

Guidelines for Summer School Credit

2023-May-15

Graduate students have been asking for some clarity on how many credits a given summer school may be worth. This document is intended to give some guidance to students and their supervisors, and to provide some uniformity for the granting of credits.

Calendar Description:

PHYS 885 - Approved Summer School (1-3 credits)

This course is available to full-time Physics graduate students in good standing. Students will participate in a summer school offered by an approved institute. The school and credit award must be approved by a committee of 3 faculty members, consisting of Physics Graduate Coordinator, Department Head and one other member (typically the supervisor).

NOTE: This class can be taken more than once in a program, for a maximum total of 3 credit hours, provided the institute and course content are different each time.

From the Course Creation Motion Rationale in 2017:

The class will be a C/NC course; the student's grade will be determined by the committee, possibly with consultation with the institute offering the course. Students will be required to complete a short report or give a presentation about the course (all aspects of the evaluation will be decided by the committee when the course is approved).

Steps for Credit:

1. *Prior to attendance at the school* (preferably when the student's application to the school has been accepted), the supervisor should notify the Department Head and Graduate Coordinator of the intention for the student to take the school for credit. The supervisor should include all relevant content information from the school's website, including: sponsoring organization, topics covered, names and institutions of instructors, length of the school, etc.
2. *Prior to attendance at the school*, the committee consisting of Graduate Coordinator, Department Head and Supervisor should decide how many credits the school is worth, what short report or presentation the student will be required to do after the course to gain credit, and the deadline by which the student must complete the work (typically the end of the semester that the course takes place in). If the Supervisor is also either Department Head or Graduate Coordinator, then a third member should be chosen from the other Physics Faculty.
3. *After the school is over*, and the student has completed the required presentation or short report, the committee will meet briefly to decide whether to confer credit, or not.
4. If credit is to be granted, Department Head will ask the Physics Administrator to create a section of PHYS 885 for each approved school, for the semester FOLLOWING the school, that the student can enroll in.
5. The Physics Head will maintain an accessible spreadsheet (FILR or other system) which records the school particulars and credits given, so that the Department can maintain consistency if the school keeps the same format and level of engagement in future years.

Guidelines for Number of Credits:

Schools offered by national laboratories and other reputable organizations are of generally high quality, and there will normally be no question of granting credit. The question is simply a matter of how many credits a given school may be worth.

- The Associate Dean of FGSR (Chris Orliet) has indicated that a 3 credit hour 800-level class has 32.5 hours of classroom instruction, with the student expected to spend at least 32.5 hours additional time on study/assignments, for a total of at least 65 hours of engagement. In addition, the course has a final exam or other evaluation component, which takes additional effort.
- He suggests that in deciding how many credits to give for a summer school, we should take into account the total number of instructional hours of the school, and whether or not it has a formal evaluation component.
- Based on this, it would be sensible for an in-person two week school involving at least 65 hours of instruction, and no exam or other formal evaluation component, should be worth 2 credits, and that a 1 week school involving at least 32.5 hours of instruction and no evaluation component should be worth 1 credit.
- A higher number of credits may be given if the school has an evaluation component, such as reports or presentations made during the school.
- If the school is virtual, it might be appropriate to reduce the credits, as the student quality of engagement is substantially reduced compared to an in-person school.

Student Work Component after Completion of Class (one of the following):

- *Physics Seminar*, where all of the students who have completed schools share a seminar slot (15-20 minutes each), presenting a high-quality presentation on one of the topics discussed at the school, and answer questions on it.
- *Short Report* (3-5 pages *Physical Review Letters* style) summarizing a major topic from the school.
- *Physics Journal Club*, where the student chooses a topic or paper discussed at the school, and leads a 45 minute discussion on it.

The student's work should be done in a professional manner, as it is part of their career development, and will be graded excellent/pass/fail.