

Title of Programme: MSc Astrophysics

Programme Code: PEAPM

Programme Specification

This programme specification is relevant to students entering:
01 September 2024

Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality Assurance):
Mariana Lilley



A programme specification is a collection of key information about a programme of study (or course). It identifies the aims and learning outcomes of the programme, lists the modules that make up each stage (or year) of the programme, and the teaching, learning and assessment methods used by teaching staff. It also describes the structure of the programme, its progression requirements and any programme-specific regulations. This information is therefore useful to potential students to help them choose the right programme of study, to current students on the programme, and to staff teaching and administering the programme.

Summary of amendments to the programme

Date	Section	Amendment
29.10.24	Table 1a	7PAM1027 (Relativity and Field Theory) has become an option module (it is no longer core).
29.10.24	Table 1a	7PAM2025 (Space Systems) replaces 7PAM1027 (Relativity and Field Theory) as a core module.
29.10.24	Table 1a	7ENT1158 (Space Systems) is no longer in the programme for 2024 entry.
29.10.24	Table 1a	7ENT2054 (Aerospace Aerodynamics) replaces 7ENT1139 (Aerospace Aerodynamics).

If you have any queries regarding the changes please email AQO@herts.ac.uk

Programme Specification MSc Astrophysics

This programme specification (PS) is designed for prospective students, enrolled students, academic staff and potential employers. It provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the intended learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the teaching, learning and assessment methods, learning outcomes and content for each module can be found in Definitive Module Documents (DMDs) and Module Guides.

Section 1

Awarding Institution/Body	University of Hertfordshire
Teaching Institution	University of Hertfordshire
University/partner campuses	College Lane
Programme accredited by	N/A
Final Award (Qualification)	MSc
All Final Award titles	MSc Astrophysics
(Qualification and Subject)	MSc Astrophysics with Advanced Research MSc Astrophysics (Sandwich)
FHEQ level of award	7

A. Programme Rationale

Studying astrophysics offers a thorough grounding in fundamental physics while exploring cutting edge topics about the Universe, its constituents and structure, and humanity's place within it. Astrophysics students develop important skills in physics research enquiry and problem solving, critical thinking, scientific writing, communication/presentation, and programming/software application. And in addition to opening up a wide range of career opportunities in STEM areas, such study offers a pathway to PhD and potentially an astrophysics research career.

The department's Centre for Astrophysics Research is an internationally renowned research group, with teaching and research expertise over a wide range of contemporary topics, and a well-trodden path from undergraduate study through to professional research. The University's Bayfordbury Observatory is also a major strength, and is a national leader in the field of astrophysics teaching. The Observatory allows our students to study a wide variety of astrophysical phenomena ranging from extra-solar planets to distant galaxy clusters, and processes across many scales from the orbits of earth-crossing asteroids to the expansion of the universe.

This Astrophysics taught Masters programme offers a learning experience that provides a wide range of intellectual and practical skills through taught modules with substantial content at or informed by the forefront of the field. The degrees include a major component of observational astrophysics at the Bayfordbury Observatory, and a major research project supervised by a research expert in the field. The programme teaches modern astrophysical techniques, as well as concepts and theories associated with cutting edge research ranging from extra-solar planets to dark energy. And the degree structure also offers a wide choice of option modules that can cater for student interests focused in a number of different directions; including galactic astrophysics, extra-galactic evolution and cosmology, space science, and theoretical study.

B. Educational Aims of the Programme

Diversity and Inclusion

Our programmes are purposefully designed to enable all students to engage meaningfully with the curriculum by being accessible and representative. We will support students to shape their learning experience, removing barriers and enabling them to succeed. The curriculum explicitly includes multiple and representative perspectives, valuing collective identities and individual diversity. Learning, teaching and assessment activities help students to understand how they can enhance outcomes both for themselves and for others. All students belong to a learning community, and during their studies we really want to hear their voices, encourage them to listen to others, and express themselves.

The programme has been devised in accordance with the University's graduate attributes of programmes of study as set out in [UPR TL03](#).

Additionally this programme aims to:

- offer an education based on the fundamental concepts, techniques, and theories of astrophysics, with studies involving current problems and/or new insights that are at or informed by the forefront of the field.
- develop the ability for practical understanding of how established research techniques and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the physics and astrophysics field.
- provide training that is suited to the abilities and career aspirations of students and which will help them realise their own potential, preparing them for employment in a wide range of sectors and/or postgraduate research in astrophysics.
- develop the ability to approach problem-solving activities using physical insight and laboratory/observatory skills aided where appropriate, by computer-based techniques.
- develop competence in communicating scientific results to other experts and to non-specialists, including the use of computers and software packages for information retrieval, analysis, and presentation.

Graduate Attributes

Our graduates will be capable and professional, creative and enterprising, and will build their social and global awareness throughout. In addition to their subject expertise and proficiency, as a University of Hertfordshire graduate, they will be:

- Professionally focused
- Globally minded
- Sustainability driven
- Digitally capable and confident
- Inclusive and collaborative
- Evidence based and ethical

C. Intended Learning Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, skills and other attributes in the following areas. The programme outcomes are referenced the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (2014), and relate to the typical student. Additionally, the SEEC Credit Level Descriptors for Further and Higher Education (2021) have been used as a guiding framework for curriculum design.

Knowledge and Understanding:	Teaching/learning methods & strategies	Assessment
<p>A1. Demonstrate systematic knowledge and understanding of the fundamental concepts ideas and theories of astrophysics, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of the field.</p>	<p>Acquisition of knowledge and understanding is through a combination of lectures, workshops, problem-based learning, electronic resources, coursework, directed study, feedback from assessment and practical work, as well as project work (A1-A3).</p>	<p>Knowledge and understanding are assessed through a combination of unseen examinations (A1, A2), practical examinations (A3), assessed individual in-course assignments (A1-A5), worked problems (A2, A3), written reports (A1-A4), class tests (A1, A2), project reports (A1-A4), poster/seminar presentations and viva discussion (A1-A4).</p>
<p>A2. Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and understanding of astrophysical techniques applicable to research investigation and project work.</p>	<p>Throughout, the learner is encouraged to undertake independent study both to supplement and consolidate what is being taught/learnt and to broaden their individual knowledge and understanding of the subject.</p>	<p>A6 is assessed by written/verbal reports from the student, the placement organization</p>
<p>A3. Demonstrate practical understanding of how established research techniques and enquiry, including statistical and computational methods, are used to create and interpret knowledge in the physics and astrophysics field.</p>	<p>A4 is developed across a range of modules including the Masters project.</p>	
<p>A4. Demonstrate a conceptual understanding that enables critical evaluation of current areas and methodologies of astrophysics.</p>		

<p>A5. Demonstrate a systematic understanding of key aspects of additional areas of astrophysics, theoretical physics, optical physics and/or space science, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of the field.</p> <p>And in the case of placement students:</p> <p>A6. Demonstrate contextual knowledge of how to work effectively in a placement environment, alongside professionals or others engaged in scientific or commercial work.</p>	<p>A5 is developed through a variety of L6 option modules.</p> <p>Acquisition of Learning Outcome A6 is through a professional or research placement in a suitable scientific or commercial organization.</p> <p>Additional support is provided by the Mathematics Drop-In Centre.</p>	<p>and the placement tutor.</p>
<p>Intellectual skills:</p>	<p>Teaching/learning methods & strategies</p>	<p>Assessment</p>
<p>B1. Formulate and tackle problems in astrophysics and related areas, using theory and analysis techniques.</p> <p>B2. Plan, execute and report the results of an astrophysics/physics experiment or project at a professional level.</p> <p>B3. Critically discuss the role of uncertainty, approximations, and numerical modelling used in astrophysics.</p> <p>B4. Critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), make judgments, and frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution or identify a range of solutions to a problem.</p> <p>B5. Effectively and independently explore the scientific literature within a specific area (or areas) and identify the key unanswered questions and the scope of on going research, while critically evaluating the ideas and results at the forefront of the field.</p> <p>B6. Present and discuss new ideas and established theory in the context of an evolving field of study, while providing good clarity to an audience of scientists in a seminar setting.</p>	<p>Intellectual skills are developed throughout the programme by the methods and strategies outlined in section A above.</p> <p>Learning Outcomes B1-B3 are developed through problem solving exercises, workshops, coursework, group-work, laboratory or observatory work and project work.</p> <p>B4 is developed primarily within the Masters Project module.</p> <p>Throughout, the learner is encouraged to develop intellectual skills further by independent study.</p>	<p>Intellectual skills are assessed through a combination of unseen examinations (B1), practical examinations (B2, B3), assessed individual in-course assignments (B1), written reports (B2-B4), class tests (B1), project reports (B1-B4), poster/seminar presentations and viva discussion (B1-B4)).</p>
<p>Practical skills:</p>	<p>Teaching/learning methods & strategies</p>	<p>Assessment</p>
<p>C1. Obtain astronomical data by observation or through database access, reduce the data using appropriate software, and make astrometric/photometric measurements.</p> <p>C2. Use statistical methods and/or computational techniques to quantify uncertainties and assess measurements.</p>	<p>Practical skills are developed through a series of observatory practicals at L7 (C1-C5), with additional observatory experience available in L6 optional modules. Practical skills are also developed through the 60-credit project (C2-C5).</p>	<p>Practical skills are assessed through laboratory reports (C1-C5) and also coursework and assignments (C2, C3).</p>

<p>C3. Interpret measurements through comparison with analytical/modelling predictions.</p> <p>C4. Produce clear and accurate scientific reports on complex topics.</p> <p>C5. Make appropriate and effective use of the scientific literature, including peer-reviewed research articles.</p>	<p>Throughout, the learner is expected to consolidate their development of practical computing skills by use of appropriate personal computers available in the learning resources centre.</p>	<p>In addition, C2-C5 are assessed during the project.</p>
<p>Transferable skills:</p>	<p>Teaching/learning methods & strategies</p>	<p>Assessment</p>
<p>D1. Retrieve, synthesize, and evaluate information and data from a variety of sources.</p> <p>D2. Work effectively in a team.</p> <p>D3. Demonstrate personal time management, as well as taking initiative and responsibility for project work.</p> <p>D4. Make decisions in complex and unpredictable situations.</p> <p>D5. Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.</p> <p>D6. Continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.</p>	<p>Transferable skills are developed through problem solving workshops (D1, D3), team-work at the observatory (D2), project presentations (D2, D5), individual assignments (D1, D3), practical work and write-ups (D1-D3) and project work (D1, D3-D6).</p> <p>Throughout, the learner is encouraged to develop transferable skills by maintaining a record of evidence and completing a personal development plan.</p>	<p>Transferable skills are assessed through a combination of observatory skill assessment (D2), practical reports (D1-D3), individual assignments (D1, D3), written reports (D1-D3), project posters (D5), and seminars / project viva (D4-D6).</p>

D. Programme Structures, Features, Levels, Modules, and Credits

The programme is offered in the following modes:

- Full-time (1 year), leading to the award of MSc Astrophysics.
- Part-time (2 years), leading to the award of MSc Astrophysics.
- Full-time (2 years), leading to the award of MSc Astrophysics with Advanced Research.
- Full-time (2 years) including a work placement in industry, leading to the award of MSc Astrophysics (Sandwich).

Intake is normally for Semester A (September).

The standard 'MSc Astrophysics' degree (1 year full-time or 2 years part-time) is structured to have 90 credits of core level 7 taught modules and a 60-credit level 7 project in semester C (or in semesters BC of year 2 for the part-time route), as well as 30 credits of optional modules at level 6 / level 7.

The 'MSc Astrophysics with Advanced Research' degree (2 years full-time) is structured to have 90 credits of core level 7 taught modules, and a 60-credit level 7 project during semesters AB of year 2. It also includes 60 credits of option modules at level 6 / level 7, and a 30-credit level 7 'Advanced Research Seminars' module that runs in parallel with the project.

The 'MSc Astrophysics (Sandwich)' degree is a 2-year route and includes a work placement in semesters AB of year 2.

On entry into the programme students on all routes have the option to do the 'Data Science Core Skills Bootcamp' module (7PAM2003) to ensure an appropriate level (or offer a revision opportunity) in mathematics, statistics, and Python programming.

On entry into the programme all students will be allocated a personal tutor.

UKVI requirements for overseas students

The University welcomes international applicants on the programme. The University of Hertfordshire does not typically sponsor students on a student route visa for part-time study. For additional information, please see <https://www.herts.ac.uk/international/new-international-students/coming-to-the-uk>

Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies

N/A

Work-Based Learning, including Sandwich Programmes

A sandwich award requires the successful completion of at least 30 weeks full-time equivalent placement activity from a maximum of two separate approved placements, neither of which will be normally less than 12 weeks in duration as defined in [UPR AS11](#). Students are supported by the Careers and Placements Office in finding a placement.

Programme Structure

The programme structure and progression information below (Table 1a and 1b) is provided for the award. Any interim awards are identified in Table 1b. The Programme Learning Outcomes detailed above are developed and assessed through the constituent modules. Table 2 identifies where each learning outcome is assessed.

Table 1a Outline Programme Structure

MSc Astrophysics

Mode of study Full-time

Duration 1 year

Entry point Semester A

Compulsory Modules Module Title	Module Code	Credit Points	% Test	% Examination	% Coursework	% Practical	Semesters
Statistics and Analysis	7PAM1035	15	0	50	50	0	A
From Stars to Planets	7PAM2011	15	0	0	100	0	A
Space Systems	7PAM2025	15	0	50	50	0	A
High Energy Astrophysics	7PAM1020	15	0	50	50	0	B
Galaxy Structure and Evolution	7PAM1030	15	15	60	25	0	B
Research Techniques in Astrophysics	7PAM2010	15	0	50	50	0	B
Astrophysics Masters Project	7PAM2013	60	0	0	100	0	C

Select ONE 15-credit optional module in Semester A, and ONE 15-credit optional module in Semester B.

Optional Modules Module Titles	Module Code	Credit Points	% Test	% Examination	% Coursework	% Practical	Semesters
Rocket Performance and Propulsion	6AAD0026	15	0	60	40	0	A
Foundations of Cosmology	6PAM1056	15	10	60	30	0	A
The Physics of Astronomical Spectra	6PAM1057	15	16	60	24	0	A
Applied Photonics	6PAM2003	15	60	0	40	0	A
Lagrangian Dynamics	6PAM2015	15	25	60	15	0	A
Relativity and Field Theory	7PAM1027	15	0	80	20	0	A
Star Formation and Evolution	6PAM1055	15	10	60	30	0	B
The Early Universe and Galaxy Formation	6PAM1058	15	25	0	75	0	B
Space Dynamics	6PAM2021	15	15	0	85	0	B
Aerospace Aerodynamics	7ENT2054	15	0	0	100	0	B
General Relativity	7PAM1033	15	25	50	25	0	B
Data Science Core Skills Bootcamp*	7PAM2003	0	0	0	P/F	0	Pre-A

* 7PAM2003 is a pre semester A module that is an option for all students.

The award of an 'MSc Astrophysics' degree requires 180 credit points (of which at least 150 credits must be at level 7, and up to 30 credits can be at level 6), and include a pass in Astrophysics Masters Project 7PAM2013.

MSc Astrophysics
Mode of study Part-time
Duration 2 years
Entry point Semester A

Year 1

Compulsory Modules Module Title	Module Code	Credit Points	%Test	% Examination	% Coursework	% Practical	Semesters
From Stars to Planets	7PAM2011	15	0	0	100	0	A
Galaxy Structure and Evolution	7PAM1030	15	15	60	25	0	B
Research Techniques in Astrophysics	7PAM2010	15	0	50	50	0	B

Select ONE 15-credit optional module in Semester A, and ONE 15-credit optional module in Semester B.

Optional Modules Module Titles	Module Code	Credit Points	%Test	% Examination	% Coursework	% Practical	Semesters
Rocket Performance and Propulsion	6AAD0026	15	0	60	40	0	A
Foundations of Cosmology	6PAM1056	15	10	60	30	0	A
The Physics of Astronomical Spectra	6PAM1057	15	16	60	24	0	A
Applied Photonics	6PAM2003	15	60	0	40	0	A
Lagrangian Dynamics	6PAM2015	15	25	60	15	0	A
Relativity and Field Theory	7PAM1027	15	0	80	20	0	A
Star Formation and Evolution	6PAM1055	15	10	60	30	0	B
The Early Universe and Galaxy Formation	6PAM1058	15	25	0	75	0	B
Space Dynamics	6PAM2021	15	15	0	85	0	B
Aerospace Aerodynamics	7ENT2054	15	0	0	100	0	B
General Relativity	7PAM1033	15	25	50	25	0	B
Data Science Core Skills Bootcamp*	7PAM2003	0	0	0	P/F	0	Pre-A

* 7PAM2003 is a pre semester A module that is an option for all students.

Semester C is a vacation period.

Year 2

Compulsory Modules Module Title	Module Code	Credit Points	%Test	% Examination	% Coursework	% Practical	Semesters
Space Systems	7PAM2025	15	0	50	50	0	A
Statistics and Analysis	7PAM1035	15	0	50	50	0	A
High Energy Astrophysics	7PAM1020	15	0	50	50	0	B
Astrophysics Masters Project	7PAM2013	60	0	0	100	0	BC

The award of an 'MSc Astrophysics' degree requires 180 credit points (of which at least 150 credits must be at level 7, and up to 30 credits can be at level 6), and include a pass in Astrophysics Masters Project 7PAM2013.

MSc Astrophysics (Sandwich)

Mode of study Full-time

Duration 2 years

Entry point Semester A

Year 1

Compulsory Modules Module Title	Module Code	Credit Points	%Test	% Examination	% Coursework	% Practical	Semesters
Statistics and Analysis	7PAM1035	15	0	50	50	0	A
From Stars to Planets	7PAM2011	15	0	0	100	0	A
Space Systems	7PAM2025	15	0	50	50	0	A
High Energy Astrophysics	7PAM1020	15	0	50	50	0	B
Galaxy Structure and Evolution	7PAM1030	15	15	60	25	0	B
Research Techniques in Astrophysics	7PAM2010	15	0	50	50	0	B

Select ONE 15-credit optional module in Semester A, and ONE 15-credit optional module in Semester B.

Optional Modules Module Titles	Module Code	Credit Points	%Test	% Examination	% Coursework	% Practical	Semesters
Rocket Performance and Propulsion	6AAD0026	15	0	60	40	0	A
Foundations of Cosmology	6PAM1056	15	10	60	30	0	A
The Physics of Astronomical Spectra	6PAM1057	15	16	60	24	0	A
Applied Photonics	6PAM2003	15	60	0	40	0	A
Lagrangian Dynamics	6PAM2015	15	25	60	15	0	A
Relativity and Field Theory	7PAM1027	15	0	80	20	0	A
Star Formation and Evolution	6PAM1055	15	10	60	30	0	B
The Early Universe and Galaxy Formation	6PAM1058	15	25	0	75	0	B
Space Dynamics	6PAM2021	15	15	0	85	0	B
Aerospace Aerodynamics	7ENT2054	15	0	0	100	0	B
General Relativity	7PAM1033	15	25	50	25	0	B
Data Science Core Skills Bootcamp*	7PAM2003	0	0	0	P/F	0	Pre-A

* 7PAM2003 is a pre semester A module that is an option for all students.

Semester C is a vacation period.

Year 2

Compulsory Modules Module Title	Module Code	Credit Points	% Test	% Examination	% Coursework	% Practical	Semesters
Work Placement	7PAM2023	60	0	0	P/F	0	AB
Astrophysics Masters Project	7PAM2013	60	0	0	100	0	C

The award of an 'MSc Astrophysics (Sandwich)' degree requires 240 credit points (of which at least 150 credits must be at level 7, and up to 30 credits can be at level 6), and include passes in Work Placement 7PAM2023 and Astrophysics Masters Project 7PAM2013.

MSc Astrophysics with Advanced Research

Mode of study Full-time

Duration 2 years

Entry point Semester A

Year 1

Compulsory Modules Module Title	Module Code	Credit Points	% Test	% Examination	% Coursework	% Practical	Semesters
Statistics and Analysis	7PAM1035	15	0	50	50	0	A
From Stars to Planets	7PAM2011	15	0	0	100	0	A
Space Systems	7PAM2025	15	0	50	50	0	A
High Energy Astrophysics	7PAM1020	15	0	50	50	0	B
Galaxy Structure and Evolution	7PAM1030	15	15	60	25	0	B
Research Techniques in Astrophysics	7PAM2010	15	0	50	50	0	B

Select ONE 15-credit optional module in Semester A, and ONE 15-credit optional module in Semester B.

Optional Modules Module Titles	Module Code	Credit Points	% Test	% Examination	% Coursework	% Practical	Semesters
Rocket Performance and Propulsion	6AAD0026	15	0	60	40	0	A
Foundations of Cosmology	6PAM1056	15	10	60	30	0	A
The Physics of Astronomical Spectra	6PAM1057	15	16	60	24	0	A
Applied Photonics	6PAM2003	15	60	0	40	0	A
Lagrangian Dynamics	6PAM2015	15	25	60	15	0	A
Relativity and Field Theory	7PAM1027	15	0	80	20	0	A
Star Formation and Evolution	6PAM1055	15	10	60	30	0	B
The Early Universe and Galaxy Formation	6PAM1058	15	25	0	75	0	B
Space Dynamics	6PAM2021	15	15	0	85	0	B
Aerospace Aerodynamics	7ENT2054	15	0	0	100	0	B
General Relativity	7PAM1033	15	25	50	25	0	B
Data Science Core Skills Bootcamp*	7PAM2003	0	0	0	P/F	0	Pre-A

* 7PAM2003 is a pre semester A module that is an option for all students.

Year 2

Compulsory Modules Module Title	Module Code	Credit Points	% Test	% Examination	% Coursework	% Practical	Semesters
Advanced Research Seminars	7PAM2012	30	0	0	100	0	AB
Astrophysics Masters Project	7PAM2013	60	0	0	100	0	AB

Select ONE 15-credit optional module in Semester A (that was not done in Year 1), and ONE 15-credit optional module in Semester B (that was not done in Year 1).

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Optional Modules Module Titles	Module Code	Credit Points	% Test	% Examination	% Coursework	% Practical	Semesters
Rocket Performance and Propulsion	6AAD0026	15	0	60	40	0	A
Foundations of Cosmology	6PAM1056	15	10	60	30	0	A
The Physics of Astronomical Spectra	6PAM1057	15	16	60	24	0	A
Applied Photonics	6PAM2003	15	60	0	40	0	A
Lagrangian Dynamics	6PAM2015	15	25	60	15	0	A
Relativity and Field Theory	7PAM1027	15	0	80	20	0	A
Star Formation and Evolution	6PAM1055	15	10	60	30	0	B
The Early Universe and Galaxy Formation	6PAM1058	15	25	0	75	0	B
Space Dynamics	6PAM2021	15	15	0	85	0	B
Aerospace Aerodynamics	7ENT2054	15	0	0	100	0	B
General Relativity	7PAM1033	15	25	50	25	0	B

The award of an 'MSc Astrophysics with Advanced Research' degree requires 240 credit points (of which at least 150 credits must be at level 7, and up to 30 credits can be at level 6), and include passes in Astrophysics Masters Project 7PAM2013, Research Techniques in Astrophysics 7PAM2010 and Advanced Research Seminars 7PAM2012.

Table 1b Final and interim awards available

The programme provides the following final and interim awards:

Final Award	Award Title	Minimum requirements	Available at end of (normally):	Programme Learning Outcomes developed (see above)
MSc	Astrophysics	180 credit points, including: at least 150 at level 7 and a pass in Astrophysics Masters Project 7PAM2013.	3 Semesters	A1-A5, B1-B4, C1-C5, D1-D6 (see Table 2)

MSc	Astrophysics with Advanced Research	240 credit points, including: at least 180 at level 7 and include passes in Astrophysics Masters Project 7PAM2013, Research Techniques in Astrophysics 7PAM2010 and Advanced Research Seminars 7PAM2012.	4 Semesters	A1-A5, B1-B6, C1-C5, D1-D6
MSc	Astrophysics (Sandwich)	240 credit points including: at least 210 at level 7 degree, and include passes in Work Placement 7PAM2023 and Astrophysics Masters Project 7PAM2013.	6 Semesters	A1-A5, A6, B1-B4, C1-C5, D1-D6

Interim Award	Award Title	Minimum requirements	Available at end of Level	Programme Learning Outcomes developed (see above)
Postgraduate Diploma	Astrophysics	120 credit points, including at least 90 at level 7	2, 3 Semesters	A1, A2, A3, B1, B2, B3, C1, C2, C4, C5, D1, D2, D3
Postgraduate Certificate	Astrophysics	60 credit points, including at least 45 at level 7	1-2 Semesters	A1, A2, A5, B1, D1

Masters and Diploma awards can be made "with Distinction" or "with Commendation" where criteria as described in [UPR AS14](#), Section D and the students' handbook are met.

Programme-specific assessment regulations

The programme is compliant with the University's academic regulations (in particular, [UPR AS11](#), [UPR AS12](#) and [UPR AS14](#)) with the exception of those listed below, which have been specifically approved by the University:

- None

Further points of clarification and interpretation relevant to this specific programme are given below:

- Students who failed 7PAM1027 in 2023/24 and did not already pass 7ENT1158, may do 7PAM2025 (with repeat status) instead of repeating 7PAM1027. Students who failed 7PAM1027 in 2023/24 and already passed 7ENT1158, may do an alternative optional module (with repeat status) and have 7ENT1158 count as a core module.
- To enrol on the project module, students must typically have studied 120 credits of taught modules from the programme and passed at least 60 credits (in order to satisfy UPR AS14, D5.2.3).
- **To be eligible for a placement, students must have passed 120 credits, AND passed their first 60 credits at first sitting. Students who have not met these progression requirements, including those with outstanding deferrals, will normally be transferred from the sandwich course to the corresponding 2-year 'with Advanced Research' course.** Students may also be eligible to transfer to the corresponding 180-credit pathway, following consultation with the programme leader.

- All students who have become eligible for a placement will be issued a statement of eligibility from the Department of Physics, Astronomy and Mathematics.
- Students are responsible for securing their placement. Students are required to secure their placement by the School's published deadline. Students who do not secure a placement by the deadline, will normally be automatically transferred from the Sandwich award to the corresponding 2-year 'With Advanced Research' course.
- For registration to continue, students should normally have met the requirements for the Postgraduate Diploma within three years and the MSc award within four years (all periods calculated from date of registration on the Programme).
- Students who are registered on the standard 180-credit full time course are not normally allowed to change their study pattern to the corresponding 2-year full time Sandwich course or the 2-year full time 'With Advanced Research' course.
- **Modules normally only run in either Semester A or Semester B. Failed modules can only be repeated in the semester in which they run. Therefore, depending on when the opportunity exists to repeat failed modules, International Students on certain student visas will need to return to their country of residency and apply for a new visa to return to repeat modules at a later date.**
- To progress into year 2 of the Advanced Research route students must pass 90 credits in year 1. If they pass 75 credits or less in year 1, they must repeat their failed modules before progressing onto year 2 modules.

E. Management of Programme & Support for student learning

Management

The programme is managed and administered through:

- Dean of School;
- Head of Department;
- Associate Dean (Academic Quality Assurance);
- Associate Dean (Learning, Teaching and Student Experience);
- A Programme Leader, who has overall responsibility for the effective operationalization of the programme and ensuring that academic standards are maintained and an effective student learning experience is provided. The Programme Leader also has overall responsibility for the quality assurance and enhancement of the programme providing advice and guidance to programme staff as appropriate. In addition, the Programme Leader advises students about programme structure and regulations.
- A Programme Team led by the Programme Leader to assist with the operationalization of the programme and maintaining academic standards and student learning experience. The Programme Team includes Principal Technical Officers at Bayfordbury and a Level 7 Year Tutor (who also monitors student special needs issues and attendance).
- Project Supervisors who in addition to supervising the 60 credit 'Astrophysics Masters Project' module also provide personal tutoring (academic and pastoral support) to their supervised student/s.
- An Admissions Tutor with specific responsibility for open days and selection.
- Placement Tutors to oversee students on the "MSc Astrophysics (Sandwich)" degree, while they are undertaking their industrial/research placement.
- Module Leaders to advise students about module-specific issues.
- Student representatives and advocates who are members of a Programme Committee.
- A designated administrative team to deal with day-to-day administration associated with the modules within the programme.

Support

Students are supported by:

- An induction week at the beginning of each new academic session;
- Overseas Orientation;

- You will have a Personal Tutor who will be an important point of contact, able to help you gain a good understanding of the School and programme you are studying.;
- A School-based SPECS Academic Support Hub (SASH) that provides academic skills support;
- A substantial Student Centre that provides advice on issues such as finance, University regulations, legal matters, accommodation, and international student support;
- Office of Dean of Students, Student Wellbeing (incorporating Counselling, Mental Health and Disability Support), Chaplaincy, and Day Nursery;
- A versatile on-line inter-active intranet and learning environment;
- Guided student-centred learning on Canvas module sites;
- Access to extensive digital and print collections of information resources;
- Attractive modern study environments in 2 Learning Resources Centres;
- Student Success Hubs, which include a Mathematics Drop-in Centre;
- Medical Centre;
- University Disability Advisors;
- An Equality Office;
- Careers Enterprise and Employment Services;
- Hertfordshire Students' Union;
- Technical and practical support at the Bayfordbury Observatory;
- The Physics, Astronomy & Mathematics (PAM) Industrial Training Placements Officer;
- Dedicated programme site.

F. Other sources of information

In addition to this Programme Specification, the University publishes guidance to registered students on the programme and its constituent modules:

- A dedicated programme site
- A Definitive Module Document (DMD) for each constituent module;

The [Ask Herts](#) website provides information on a wide range of resources and services available at the University of Hertfordshire including academic support, accommodation, fees, funding, visas, wellbeing services and student societies.

As a condition of registration, all students of the University of Hertfordshire are required to comply with the University's rules, regulations and procedures. These are published in a series of documents called 'University Policies and Regulations' (UPRs). The University requires that all students consult these documents which are available on-line, on the UPR web site, at: <http://www.herts.ac.uk/segreg/upr/>. In particular, [UPR SA07](#) 'Regulations and Advice for Students' Particular Attention - Index' provides information on the UPRs that contain the academic regulations of particular relevance for undergraduate and taught postgraduate students.

In accordance with section 4(5) of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA), the UK Office for Students (OfS) has registered the University of Hertfordshire in the register of English higher education providers. The Register can be viewed at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/the-register/the-ofs-register/>.

G. Entry requirements

The normal entry requirements for the programme are:

- A good (2.1 or above) Honours degree (or equivalent) in physics, astrophysics, or a closely related subject, where the degree is accredited by a Professional Statutory Regulatory Body such as the IoP (or a body of equivalent standing in a related subject or overseas).

Students who wish to join the course with a 2.2 may be considered on a case-by-case basis, where entry may be possible based on additional information and/or an interview.

It is not possible for students who have already obtained the MPhys (Physics) degree (PMMPHY) or MPhys (Astrophysics) degree (PMMPHYAP) to register on the Astrophysics MSc.

For current entry tariff point requirements, please refer to the relevant page for the Course on the University website or online prospectus.

The programme is subject to the University's Principles, Policies and Regulations for the Admission of Students to Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes (in [UPR SA03](#)), along with associated procedures. These will take account of University policy and guidelines for assessing accredited prior certificated learning (APCL) and accredited prior experiential learning (APEL).

If you would like this information in an alternative format please contact:
hhaq@herts.ac.uk

If you wish to receive a copy of the latest External Examiner's Report for the programme, please email a request to aqo@herts.ac.uk

MSc Astrophysics

Table 2: Development of Intended Programme Learning Outcomes in the Constituent Modules

This map identifies where the programme learning outcomes are assessed in the constituent modules. It provides (i) an aid to academic staff in understanding how individual modules contribute to the programme aims (ii) a checklist for quality control purposes and (iii) a means to help students monitor their own learning, personal and professional development as the programme progresses.

		Programme Learning Outcomes (as identified in section 1 and the following page)																							
		Knowledge & Understanding						Intellectual Skills						Practical Skills					Transferable Skills						
Module Title	Module Code	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	
From Stars to Planets	7PAM2011	X	X					X									X	X	X		X				
Research Techniques in Astrophysics	7PAM2010	X	X	X				X	X	X				X	X		X	X	X	X	X				
Statistics and Analysis	7PAM1035			X						X					X				X						
Galaxy Structure and Evolution	7PAM1030	X	X					X										X							
Relativity and Field Theory	7PAM1027	X						X																	
High Energy Astrophysics	7PAM1020	X		X				X	X					X	X		X	X	X	X	X				
Astrophysics Masters Project	7PAM2013	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X					X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Foundations of Cosmology	6PAM1056		X	X		X		X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
The Early Universe and Galaxy Formation	6PAM1058		X			X		X																	
The Physics of Astronomical Spectra	6PAM1057		X			X		X																	
Star Formation and Evolution	6PAM1055		X	X		X		X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Lagrangian Dynamics	6PAM2015					X		X																	
General Relativity	7PAM1033					X		X																	
Applied Photonics	6PAM2003			X		X		X	X						X	X	X	X	X		X				
Space Dynamics	6PAM2021					X		X									X	X					X		
Rocket Performance and Propulsion	6AAD0026					X		X																	
Aerospace Aerodynamics	7ENT2054					X		X																	
Space Systems	7PAM2025					X		X																	
Data Science Core Skills Bootcamp	7PAM2003			X				X							X										

MSc Astrophysics (Sandwich)

		Programme Learning Outcomes (as identified in section 1 and the following page)																						
		Knowledge & Understanding						Intellectual Skills						Practical Skills					Transferable Skills					
Module Title	Module Code	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6
From Stars to Planets	7PAM2011	X	X					X									X	X	X		X			
Research Techniques in Astrophysics	7PAM2010	X	X	X				X	X	X				X	X		X	X	X	X	X			
Statistics and Analysis	7PAM1035			X						X					X				X					
Galaxy Structure and Evolution	7PAM1030	X	X					X										X						
Relativity and Field Theory	7PAM1027	X						X																
High Energy Astrophysics	7PAM1020	X		X				X	X					X	X		X	X	X	X	X			
Astrophysics Masters Project	7PAM2013	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X					X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Work Placement	7PAM2023						X													X	X			
Foundations of Cosmology	6PAM1056		X	X		X		X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
The Early Universe and Galaxy Formation	6PAM1058		X			X		X																
The Physics of Astronomical Spectra	6PAM1057		X			X		X																
Star Formation and Evolution	6PAM1055		X	X		X		X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Lagrangian Dynamics	6PAM2015					X		X																
General Relativity	7PAM1033					X		X																
Applied Photonics	6PAM2003			X		X		X	X						X	X	X	X	X		X			
Space Dynamics	6PAM2021					X		X									X	X					X	
Rocket Performance and Propulsion	6AAD0026					X		X																
Aerospace Aerodynamics	7ENT2054					X		X																
Space Systems	7PAM2025					X		X																
Data Science Core Skills Bootcamp	7PAM2003			X				X							X									

MSc Astrophysics with Advanced Research

		Programme Learning Outcomes (as identified in section 1 and the following page)																							
		Knowledge & Understanding						Intellectual Skills						Practical Skills					Transferable Skills						
Module Title	Module Code	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	
From Stars to Planets	7PAM2011	X	X					X									X	X	X		X				
Research Techniques in Astrophysics	7PAM2010	X	X	X				X	X	X				X	X		X	X	X	X	X				
Statistics and Analysis	7PAM1035			X						X					X				X						
Galaxy Structure and Evolution	7PAM1030	X	X					X										X							
Relativity and Field Theory	7PAM1027	X						X																	
High Energy Astrophysics	7PAM1020	X		X				X	X					X	X		X	X	X	X	X				
Astrophysics Masters Project	7PAM2013	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X					X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Advanced Research Seminars	7PAM2012	X	X	X	X					X	X	X	X					X			X	X	X	X	
Foundations of Cosmology	6PAM1056		X	X		X		X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
The Early Universe and Galaxy Formation	6PAM1058		X			X		X																	
The Physics of Astronomical Spectra	6PAM1057		X			X		X																	
Star Formation and Evolution	6PAM1055		X	X		X		X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Lagrangian Dynamics	6PAM2015					X		X																	
General Relativity	7PAM1033					X		X																	
Applied Photonics	6PAM2003			X		X		X	X						X	X	X	X	X		X				
Space Dynamics	6PAM2021					X		X									X	X					X		
Rocket Performance and Propulsion	6AAD0026					X		X																	
Aerospace Aerodynamics	7ENT2054					X		X																	
Space Systems	7PAM2025					X		X																	
Data Science Core Skills Bootcamp	7PAM2003			X				X							X										

KEY TO PROGRAMME LEARNING OUTCOMES

Knowledge and Understanding

- A1. Demonstrate systematic knowledge and understanding of the fundamental concepts ideas and theories of astrophysics, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of the field.
- A2. Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and understanding of astrophysical techniques applicable to research investigation and project work.
- A3. Demonstrate practical understanding of how established research techniques and enquiry, including statistical and computational methods, are used to create and interpret knowledge in the physics and astrophysics field.
- A4. Demonstrate a conceptual understanding that enables critical evaluation of current areas and methodologies of astrophysics.
- A5. Demonstrate a systematic understanding of key aspects of additional areas of astrophysics, theoretical physics, optical physics and/or space science, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of the field.
- A6. Demonstrate contextual knowledge of how to work effectively in a placement environment, alongside professionals or others engaged in scientific or commercial work.

Intellectual Skills

- B1. Formulate and tackle problems in astrophysics and related areas, using theory and analysis techniques.
- B2. Plan, execute and report the results of an astrophysics/physics experiment or project at a professional level.
- B3. Critically discuss the role of uncertainty, approximations, and numerical modelling used in astrophysics.
- B4. Critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), make judgments, and frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution or identify a range of solutions to a problem.
- B5. Effectively and independently explore the scientific literature within a specific area (or areas) and identify the key unanswered questions and the scope of on going research, while critically evaluating the ideas and results at the forefront of the field.
- B6. Present and discuss new ideas and established theory in the context of an evolving field of study, while providing good clarity to an audience of scientists in a seminar setting.

Practical Skills

- C1. Obtain astronomical data by observation or through database access, reduce the data using appropriate software, and make astrometric/photometric measurements.
- C2. Use statistical methods and/or computational techniques to quantify uncertainties and assess measurements.
- C3. Interpret measurements through comparison with analytical/modelling predictions.
- C4. Produce clear and accurate scientific reports on complex topics.
- C5. Make appropriate and effective use of the scientific literature, including peer-reviewed research articles.

Transferable Skills

- D1. Retrieve, synthesize, and evaluate information and data from a variety of sources.
- D2. Work effectively in a team.
- D3. Demonstrate personal time management, as well as taking initiative and responsibility for project work.
- D4. Make decisions in complex and unpredictable situations.
- D5. Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.
- D6. Continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.

Table 3: Development of Graduate Attributes in the Constituent Modules

This map identifies where the Graduate Attributes are delivered in the constituent modules. It provides (i) an aid to academic staff in understanding how individual modules contribute to the development of the Graduate Attributes (ii) a checklist for quality control purposes and (iii) a means to help students monitor their own personal and professional development as the programme progresses. [Note that there is no requirement for the Graduate Attributes to be assessed through these modules]

D = Delivered

Module Title	Module Code	Professionally Focused	Globally Minded	Sustainability Driven	Digitally capable & confident	Inclusive and collaborative	Evidenced based and Ethical
From Stars to Planets	7PAM2011	D	D	D	D		D
Research Techniques in Astrophysics	7PAM2010	D			D	D	D
Statistics and Analysis	7PAM1035	D	D	D	D		D
Galaxy Structure and Evolution	7PAM1030	D			D		D
Relativity and Field Theory	7PAM1027						D
High Energy Astrophysics	7PAM1020					D	D
Astrophysics Masters Project	7PAM2013	D			D		D
Advanced Research Seminars	7PAM2012	D			D		D
Foundations of Cosmology	6PAM1056	D			D	D	D
The Early Universe and Galaxy Formation	6PAM1058	D			D		D
The Physics of Astronomical Spectra	6PAM1057						D
Star Formation and Evolution	6PAM1055	D			D	D	D
Lagrangian Dynamics	6PAM2015						D
General Relativity	7PAM1033						D
Applied Photonics	6PAM2003	D	D		D	D	D
Space Dynamics	6PAM2021	D	D		D	D	D
Rocket Performance and Propulsion	6AAD0026	D	D		D	D	D
Aerospace Aerodynamics	7ENT2054	D	D				D
Space Systems	7PAM2025	D	D				D
Data Science Core Skills Bootcamp	7PAM2003				D		D
Work Placement	7PAM2023	D	D		D	D	

Section 2

Programme management

Relevant QAA subject benchmarking statements	Physics, Astronomy and Astrophysics (Masters level)
Type of programme	Taught Postgraduate
Date of validation/last periodic review	February 21
Date of production/ last revision of PS	March 2024
Relevant to level/cohort	Level 7 entering September 2024
Administrative School	School of Physics, Engineering & Computer Science
Language of Delivery	English

Table 4 Course structure

Course details			
Course Code	Course Description	HECOS	UCAS
PEAPM	MSc Astrophysics	100415	N/A
PEAPME	MSc Astrophysics – Extended (with Advanced Research)	100415	N/A
PEAPME	MSc Astrophysics – Extended (Sandwich)	100415	N/A