

Graduate General Examination Rules

hgrie 13.10.2020, final, re-re-revised version

1 New “Rules and Procedures for Ph.D. Students”, Sect. A. *General Ph.D. Examination*

The Department of Physics approved the following revision of the Graduate General Examination on 2 October 2020. The Physics Graduate Committee approved this version (minor/technical revisions) on 7 October 2020 by email.

Preamble It is the purpose of the General Examination to ascertain the student’s knowledge in the core areas of Physics and to officially certify the student’s academic progress for further studies towards candidacy for the Ph.D. degree.

Currently, the core areas are CLASSICAL MECHANICS, CLASSICAL ELECTRODYNAMICS, QUANTUM MECHANICS I and STATISTICAL MECHANICS. In addition to these four core courses, the standard course curriculum of the first three semesters consists of lecture courses in MATHEMATICAL METHODS OF THEORETICAL PHYSICS and QUANTUM MECHANICS II, as well as the three numerically-oriented courses COMPUTATIONAL PHYSICS I, II, AND III.

Eligibility Any graduate student is eligible for the General Examination.

Passing the General Examination A student passes the General Examination if both of the following criteria are fulfilled:

- (1) The cumulative graduate GPA of all courses of the standard course curriculum as defined above is 3.0 or higher. If the student follows the standard curriculum, that is the cumulative GPA after the grades of the last course of the third semester has been added.
- (2) At most one grade in the core areas is *C*, but not lower.

If the GPA is below 3.0 or if the student has two grades of *C* or lower in the core areas, the student fails the General Examination and the Director of Graduate Studies recommends to the Dean that the student be dismissed from the program for lack of academic progress. The student is immediately informed of the decision.

Nonstandard study plan: If a student’s individual study plan is different from the standard course curriculum above, the General Examination is done at the end of the semester when the last of the courses of the standard curriculum is taken. The total GPA applicable is then calculated out of the nine courses of the standard curriculum. If necessitated by the student’s nonstandard study plan, one or more of these courses may be substituted by courses deemed equivalent by the Graduate Committee. The student will be informed of such substitutions before they take effect for the Examination.

For transfer students from outside GW: As part of the request to transfer credits from another institution, the Director of Graduate Studies and the GW lecturer of the corresponding course determine a grade based on the student’s transcript, syllabus and other material. The student is informed of the decisions when the credit transfer is approved. This grade is used in

the student's cumulative graduate GPA as if the course had been taken at GW Physics. The weight is the weight of the corresponding GW course.

For transfer students from GW Physics Masters program to the PhD program: All core courses taken at GW enter the cumulative GPA. The same criteria as for PhD students applies.

Information of Faculty At the next regular or special Department Meeting, the Director of Graduate Studies informs the whole faculty on students who passed or failed the General Examination. Any full-time faculty member will be given copies of the examination documentation upon request.

Appeals At any stage of the process, the student may appeal, in writing, to the Director of Graduate Studies, clearly outlining the grounds for appeal. The Director of Graduate Studies then appoints an ad-hoc committee of three regular faculty. Faculty directly involved in the production of grades which led to the appeal can not be a part of the committee but may be heard by the committee. The committee hears the appeal, solicits further pertinent information as it sees fit, and votes by simple majority. It informs the student of its decision within 3 weeks of the appeal, including if a remedial plan or other actions are warranted. If the answer is not to the student's satisfaction, the student may appeal to the Department Chair who will bring it up at the next faculty Meeting. At the Departmental level, that Meeting's decisions are final; they must be recorded.

An appeal does not prejudice any appellate or grievance mechanisms at the Department, College or University level, such as the CCAS process on Alleged Arbitrary or Capricious Academic Evaluation (columbian.gwu.edu/arbitrary-or-capricious-academic-evaluation-procedures).

2 Transition Period

The following procedure applies to students who are enrolled in Fall 2020 but have not yet passed all Parts of the General Examination.

The students are given a choice:

Either continue to take all future Parts of the General Examination under the rules they started with, including pending and future retakes.

Or take the General Examination under the new rules.

By **15 November 2020**, the student informs the Director of Graduate Studies of the choice in writing or per email. The choice is final.

In the next regular or special Department Meeting, the Director of Graduate Studies informs the whole faculty of the students' decisions.