University of Wyoming
Physics & Astronomy
Graduate Student Handbook

Approved by the faculty
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Revision History

2026 Spring changes

- *Changed 2nd person to 3rd person throughout*
- *Removed details of the written exam and referred the reader to the appendix in the department bylaws where these details will reside*
- *Removed appendix B on the graduate faculty, as it is constantly changing and not relevant to this document*
- *Removed information about the Master of Science in Teaching (obsolete program)*
- *Removed recommendations to take independent study and instead always take 5980 Dissertation research.*

2026 October minor change

- *Small revision to example student timeline so that Condensed Matter and Astrophysics timelines are the same; remove number of papers expected; specify defend dissertation proposal by end of year three*

This handbook is intended as a supplement to the UW Graduate Student Regulations and Policies document available under the appropriate section of the UW Course Catalog This document summarizes Physics & Astronomy graduate degree requirements and answers frequently asked questions about student goals and student-faculty relations. Although every effort has been made to maintain accuracy, you should always defer to the UW Graduate Student Regulations and Policies in the event of any conflict with that document.

The M.S. and PhD programs in Physics & Astronomy are designed primarily to train individuals for careers in modern physics, astrophysics, or related research. Increasingly, PhDs in the physical sciences are pursuing a broader range of careers, bringing their technical knowledge as well as their skills, experience in research, and problem-solving in public and private sector careers. All of these careers are very demanding and competitive. Hence, independent of what career path the student follows, the student's principal goal

throughout the student's graduate career should be to learn and get first-hand experience with the broad range of tools of a research scientist.

For many scientists, teaching is a critical component of their job. In the Physics & Astronomy program, most students will receive training and experience in teaching. There are also a growing number of opportunities for enhancing this training and documenting the student's experience for help in the student's future employment.

This handbook should serve as a handy reference guide, and a place to start. However, it cannot replace the invaluable information the student can obtain by talking with the student's advisor, other faculty members, or other students. This handbook is also an evolving document.

1.0 Graduate Students and Faculty - Mutual Expectations

The purpose of this section is to provide graduate students with an idea of what is expected of them and also what they might reasonably expect from the faculty. In general terms, the faculty expect all graduate students to be working hard and making no less than "satisfactory progress", as described further below, toward their intended degree. Graduate students can reasonably expect the faculty to provide them with instruction, advice, and access to resources which allow them to make reasonable progress.

Due to the highly competitive nature of the job market in astronomy and physics, there are multiple, sometimes competing Department goals for the graduate program. While not all of our graduates proceed to employment in physics or astronomy, all of the goals of our program are designed to best prepare a graduate student for such a career. This is based, in part, on the expectation that all entering graduate students have the long-range goal of a career in physics or astronomy. However, it is also the aim of the faculty to help the graduate students develop skills which are "transferable" (e.g., problem solving skills, communication skills, computing expertise, etc.) with the goal to enhance their prospects for future employment, regardless of field.

1.1 What is "Satisfactory Progress"?

The guidelines and requirements spelled out in Section 2 describe the timelines for various goals to be accomplished. Graduate students should be familiar with these. The Graduate Faculty will conduct an Annual Review each spring to review the progress of each graduate student. Before this review, all graduate students submit a self-evaluation to the **Director of Graduate Studies** (DGS, see the next section). The DGS is then responsible for providing to each graduate student a short written summary of student progress relative to

expectations based on input from the advisor and other faculty. This should not replace continuing discussions between faculty and advisees concerning the students' progress. Any questions should be directed to the student's adviser and/or the DGS. Failing to make satisfactory progress according to program milestones, or failing to carry out one's teaching responsibilities may be grounds for loss of graduate assistantship support.

Satisfactory progress entails consistent progress in coursework and research toward the PhD degree. The UW Graduate Student Regulations and Policies document is the final authority on rules and regulations. Students are responsible for knowing its contents, which are not listed in detail here. At a minimum, the University requires that students maintain a 3.0 GPA at all times. Students with a GPA below 3.0 will be placed on probation. If a Physics & Astronomy graduate student receives a grade of ` C' or lower in a particular course, the student's committee can require the student to retake and pass that course. If after one semester on probation a student fails to raise their GPA to 3.0 or higher, the student is placed on suspension. In order for a student on suspension to register for classes, the Graduate School must receive a letter from the Department Head requesting permission for the student to register, otherwise the student is not allowed to continue in the program. In Physics & Astronomy, the faculty as a whole shall decide whether the student shall be allowed to continue in the program and make a recommendation to the department head.

Satisfactory progress also entails continuous enrollment. If, for personal reasons, it becomes necessary for a student to temporarily discontinue graduate study for longer than one semester, a petition for a ` ` leave of absence'' should be filed with the graduate school after consultation with the DGS and Department Head.

At a broader level, what constitutes ` ` satisfactory progress'' depends on the goals of the individual graduate student and can be far more complex than the single characterization of an MS or PhD degree. If eventual employment as a research scientist is the desired goal (as is often assumed), the job market can be much more demanding than the formal university requirements for a PhD (successful post-doctoral candidates generally have research accomplishments in addition to their required thesis work). Thus, it is reasonable for the graduate students to discuss their goals with faculty members and ask them for informal evaluations not only on the progress of their research, but also on their employment prospects.

1.2 The Faculty Roles

Faculty members have many different responsibilities for the graduate program; these fall within three main categories. For the most part, it is the faculty's responsibility to provide access to first-rate physical resources for learning and research. Whether this is in the form of observing time on the world's best telescopes, in-house laboratories, state-of-the-art computing facilities, library facilities, or adequate office space, this is where the faculty spend a great deal of effort. Clearly, it is in the best interest of the graduate students to help in this effort, when possible. It is also the faculty's responsibility to provide a curriculum which includes a large range of exposure to fundamental concepts, areas of important current research, and experiences with methods of research and problem solving.

Finally, it is the faculty's responsibility to provide feedback to the student. Formally, this is achieved through the *Spring Annual Review*. Here all students' progress is reviewed and goals are identified for the next year (i.e., ``satisfactory progress'' is defined). Graduate students participate directly in this evaluation by submitting a self-evaluation to the DGS (the date will be designated by the DGS); senior graduate students who have passed the Preliminary Exam will additionally present progress on their dissertation. The self-evaluation consists of answering several questions which serve as an overview of the last year's progress (see Appendix A). It is not expected that all graduate students will have accomplishments in every category, (especially true for students in their first year), but the evaluation should be seen as a list of what types of accomplishments the faculty are looking for. This self-evaluation also allows the graduate student an opportunity to define what they believe are reasonable goals for the next year. Since satisfactory progress is a pre-requisite for Departmental employment, the graduate student's qualification for departmental support is part of this review process.

For first and second-year graduate students, some feedback is also available in the form of grades in graduate course work. However, graduate students should be aware that grades of A and B are common in graduate courses; a grade of C should be considered unsatisfactory. To be competitive for fellowships later on, students usually need a GPA of no less than 3.5.

To get the most out of graduate school, graduate students need to go beyond these formal feedback mechanisms, and to work with their faculty advisor(s) to establish well-defined goals and evaluate progress on a regular basis. Getting feedback on academic, technical, communications, and research skills are all of value for the student. Since, by definition, the results of research are unpredictable, a frequent review of progress and the re-evaluation of goals in this area is critical. Informal feedback from other faculty members,

and even from fellow students, can help a student identify strengths and areas that need improvement. The graduate students can also look to the faculty for evaluation of their work and professional development. When possible, the faculty attempt to provide the financial support necessary for this progress.

2.0 Formal Requirements for PhD

Both the Physics & Astronomy Department and the University have formal requirements for completion of the PhD Graduate students are responsible for being familiar with and completing both of these sets of requirements.

The department admits students to two degree programs: the PhD in physics and the Master's of Science in Physics. Students in the physics PhD program may choose to specialize either in physics (*physics-track*) or astronomy (*astronomy-track*). Although the degree requirements are very similar, this choice will determine which set of physics core courses are required, which research advisor the student may elect to work with, and what type of research the student's dissertation will involve.

2.1 Registration and Student Status

For many reasons, such as deferment of student loans, eligibility for University employment, health benefits, access to University facilities, it is important for graduate students to maintain their full-time registration. Students must register each semester. The Graduate School requires continuous enrollment, excluding summer session, for a minimum of one credit. The student must register for at least nine credits per semester to be considered a full-time student unless the optional student fee package petition form is used. Doctoral candidates taking less than 9 credits must fill out a petition with the graduate school to have their fees package paid by the university. Doctoral candidates may utilize this optional fee package in their last 2 semesters (but it may be extended to a 3rd semester). Students needing one additional credit to reach nine hours (full-time status) should typically take Dissertation Research PHYS/ASTR5980 for one credit on an S/U basis. To earn credit, regular weekly participation in a journal club shall be expected, or suitable other research work by prior arrangement with a member of the faculty.

Advising: All students are expected to register for classes at least two weeks before the start of a semester after having obtained the approval of the appropriate Director of Graduate Studies or dissertation advisor.

2.2 Tuition

Students on TA or RA appointments of at least 45% get tuition waivers. For students who must pay, the tuition structure can be complicated; the student should obtain the official policies from the Graduate School in Knight Hall.

2.3 General University & Department Requirements

Program of Study: Each student must submit a **Program of Study** to the Registrar's Office no later than the beginning of the student's second year. If a student enrolled in the PhD program wishes to obtain an optional M.S. degree, they must file a Program of Study opting for a "dual" degree program for both a Master's and a PhD Forms are available at the UW web page for graduate student forms.

For a list of forms and timelines to file them, see
http://physics.uwyo.edu/~chip/grads/gradforms.html

- **Courses**: UW requires at least 72 credits, with at most 12 credits at the 4000 level. At least 42 of these must be in formal course work, with a ` B' (3.0) average or better. Independent study 5860 credit counts as formal course work. The remaining 30 credits are typically for doing PHYS/ASTR 5980 for dissertation research. The Department requires 30 credits of 5980. **Research Credits**: Plan A Master's students must take 26 credits of coursework and four credits of 5960 (Thesis Research). There are no research credit requirements for Plan B Master's students, but 30 hours of coursework are required. **Written Examination:** The faculty are committed to promoting the professional development and success of each student by ensuring a solid background in physics and astronomy through the opportunity to synthesize this material in preparation for a career as a practicing scientist. The primary purpose of the exam is to help students synthesize material from the core of the physics and astronomy curriculum. The exam will cover general undergraduate physics as defined by the exam committee, concentrating on, but not limited to: classical mechanics, electricity & magnetism, quantum mechanics and thermodynamics. The exam will be constructed by a committee of faculty assembled specifically to construct the exam. Details about exam construction and administration are found in an appendix of the department bylaws and are available from the Director of Graduate Studies.

- **The Preliminary Exam:** The University requires a **Preliminary Exam** to candidacy sometime after at least 30 hours of coursework. This Preliminary Exam will be conducted by a committee of graduate faculty. At least three and not more than four must be from the student's major area. At least one member must be from

outside the major department. An additional member from outside the university may be appointed. It is the student's responsibility to assemble this committee, with guidance from the DGS or their advisor. The Department expects that this committee will be assembled at the time the student completes the **Program of Study**. The **Preliminary Exam** will consist of an oral defense of the **Dissertation Proposal** and related physics. Students **are** expected to take the Preliminary Exam by the end of the third year. The first portion of the exam will be an open presentation by the student. The second portion of the exam will be a closed question-and-answer session involving the student and the committee. The **Dissertation Proposal** shall be presented to committee members in written form at least a week before the **Preliminary Exam**. The proposal has no specific page requirements, but it should include a description of the status of the field that illustrates the student's knowledge of the literature, a motivation for the work to be performed, a description of the methods to be used in sufficient detail to illustrate the student's readiness to undertake the project, datasets to be used to acquired, and intended funding mechanisms for the student. It should be of a length commensurate with a journal article. Examples from recent students are available. Upon successful completion of the **Preliminary Exam** the student's committee will sign the form advancing the student to official PhD candidate status. The committee may choose to pass a student unconditionally or conditionally. Such conditions may require the student to make up perceived deficiencies either in their physics background or research performance. The committee may also fail the candidate. In such a case, a student may complete the degree requirements for a Master's (M.S.) in Physics but must leave the program, generally by the following summer.

- **Dissertation:** The most significant requirement is the completion of original scientific research under the direction of a faculty member. It is up to the student to initiate contact with a faculty member to arrange a suitable dissertation project. Sometimes a student develops an interest in an area of research not directly performed by a faculty member in the department or finds an opportunity at a national facility. In these cases, it may be in the student's best interest to finish the student's thesis *in absentia* so the student can directly work with a scientist at another institution or use the equipment and expertise located at a research institute. In any case, the completed written dissertation must be orally defended before the committee at the **Final Examination**, in accordance with Graduate School standards. The Department requires a public presentation of the dissertation results, followed by a private, closed-door period with the committee.

Upon successful defense of the dissertation, the committee will recommend that the University confer the PhD

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2.4 Courses for Astronomy-Track PhD Students.

The following courses are required:

ASTR 5150 Astronomical Techniques (4)
ASTR 5420 Stellar Structure and Evolution (4)
ASTR 5460 Cosmology (4)
ASTR 5470 Interstellar Medium and Diffuse Matter (4)
ASTR 5465 Galaxies (4)

Two of the following physics courses must be taken:

PHYS 5310 Quantum Theory I (4)
PHYS 5410 Electromagnetic Theory I (4)
PHYS 5510 Statistical Mechanics (4)

Elective courses:

ASTR 5160 Data Mining in Large Astronomical Surveys (4)
ASTR 5430 Radiative Processes & Stellar Atmospheres (4)
ASTR 5440 Stars & the Milky Way (4)
ASTR 5480 Planetary Astronomy (4)
ASTR 5490 Planets and Their Stars (4)
ASTR 5870 Special Topics in Astrophysics (3)
GRAD 5910 College Teaching (3)

2.5 Courses for Physics-Track PhD Students

The following courses are required:

PHYS 5310 Quantum Theory I (4)
PHYS 5410 Electromagnetic Theory I (4)
PHYS 5510 Statistical Mechanics (4)
PHYS 5720 Advanced Solid State (3)
PHYS 5750 Optical Properties of Solids (4)
PHYS 5730 Condensed Matter Magnetism (4)
PHYS 5740 Transport Properties of Solids

A minimum of 10 credit hours must be taken from the following electives:

PHYS 5110 Methods of Theoretical Physics I (4)
PHYS 5120 Methods of Theoretical Physics II (4)
PHYS 5130 Ultrafast Science and Spectroscopy (4)
PHYS 5210 Classical Mechanics I (4)
PHYS 5220 Classical Mechanics II (4)
PHYS 5320 Quantum Theory II (4)
PHYS 5550 Advanced Statistical Mechanics (3)
PHYS 5770 Nanotechnology: Nanophysics and Nanosystems (4)
PHYS 5780 Modern Computational Methods in Solids (4)
PHYS 5820 Plasma Physics (4)
PHYS 5830 Physics and Chemistry of Solar Cells (4)
PHYS 5840 Experimental Methods (4)
PHYS 5870 Special Topics: Physics of Semiconductors and Electronic Devices (4)
GEOL 5200 Special Topics: Applied SEM (1)
CHEM 5150 Special Topics: Nanotechnology (1)
CHEM 5100 Special Topics: Applied TEM (1)
CHEM 5500 Special Topics: Physical Chemistry-Surface Science and Catalysis (3)
CHEM 5560 Molecular Modeling (3)
GRAD 5910 College Teaching (3)

3.0 Sample Astronomy-Track Graduate Student Timeline

The following timeline assumes a student with full undergraduate preparation. Some students may elect to take certain 4000-level courses in the first year as additional preparation. These students will register for ASTR courses but will generally delay 5000-level PHYS courses for one year. Items in **bold font** are required activities. *Items in italic font* are suggested benchmarks for progression through the program.

<u>Year 1</u>

Fall

- 2-3 graduate courses, up to 12 credits
- PHYS/ASTR 5980 as needed to get up to a total of 9 credits

Spring

- take Written Exam in January
- 2-3 graduate courses totaling at least 9 credits, up to 12 credits

Summer:

- PHYS/ASTR 5980 1 cr
- Start a research project with a faculty member, if not already started

<u>Year 2</u>

Fall

- 2-3 graduate courses, up to 12 credits
- PHYS/ASTR 5980 as needed to get up to a total of 9 credits

Spring

- take Written Exam in January (if needed for second try)
- 2-3 graduate courses totaling at least 9 credits
- Select major advisor, not done already
- File forms: Committee Membership; Program of Study
- *File forms for M.S. degree (recommended; requires possible change of program to dual degree, new MS committee assignment, MS program of study, results of final MS examination)*

Summer

- PHYS/ASTR 5980 1 cr
- Summer research

<u>Year 3</u>

Fall

- Dissertation Research (PHYS 5980, up to 9 cr)

- any additional coursework to achieve 42 credits in graduate coursework

Spring

- Dissertation Research (PHYS 5980, 9 cr)
- any additional coursework to achieve 42 credits in graduate coursework

Summer

- PHYS/ASTR 5980 1 cr
- **Defend Dissertation Proposal by end of summer**
- Ideally be attending conferences

Year 4

Fall

- Dissertation Research (PHYS 5980, 9 cr)

Spring

- Dissertation Research (PHYS 5980, 9 cr)

Summer

- PHYS/ASTR 5980 1 cr
- Publish paper, attend conferences

Year 5

Fall

- Dissertation Research (PHYS 5980, 9 cr)

Spring

- Dissertation Research (PHYS 5980, 2 cr; submit optional fee petition package to reduce to 2 credits https://www.uwyo.edu/registrar/graduate-students/graduate-student-forms.html)

Summer

- PHYS/ASTR 5980 1 cr
- Publish paper, attend conferences

Year 6

Fall

- Dissertation Research (PHYS 5980, 2 cr; submit optional fee petition package to reduce to 2 credits https://www.uwyo.edu/registrar/graduate-students/graduate-student-forms.html)

Spring

- Dissertation Research (PHYS 5980, 2 cr; submit optional fee petition package to reduce to 2 credits https://www.uwyo.edu/registrar/graduate-students/graduate-student-forms.html)
- **File graduation intent forms**

Summer

- PHYS/ASTR 5980 1 cr
- Publish final paper(s)
- **Defend Dissertation; graduate**

4.0 What about a Masters?

The Department primarily admits students to the PhD program which is a research-based program. En route to a PhD, a student may elect to obtain a Master's degree by fulfilling the University requirements.

The Department may choose to accept self-funded master's students to pursue a Plan B (coursework only) master's degree in physics/astronomy. The Plan B master's degree requires 30 hours of formal graded coursework beyond the bachelor's. The master's degree may involve all PHYS 5000-level coursework or may include an emphasis in astronomy. In the latter case, the coursework must include two PHYS 5xxx courses (approximately 12 hours) and the remainder may be ASTR 5xxx courses.

For students admitted to the M.S. program, there is no expectation of Graduate Assistantship support, no expectation of research involvement, and no expectation of office space. Students who are in a M.S.-only degree may apply for admission for the PhD program and will be considered on the same criteria as all other applicants. In this case, students will be required to take the qualifying exam as per the PhD requirement.

Plan A Master's (Thesis)

- Program of Study: Each student must submit a MS Program of Study for approval.
- 26 credits, 20 of which must be in PHYS/ASTR at the 5000 level.
- Research Credits: 4 hours of Master's Thesis research credits (5960).
- Thesis: An original research paper, suitable, but not necessarily destined for publication, conducted under one of the members of the Physics & Astronomy faculty. The thesis shall be approved by the committee.

Plan B Masters (Non-Thesis)

- Program of Study: Each student must submit a MS Program of Study for approval.

- Courses: 30 credits, at least 24 of which must be in PHYS/ASTR at the 5000 level
- Research Credits: None required

5.0 Life in the Department

In addition to all the formal requirements for graduate degrees in Physics & Astronomy, graduate students are encouraged and expected to become a full part of our professional community. This means participating in a variety of informal activities, like joining discussions about the department's programs and facilities, helping out where it is needed, and receiving help from other students and faculty.

5.1 Seminars and Journal Club

Graduate students are expected to be active participants in these programs. Seminars, scheduled for Friday afternoons typically, feature mostly outside speakers presenting current research on a wide variety of topics. These form a critical part of the continuing professional development of both faculty and students. Often, a separate time is set aside for graduate students to meet with the speaker; students are encouraged to participate in these sessions. Dinner arrangements for speakers may be made with that week's host. Typically, graduate students are welcome to attend Journal Clubs are a key opportunity for faculty and graduate students to hear about interesting research around the world, either through reviews of preprints, or meeting reports, etc. They also present an important opportunity for graduate students to practice their communication skills in front of a supportive audience, but one that can provide critical feedback for improvement.

5.2 Getting Involved in Research

Most beginning graduate students have only vague notions of the area of research they wish to pursue seriously. Some have had extensive exposure to active research as undergraduates, but many have not. It is important for each student to become familiar with research in the Department from the very beginning of the student's career. Students are expected to participate in weekly colloquia and journal clubs. In addition, the student should be reading current journals and preprints regularly (e.g., arXiv.org) and discuss research activities with other graduate students and faculty. Most important, the student should take the initiative to become directly involved in meaningful research. Personal involvement may develop in several ways. For example, in the fall after the student arrives the Director of Graduate Studies can discuss the student's research interests and help make arrangements with a faculty member to work on a research project.

When the student's academic and teaching responsibilities are going smoothly, and definitely by the summer after the student's first year, the student should be getting involved with small research projects.

5.3 Financial Aid

The Department tries to provide financial support for all graduate students who are making satisfactory progress toward a degree, so that they can concentrate on their studies and research. This support comes in several forms: Teaching Assistantships (TAs) awarded by the Department; Research Assistantships (RAs) arranged with individual faculty members using research grant funds; and Fellowships such as those provided through the WY/NASA Space Grant Consortium, the UW School of Energy Resources, the National Science Foundation, NASA, the Department of Defense, and the Hertz Foundation.

Most graduate students will be supported initially through teaching assistantships. Provided the student makes satisfactory progress toward the student's degree, and provided the student's teaching is satisfactory, the Department will make every effort to supply TA support for two academic years. Our ability to provide this support depends, of course, upon the department's ability to obtain sufficient funding for TAs from the College. Beyond the second year, the student should try to obtain support from faculty as an RA or from fellowships.

The funding priorities are

1. First and second year PhD students
2. Sixth-year PhD students in their final year.
3. Third through fifth year PhD students who are making satisfactory progress, defined in part by meeting expected milestones.
4. Other students

For current graduate student funding levels, consult the UW office of academic affairs website.

Some summer TA support has been available to graduate students who are not yet supported full time as RAs. However, its nature and extent are variable, so the student should discuss this with the DGS early in the spring. Every effort will be made to find the student support for at least part of the summer (faculty members must also find salary money during the summer, since they are paid only nine months by the University).

As part of the PhD program, the student is required to participate in research projects. Some of these can be supported through external research grants, but others may not. By the student's third year, students should plan on finding support as an RA which normally will happen by establishing themselves as a productive member of a research group.
It is important to realize that all RA support in the Department comes through externally funded research grants. Faculty members must write proposals every one to three years; this involves a large amount of effort and must be done eight months to one year in advance. The actual cost of an RA to a grant is approximately twice what a student receives in salary, because it includes University overhead and fringe benefit costs for health care, tuition, etc. Funding is very competitive, and RA support for students must be justified to the funding agencies based upon their real scientific value to the proposed research.

5.4 Advising

By default, graduate advising will be done by the Director of Graduate Studies. When the student gets ready to register for courses, if the student has questions or issues about the graduate program and its expectations, if the student has issues about teaching assignment or workloads, the DGS the first point of contact. For students who are becoming involved in research and have chosen a graduate research advisor (usually in the second or third year), the first point of contact becomes the student's graduate advisor who will help think about the student's overall course program and plan of study. At any time, the student is welcome to informally seek advice from other faculty members. A student may also have another faculty member officially designated as their advisor at any time by informing the DGS. Before beginning M.S or PhD thesis work, the student must obtain a `thesis advisor' who will supervise the student's thesis work and serve as the official academic advisor.

5.5 Travel Support

Support for student travel may be available through the Department or the College. See the DGS or Department Head for current information.

5.6 Access to Computers

The Department, in conjunction with individual faculty, is expected to provide a computer for each student. Special-needs computing is available on campus by arrangement with individual faculty or campus computing units.

5.7 Outreach Programs

Part of the mission of the Department is to serve the citizens of Wyoming through various public outreach programs. All professional members of the Department—faculty, post-

docs, graduate students—are expected to participate in these activities. Some of these responsibilities are also folded into the Teaching Assistant positions. Current activities in outreach may include:

- Astro Camp & Teton STEM Academy
- Classroom visits to local schools for slide and other presentations
- Public evenings at the telescope or planetarium
- Visits from schools and other groups
- Talks to other local organizations as requested
- Mentoring programs with local school children
- Answering inquiries from the public
- UW Discovery Days/Resource Fair
- Volunteer to help at WIRO on homecoming weekend

5.8 When Problems Arise

Graduate student life should be both challenging and enjoyable, in varying combinations. If either of these elements is missing for an extended period of time, it's time to talk to the advisor or the DGS or the department head.

It is not uncommon for stresses, academic, personal, financial, etc., to reach a level where they affect a student's work. It is very important that the student does not let such problems reach a critical stage—instead, address them promptly when they're easiest to deal with. Many students have dealt with difficult problems, and the faculty and UW health professionals can help with discretion and confidentiality. The faculty certainly remember such times in their own graduate school and postdoc days. It is in the interest of the Department and University to have its students be successful and healthy, so a student should ask for help when One resource is the University Counseling Center in 340 Knight Hall: 766-2187

Appendix A: Grad student annual self-evaluation (astronomy version)
https://physics.uwyo.edu/~chip/grad_annual_assessment.docx

Grad Student Annual Self Assessment (astronomy version)

Name _____ Calendar year ending 20__ First grad Fall at UW: 20__

Note: No one is expected to have entries in every category each year. As you proceed through the graduate program, the student's list of accomplishments will change. Please return an editable .docx file.

1. List classes taught or TA'd, and describe the student's role, in a sentence or two.

2. List of courses taken

3a. List publications in refereed journals, in the format expected for the student's discipline.

3b. Non-refereed publications, conference contributions, proposals etc, to which you contributed.

3c. Meetings/conferences attended, including dates & locations.

4. Talks given, including professional talks, journal club presentations, etc.

5. Observing runs or other professional research trips taken

6. Public outreach events or talks presented.

7. Other accomplishments, awards, professional preparation, or milestones reached.

8. Self-assessment of the past year (what were the student's successes? In what areas did you not achieve what you wanted to?) and summary of goals for the coming year, in a short paragraph.

9. What are the student's professional goals, as you currently understand them?

Note: If you have had extenuating personal hardships this year that have affected the student's graduate work, it is important to include some indication of this for the record. Students having substantial personal challenges that affect graduate progress (e.g., illness, childbirth, family tragedy) should consider filing a "leave of absence" petition with the Graduate School (see grad school website) to officially take time off from their program so that they don't owe tuition or student loans or have responsibilities to the Department.

---------- For faculty use: ----------

"satisfactory progress" is defined by the timeline in the Department Graduate Student Manual. Satisfactory progress roughly looks like the schedule outlined in the grad handbook: passing the written exam by year 2, defending a dissertation proposal by the end of year 3, publishing a first paper (meaning, leading it as the primary author where you write >90% of it) by the end of year 4, and defending a dissertation consisting of at least 2-3 first-author papers by the end of year 6.

___ Making satisfactory progress

___ At risk of failing to make satisfactory progress

___ Not making satisfactory progress

Faculty Comments:

(Optional) Student Response: