors Thesis in Astronomy I, have a GPA of at least 3.50 in ASTR and PHYS courses taken at Mason, and have a GPA of at least 3.50 in all courses taken at Mason may apply for admission to the astronomy honors program. Not all applicants who meet the minimum requirements are guaranteed acceptance. Please visit the department for details.

Honors Requirements

To graduate with honors in astronomy, a student must maintain a GPA of at least 3.50 in their ASTR/PHYS courses. Students accepted into the honors program must complete ASTR 405 Honors Thesis in Astronomy I and ASTR 406 Honors Thesis in Astronomy II with a GPA of at least 3.50 and a grade of 'A-' or better in ASTR 406 Honors Thesis in Astronomy II. Students in ASTR 405 Honors Thesis in Astronomy I/ASTR 406 Honors Thesis in Astronomy II will complete a research project and write a thesis working under the supervision of a faculty member. At the end of ASTR 406 Honors Thesis in Astronomy II, the student will write a substantial thesis paper and make a presentation of results to their honors committee.