Expected Outcomes: Acquire appropriate knowledge and skills

A master's degree in physics qualifies the recipient to teach at a 2-year college level. This means having successfully taken 18 hours of graduate credit in physics. In other words, a person with a master's degree in physics understands basic physics at a level of sophistication to be able to teach freshman and college students.

Assessment methods

Method: Score on General Doctoral Exam

Very few physics graduates students who come to Auburn aspire to a master's degree only. They either get a master's from AU (1) as they are on their way to their Ph.D., (2) because they have decided to go elsewhere to complete their Ph.D. research, or (3) they have not scored high enough on the written General Doctoral Examination (GDE) to be admitted to Ph.D. candidacy at Auburn. Students who score high enough on the GDE to go forward for their Ph.D. obviously qualify for a master's. Those who score just below that level are awarded a master's as a terminal degree. The entire faculty meets after each GDE to discuss and decide the appropriate score.

Findings:

100% of the students who took the GDE in 2011-2012 scored high enough to earn an MS

How did you use findings for improvement?

The content and level of difficulty of the GDE is constantly discussed and assessed by the faculty even when the success seems sufficient.

Additional comments:

None

Method: Successful Course work

Since the master's in physics is primarily aimed for persons who will teach, successful course work is considered as demonstrating the acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills.

Findings:

Some students struggle to maintain the required 2.87 GPA in the core graduate courses even though they are able to maintain the 3.0 GPA required by the Graduate School

How did you use findings for improvement?

While it is viewed as unfortunate that all students do not succeed, it is also recognized that maintaining standards is a necessary and important role for the faculty. The graduate faculty learning committee regularly re-evaluates the level of difficulty and content of the core graduate courses. While we will continue to try ways to increase success, it is our judgement at this time that no dramatic changes are necessary.

Additional comments:

None