

Graduate Handbook – School of Physics

I. Introduction & Resources for Students

This document describes the graduate degree program of the School of Physics. It includes detailed information about our courses of study, degree requirements, financial support, administrative matters, facilities, etc.

There are many resources available in the School and across campus to support graduate students throughout their career at Georgia Tech. The Associate Chair for Graduate Studies ([Prof. David Ballantyne](#) in Howey C201 & Boggs 1-90L) is always available to help with ANY issue that may arise at any time.

A. Academic and Administrative Resources

- The School of Physics Academic Office (Howey W111) is the first point of contact to find answers to academic and administrative issues.
- For Ph.D. students, the members of the Thesis Exam Committee (see Section IIB.5) should also be regarded as important resources to help resolve academic, research, or other questions.
- The [Georgia Tech Communication Center](#) can assist students with CV writing, poster presentations, dissertation writing, as well as all other forms of scientific communication.
- The [Georgia Tech Office of Graduate Studies](#) can provide Institute-level guidance on completing and submitting the doctoral thesis, information on fellowships, and resources on professional development and career planning.
- For all students, the [Georgia Tech Office of Conflict Resolution & Ombuds](#) provides a confidential, neutral, and independent resource to help resolve issues which may transcend the resources of the School itself.
- Finally, the [Registrar's Office](#) and [Bursar's Office](#) can provide help and guidance related to registration and financial issues.

B. Health and Wellness Resources

- Questions about [Student Health Insurance](#) should be directed to Jennifer White at STAMPS ((404) 894-0633).
- Graduate school can be a stressful time for students. The [Georgia Tech Counseling Center](#) and [STAMPS health services](#) offer a wide range of programs and services that can help students who may need assistance. (See [this Physics Today article](#) by our own Andrea Welsh on her journey completing a Physics Ph.D. while dealing with mental health issues.) The [Georgia Tech Health Initiatives](#) site includes information on many stress-management services available on campus (e.g., yoga, mindfulness), as well as diet and lifestyle resources.
- Sometimes you might just need to talk to another graduate student who knows what you are going through. The [Peer Coaching Program](#) provides students with another way to receive

support with their academic, social, and other concerns. Students are matched with a fellow Tech student who has been extensively trained to navigate mental health conversations and who is knowledgeable about campus resources.

- Additional resources on campus that are there to assist graduate students include the [Women's Resource Center](#), the [LGBTQIA Resource Center](#) and the [Veteran's Resource Center](#).
- Put the Georgia Tech Police number in your phone (404-894-2500) to call for any safety concerns. Call 911 for emergencies.

All these links (and more!) are collect at one site: [GT United](#). **Please bookmark this site!** The bottom line: if you need help with anything, please ask! There are many resources available to ensure your Ph.D. experience is all you want it to be.

C. Policies on Harassment and Workplace Environment

The School of Physics strives at having a safe, respectful, and constructive workplace for all members of its community (faculty, researchers, students, and staff) where each individual is treated with respect and compassion. The School does not tolerate harassment, discrimination, intimidation or any behavior, either spoken or unspoken, that creates a negative or hurtful environment for any student. All graduate students must read and understand the Georgia Tech policies related to sexual harassment, sexual misconduct and workplace discrimination:

- Harassment: <http://www.policylibrary.gatech.edu/anti-harassment-policy> and <http://titleix.gatech.edu/anti-harassment-policy>
- Student sexual misconduct: <http://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-life/student-sexual-misconduct>

If any graduate student either witnesses or experiences any behavior from a faculty member, staff member, or another student (graduate or undergraduate) that causes them concern, please reach out to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies, the Chair, or any other faculty member the student feels comfortable speaking to.

Lastly, please be aware that the School of Physics prohibits romantic or sexual relationships between faculty or staff members and any person under their supervision. Note that graduate TAs are considered staff members.

II. Degrees and Programs of Study

A. Master of Science (MS)

The MS degree requires 30 credit hours of graduate-level course work. These hours must include the graduate courses PHYS 6101, 6103, 6104, 6105, 6106, and 6107 (see Table below) plus at least 6 hours of 8000-level Special Problem or Masters practicum research experience in Physics. Students may use one 4000 level physics course as a substitute for one graduate level course. PHYS 6110, Survey of Physics, may not be used for MS degree credit. A minimum grade point average of 2.7 is required and no more than 3 hours may be taken on a pass/fail basis. There is no language or Responsible Conduct of

Research (RCR) requirement. This degree usually takes 3 semesters of full time study to complete. The School does not provide financial support for MS students.

At the end of the Summer semester MS students give a 20-min presentation on their research project to a committee consisting of their research advisor plus two other School of Physics faculty members. The student will be assessed on the research skills acquired over the Summer and the quality of their presentation. The assessment forms are available from the Academic Office and here: [ms_research_assessment.pdf](#) and [ms_oral_presentation.pdf](#). These assessments are not used to pass or fail a student, but are used to provide constructive feedback to the student and to evaluate the effectiveness of the MS program. [Note: Ph.D. students who are obtaining the MS degree 'on-the-way' (see Sect. V.B below) do not need to give this presentation.]

During the semester preceding the semester when the MS degree is expected (i.e., the Spring semester for graduation in the Summer), a student must submit an [Online Application for Graduation](#).

B. Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

The Ph.D. degree requires successful completion of (1) a program of study in core and advanced physics courses; (2) a course in the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR); (3) a Thesis Proposal and a subsequent Proposal Exam; (4) a Minor course of study; and (5) a written Ph.D. thesis and a public defense of that thesis. There is no qualifying exam and no foreign language requirement. Georgia Tech requires that all graduate students maintain a 3.0 grade point average.

With the permission of the School's Associate Chair for Graduate Studies, a Ph.D. thesis may be written under the supervision of a Georgia Tech faculty member outside the School of Physics.

With the permission of the research supervisor and the School's Associate Chair for Graduate Studies, Ph.D. students may seek a concurrent MS degree from another School. If so, the courses taken for the MS may be counted to satisfy the Minor requirement.

During the semester preceding the semester when the Ph.D. degree is expected, students must submit an [Online Application for Graduation](#). See section V below.

[A Ph.D. student may also choose to obtain a MS in Physics 'along-the-way' after they have obtained the required number of credits (typically after the 1st summer in the program). See Sect. V.B below. As long as the MS requirements are satisfied, the MS can be awarded whether or not the Ph.D. is completed. The end-of-first-summer presentation is not required for Ph.D. students to obtain the MS degree.]

1. Program of Study

First-year students are required to take the core physics courses indicated in the Table below. Students are expected to earn course grades of A, B, or P (pass) in both semesters. One course grade of C is permitted in either the first or second semester (not both). Students who earn two or more grades of C or any number of D or F grades may not continue in a Ph.D. program without the explicit permission of the School's Graduate Committee; however, if they wish, these students will be allowed to complete a summer Special Problems project in order to earn the MS degree.

Incoming Ph.D. students demonstrate their grasp of the core principles of physics by taking the courses indicated in the Table below.

Fall	Spring	Summer
PHYS 6101: CM I (3 LG)	PHYS 6104: EM II (3 LG)	PHYS 8901: Special Problems (9 LG)
PHYS 6103: EM I (3 LG)	PHYS 6106: QM II (3 LG)	
PHYS 6105: QM I (3 LG)	PHYS 6107: SM I (3 LG)	
PHYS 6124: MM (3 P/F)	PHYS 8901: Special Problems (3 P/F)	

Note that the Math Methods (MM) and Spring Special Problem courses are taken on a pass/fail (P/F) basis. If a student earns an Unsatisfactory grade in either of these courses, they must meet with the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies within a week of the release of final grades. The Summer Special Problem course and the other core courses **must** be taken on a letter grade (LG) basis.

Special Problem (PHYS 8901) is a 3-hour course arranged with an individual faculty member. Registration requires the permission of the professor. The Special Problem should be viewed as a serious opportunity to begin Ph.D. research with a faculty member. If, at mid-term, either the student or the professor concludes that a partnership toward an eventual Ph.D. is unlikely, the student should find another professor with whom to explore Ph.D. research for the second half of the semester. Students may not register for more than one Special Problem per semester.

Unless explicit permission is granted by the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies, the first (Spring) Special Problem must be arranged with a regular physics faculty member (not an adjunct faculty member in another School). Adjunct faculty members may serve as Special Problem supervisors during subsequent semesters.

Beyond the core courses, students are required to earn a C or better in two (2) advanced physics courses (6000, 7000 or 8000 level) at some point before they graduate. Students must seek the permission of the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies to register for more than one course outside the School of Physics each semester.

Students continue registering for Special Problem (PHYS 8901) until they are admitted to candidacy following the Proposal Exam. After passing the Proposal Exam (described below), students should register for Doctoral Thesis (9000) hours with their supervisor rather than Special Problems (8901) hours.

	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
Fall	Core Courses CETL 8000 PH1: Physics TA Preparation PHYS 8002: Seminar & RCR Training	Thesis Research Minor Course or Advanced Physics Course (optional)	Thesis Research Minor Course or Advanced Physics Course (optional)

	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
Spring	Core Courses Special Problem Research	Thesis Research Minor Course or Advanced Physics Course (optional)	Thesis Research Minor Course or Advanced Physics Course (optional)
Summer	Special Problem Research	Thesis Research	Thesis Research Thesis Proposal and Proposal Exam due for ALL Ph.D. Students

2. Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Training

All doctoral students at Georgia Tech are required to complete a two-step [RCR training](#) process.

- The first step is an [online training course](#) that must be completed within 90 days of a student starting the Ph.D. program.
- The second step is an in-person training course, PHYS 8002, that is completed during the first Fall semester. This 2-credit hour course is taken on a pass/fail basis, and all students must pass the course to receive the RCR credit. Any student who receives an unsatisfactory grade in PHYS 8002 must complete the [PHIL 6000](#) course during their first summer.

Students are not able to be admitted to candidacy without completing the RCR courses.

3. Minor Course of Study

Georgia Tech requires all Ph.D. students to complete 9 hours of graduate-level courses taken on a letter grade (LG) basis (more information can be found [here](#)). Students can satisfy this requirement by taking three 3-credit courses from a School other than Physics, e.g., Mathematics, Electrical & Computer Engineering, Computer Science, etc. The 3 courses do not have to be all from the same School, but they should at least be loosely connected to a single intellectual topic. Students may also satisfy this requirement inside the School of Physics as long as none of the three courses is a specialty course in the subject area of the thesis research. For example, condensed matter students cannot use the courses Condensed Matter I and Condensed Matter II to help satisfy the Institute Minor requirement. However, these two courses could be used by a condensed matter student to satisfy the School's advanced course requirement (see Section II.B.1 above).

Ideally, courses for the Doctoral Minor should be at the 6000-level and above, but certain 4000-level courses may be taken for the Minor if they are needed as prerequisites for the graduate courses. Also, graduate courses taken at another institution can be used toward the Minor requirement.

4. Thesis Proposal & Proposal Exam - Admission to Candidacy

By the **end of the third summer** at Georgia Tech, every physics Ph.D. student must seek admission to candidacy by presenting a 10-20 page Proposal to a Thesis Proposal Committee (TPC) composed of their primary research supervisor and at least two (2) other Georgia Tech faculty members. Every student is

required to defend their Proposal to their TPC in the form of a 20-30 minute oral presentation which is then followed by a Proposal Exam. Students who do not complete their Thesis Proposal and Proposal Exam by the end of their third summer will be ineligible for School of Physics student awards, including the travel grants described in Sect. IV.E.1. If students think they have a legitimate reason that their Thesis Proposal will be late, they should discuss it with the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies as soon as possible.

The written Thesis Proposal should contain (1) a review of the literature of their field; (2) a discussion of how the proposed research fits into that field; (3) a summary of preliminary results, and (4) a plan for completion of the thesis research. The completed proposal should be send to the TPC no later than **one week** before the Proposal Exam. TPC members have the right to reject poorly-prepared proposals, or to ask for a delay for the Proposal Exam if they are not given enough time to carefully read the proposal. Below are some examples from previous years.

- Gregory Richards (2014): [Download](#)
- Zhe Guang (2014): [Download](#)
- Nzmi Burak Budanur (2015): [Download](#)

During the Proposal Exam each TPC member is expected to ask questions designed to probe the students' understanding of their proposed research and overall knowledge of their research area (assessed with this form: [Research Assessment](#), also available from the Academic Office). It is the responsibility of the TPC to decide if the student passes or fails the Proposal Exam, and the assessment forms should have scores commensurate with this judgment. A student who passes is formally admitted to Ph.D. candidacy, as the Proposal Exam satisfies Georgia Tech's comprehensive exam requirement. A student who fails the Proposal Exam must rewrite his/her Thesis Proposal as directed by the TPC, and repeat the oral presentation & Proposal Exam within two semesters of the initial attempt (including the summer session).

The Thesis Proposal and Proposal Exam is also used as a 'mid-point' chance to assess students' technical writing and oral presentation skills. It is the responsibility of the Ph.D. student to supply each member of the TPC with all three assessment forms (available from the Academic Office or here: [Research Assessment](#), [Technical Writing Assessment](#), [Oral Assessment](#)) and ask one member of the TPC (not the Thesis supervisor) to collect all the completed forms and return them to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies. These assessments are used to provide constructive feedback to the Ph.D. student and to help evaluate the effectiveness of the Ph.D. program.

After passing the Proposal Exam, it is also the responsibility of the Ph.D. student to obtain the signature of each TPC member on the [Request for Admission to PhD Candidacy](#) form (also available from the Academic Office) and then bring the completed form to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies.

5. Post Thesis Proposal Annual Review

In the year after presenting the Thesis Proposal and passing the Proposal Exam, students will recruit their full Thesis Exam Committee (TEC). The TEC is composed of the Thesis Proposal Committee supplemented by no less than 2 persons, including one faculty member from an academic unit other

than Physics. Students should inform the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies of the membership of their TEC once it is completed.

Students will then meet with at least 3-4 faculty members from their TEC for a short check-in discussion at least once a year until graduation, beginning in the year after their thesis proposal. These discussions should be low-key meetings between the student and the committee members and should nominally consist of

- No written document.
- A presentation of roughly 5-10 slides describing the student's progress over their last year and their proposed timeline for the following year, including experiments, paper/thesis writing, and job searches
- The discussion should focus on identifying any research-related problems or roadblocks, including possible solutions, and confirming the presented timeline. It will also be appropriate for the committee and the student to talk about job searches and career development during these meetings.

Deviations from this format are allowed if they are agreed upon by the student and advisor prior to two weeks before the scheduled meeting. If the committee determines it is necessary, more frequent meetings are also allowed.

Ideally, the meetings will occur as face-to-face discussions between the student and the TEC members, but remote connections are allowed if scheduling a face-to-face discussion in one room becomes too challenging.

After the meeting, one member of the committee (not the advisor) will send a short, 1-paragraph email to the Graduate Chair (cc'd to the student) summarizing the outcome of the meetings. The dates of the meetings will be recorded in the student's record and the email archived.

6. Ph.D. Thesis

This requirement is met when a student has (i) written a dissertation which summarizes their original research and (ii) presented a public, oral defense of the student's dissertation to the TEC.

Georgia Tech has provided an excellent manual on the policies and procedures for producing and submitting your thesis (please download and read it [here](#)). Students should also be aware of the submission [deadlines](#) that must be met in order to meet their desired graduation date.

The Thesis Defense is used to assess students' final performance in research, writing and oral presentation skills. It is the culmination of a student's time at Georgia Tech, and a chance to show the TEC everything the student has accomplished. The dissertation should therefore be a high-quality publication-worthy document at the time of the defense. It should also be given to the TEC with enough time for each TEC member to read it completely and carefully (a minimum of **2 weeks** before the defense date). TEC members have the right to reject poorly-prepared dissertations, or to ask for delays in the defense date if they are not given enough time to carefully read the thesis.

Finishing Ph.D. students must also supply each member of the TEC with these three assessment forms (available from the Academic Office or here: [Research Assessment](#), [Technical Writing Assessment](#), [Oral](#)

[Assessment](#)). The first two, on research and writing, should be provided simultaneously with their thesis, and the last one (on presentation skills) can be brought to the defense. Following the defense one member of the TEC (not the Thesis supervisor) should collect all the completed forms and return them to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies. These assessments are used to provide constructive feedback to the Ph.D. student and to help evaluate the effectiveness of the Ph.D. program.

III. Stipend, Duties, Registration & Fees

A. Stipend Support

The School provides financial support to Ph.D. students in the form of Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA) and Graduate Research Assistantships (GRA). A student's support in the first year is contingent on the academic performance described in Section II.B.1 above. Assuming no academic problems, every student is guaranteed five semesters of support as a GTA paid by the School. Typically, these are the first five semesters in residence, whereupon the student converts to a GRA paid by the research funds of the Ph.D. supervisor. However, some supervisors may prefer to begin GRA support earlier and make use of what remains of the five semesters of TA support later.

To guarantee a student's salary, every GTA and GRA must register for at least 12 credit hours. Of these, at least 9 hours must be taken on a letter grade or pass/fail basis. The remainder should be PHYS 8997 (GTA) or PHYS 8998 (GRA) taken on an audit basis.

B. Assistantship Duties

A GTA works for the School for 10-14 hours/week. a student may be asked to (a) supervise undergraduate laboratories, (b) proctor examinations, (c) grade homework, or (d) tutor undergraduates. This is a serious job. If a student does not perform the tasks asked of him/her, the School will not hesitate to reduce or discontinue a student's financial support.

To help students prepare for their GTA duties, all first-year students register for CETL 8000 PH, "Physics GTA Preparation", a one-credit pass/fail course during the Fall semester (see Table above). This course prepares first-year Ph.D. students for their teaching responsibilities through the integration of pedagogy, physics, and professional development strategies. Class activities use research-based teaching practices to help students build a foundation for learner-centered teaching. Emphasis is given to development of transferable skills that students can use in their future careers inside and outside of the classroom.

A GRA works for an individual professor. A student's duties are to conduct research toward a student's Ph.D.

GRA salaries are paid from the research grants of individual professors. Therefore, once a student is committed to a professor for a student's Ph.D., a student must ask him/her before registering each semester to learn whether he or she will be a GRA or a GTA for the coming semester.

C. Registration

Not long after mid-term every semester, Phase I registration opens for the next semester. It last two weeks. Phase II registration opens just before each semester begins. It also lasts two weeks. **Plan to register during Phase I.** Note: even if a student registers during Phase I, he/she does not need to pay the

registration fee until the beginning of Phase II. During Phase I in the Spring, students can register for both Summer and Fall classes. The registration web site is <https://oscar.gatech.edu>.

Once past the first year courses, the majority of students register in (i) a research course under their advisor [either PHYS 8901 or PHYS 9000 depending on if they have passed their Proposal Exam] for a minimum of 9 hours on a P/F basis, (ii) an assistantship course [either PHYS 8997 or PHYS 8998] for 3 hours on an audit basis, and, potentially, (iii) a course to satisfy their Doctoral Minor or advanced physics course requirements (3 hours on a Letter Grade basis). Exceptions to this standard should be discussed with the Graduate Coordinator well ahead of the registration deadlines.

1. Final Semester Registration Options

Students that are completing their Ph.D. may find that the timing of their defense, graduation, and start of their subsequent employment leads to an ambiguity in how they should register for their final semester at Georgia Tech. There are, in general, three options (see Pages 5-6 of the [Thesis Manual](#) for more details and rules).

- Register as normal (i.e., PHYS 9000 & PHYS 8997/8). This works fine if the final version of your thesis is submitted in time for graduation in your last semester (see the [deadlines](#)), and there are no funding limitations.
- The 1-credit hour option. Students in their graduating semester can register for only 1 hour of PHYS 9000. Such students are, of course, not full-time and will therefore not receive a tuition waiver or be able to be paid as a GTA or GRA. These students must therefore pay the 1-hr of tuition and fees (~\$1800/in-state and ~\$2400/out-of-state). Students can be hired as a Graduate Assistant (GA) by their advisor and paid hourly. [**NOTE: Students who are US citizens are ineligible for [student health insurance](#) if they are registered for less than 4 credit hours. Such students should contact STAMPS Health Services and consider their options before registering for 1-credit hour.**] Students can use the 1-credit hour option only once while at Georgia Tech.
- Enrollment Waiver. This is for students who missed the final submission deadline for their target graduating semester, but have successfully defended, submitted their thesis, and are ready to start their job. They therefore have to stay 'on the books' at Georgia Tech to graduate the following semester, even though they may not ever be on campus during the semester. The Enrollment Waiver allows a student to stay 'on the books' and not register for any hours or pay any money. To use the Enrollment Waiver, download and complete the [form](#), and then submit it to the Office of Graduate Studies before the deadline. Note that all thesis-related forms must be completed and submitted for the Enrollment Waiver to be approved.

If none of these seem to fit, students should discuss their case with the Registrar's Office.

D. Fees

GTA and GRA students must pay a fee to register for either the Fall or Spring semesters. Depending on a student's residency status (Georgia resident or non-resident) MS and Ph.D. students without any financial support pay a fee that depends on the number of hours registered. The complete fee schedule is posted at <http://www.bursar.gatech.edu>. Students can pay on-line or in person at the Office of the Bursar. **Pay student fees on time to avoid late charges!**

E. Travel Reimbursements

As part of their training, graduate students may need to travel to destinations around the world. This travel is often supported through the grants of the student's advisor, or through one of the various student travel awards offered on campus (see IV.E below). Frequently, the student is reimbursed for travel expenses after completion of the trip. To ensure a smooth reimbursement process, students should

- talk to the staff in the School of Physics Finance Office (Howey N109) about reimbursement policies and procedures **before** making any travel arrangements
- read and be aware of Georgia Tech's [travel policies](#), including common issues that arise (e.g., sharing hotel rooms, missing receipts).

If a student has any questions about what may or may not be reimbursable (e.g., stays in Air B&Bs are not reimbursable), they should speak to the Finance Office before they travel.

IV. Facilities

A. E-Mail & Telephones

The School and the Institute communicates with students through an e-mail account that is assigned to each student. **It is essential that a student activate this account and check it every day.** Students can do this at <http://mail.gatech.edu> or with your favorite email client.

We do not provide phones in student offices. Students may use the phones in the main office for emergency outgoing calls. However, the front office does not pass on telephone messages to students. Students actively engaged in research may have access to phones in the research space of their advisors. If so, outgoing calls must be restricted to professional matters. A phone for local calls is located adjacent to the mail room.

B. Mailboxes

Students have personal mailboxes in room W101. Check it every day. The mailing address is:

School of Physics
Georgia Institute of Technology
Atlanta, GA 30332-0430

C. Office Space

Students will be assigned a desk somewhere in the School. Typically, students share an office with several other students. Later, they may move to a desk given to them by a thesis advisor.

D. Room Access

A student's Buzz Card opens the exterior doors of the Howey Physics Building. A student's key or Buzz Card opens a student's office, the mailroom, the computer cluster (S021), and two rooms on the second floor (common room, library). Books and journals from the library can be removed for photocopying only.

E. Travel Funds

I. Graduate Student Travel Awards

The Graduate Committee of the School of Physics invites graduate students to submit proposals to assist with upcoming professional travel to conferences and workshops. The awards are funded by the Amelio Endowment and the Weatherly Fund. Support will typically be up to \$500 for a domestic trip and up to \$1000 for an international trip. Larger amounts are possible (to support, e.g., attendance at summer schools), but would require additional justification and would depend on the availability of funds. The award will be dispersed as a reimbursement to the student after his or her return to campus and turning in receipts to the Financial Office (see reimbursement information in III.E). Only Ph.D. students in good standing are eligible for the Awards. That is, all students with overdue Thesis Proposals or Annual Reviews will not be considered for Travel Awards.

To be eligible for the award, the student must

- have an accepted abstract for either a talk or a poster at the conference or workshop (this can be omitted if there are no student presentations at the event -- this must be confirmed by the student's advisor)
- submit a 1-page justification for the travel, endorsed via email by their advisor. The student's name and their advisor's name should be listed in the proposal.
- submit a travel budget including the estimated costs of transportation, hotel, registration, per diem, etc.
- submit information on other sources of funding that have been obtained or are being sought

The proposal should be sent as a single PDF file by email to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies. The student's name must appear in the filename.

Depending on the availability of funds, submitted proposals will be discussed by the Graduate Committee on a quarterly basis and successful proposers will be notified shortly thereafter. The deadlines will be a subset of Feb 1, May 1, Aug 1, and Nov 1. If a competition is being held, a call for proposals will be sent out a month before the deadline. *Within 10 days of returning from the trip, the student must provide to the Graduate Committee a 1 paragraph conference summary detailing the professional development gained on the trip.*

A graduate student can only win a Travel Award once each calendar year.

Rare exceptions to the above guidelines must be approved by the full Graduate Committee.

II. SGA Funds

The Graduate Student Senate also has a fund to support professional travel. Apply directly to them through the student center ([click here](#))

III. College of Science Doctoral Student Travel Supplement

The College of Science also provides some funds to supplement Ph.D. students to travel to present work at conferences. Download the [application form](#) and follow the instructions. Note that the student needs to have already obtained funds from the School and/or the SGA prior to applying to the College.

F. Security

Our campus is in an urban environment. Take special care if walking in the adjacent neighborhoods after dark. Security on the campus and in our building is very good. We need students help to keep it that way. All persons who have reason to be in this building at night or on weekends have a key. Therefore, there is never any reason to let a person in. Never prop open a door to allow people to enter. Always lock office doors. Anyone who steals the private property of another person (or of the School itself) will be dismissed from the program. If a student ever finds unauthorized persons in the building, open doors, or unusual activities, report them to the campus Police (Ext 2500) immediately.

GTA's are given a key and a keypad entry code for the undergraduate laboratories. **Be sure to use the code when unlocking these rooms.** If a student does not, an alarm sounds in the campus police station. This summons the police to the laboratory and there may be unpleasant consequences for a student.

V. Forms

There is a certain amount of paperwork necessary to report a student's status and progress to the Graduate Office. Please check with the Academic Office (W111) or the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies at each stage to ensure that the necessary documents have been forwarded to the Institute Graduate Office. Many of the forms needed during the graduate program can be found [here](#). Students should also monitor their progress toward their degree through regular checking of [Degreeworks](#).

A. MS Degree

Refer to Section II.A above and the Institute's [Online Application for Graduation](#) (OAG).

B. MS Degree 'on the way' for Ph.D. Students

Ph.D. students can obtain the Physics MS degree anytime after their first summer. To do this

- Complete the [Graduate Level Change](#) form. Fill out the top part of the form, select 'Add A Master's Degree Level' and bring the form to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies. Submit this form to the registrar **before** Phase I registration of the semester preceding the semester in which a student expects the degree. This allows time to correct any unfulfilled requirements identified by the Graduate Office or Registrar.
- During the semester preceding the semester when the MS degree is expected, a student must submit an [Online Application for Graduation](#).

Note that Ph.D. students are not required to give the 'end-of-first-summer' presentation to obtain the MS degree. Finally, please be aware that students with a MS degree are ineligible to apply for a [NSF GRF](#). Therefore, students who are planning on submitting a GRF proposal in their 2nd year should wait to obtain their Georgia Tech MS degree until after the GRF deadline.

C. Ph.D. Degree

Refer to Section II.B above. After the Thesis Proposal Committee has approved a Thesis Proposal and the student has passed the Proposal Exam, it is the responsibility of the student to return to the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies the completed "[Request for Admission to Ph.D. Candidacy](#)" form (signed by the Thesis Committee members). After a student completes his/her Institute Minor requirements, inform the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies and make sure he/she advises the Graduate Office of this fact. Refer to the Institute's [Online Application for Graduation \(OAG\)](#) and submit a petition to graduate to the registrar **before** Phase I registration of the semester preceding the semester in which a student expects the degree. This allows time to correct any unfulfilled requirements identified by the Graduate Office. A useful list of deadlines for submitting the thesis to the Graduate Office is found [here](#). A list of documents required by the Graduate Office when submitting a Ph.D. thesis can be found [here](#) or in the [Thesis Manual](#).