Assessment of proficiency for new students:

First year students can request to be assessed for proficiency in the courses of the key areas, i.e., Classical Mechanics (PHY131), Electricity & Magnetism (PHY145 and/or PHY146), Quantum Mechanics (PHY163 and/or PHY164), Statistical Mechanics (PHY153), and Astronomy (for the students in the Astrophysics Track; AST121 and/or AST122). The student must submit the request to the Director of Graduate Studies within seven days from the start of the semester (counting from the first day of classes in the Fall or Spring semesters as specified on the University academic calendar). The Director of Graduate Studies, in consultation with current and/or recent instructors of the course(s) in question and the student’s advisor, will be responsible for deciding on the disposition of the request. If the request is approved, the student will be considered as having received a grade of A- in that course for the purpose of fulfilling the Ph.D. proficiency requirements.

In order to be eligible, the student must have passed a graduate level course that is equivalent to the course taught in our department with a grade of at least A- or equivalent. With the submission of the request, the student must provide evidence of the grade received, and the course syllabus (including a detailed description of the content of the course and the adopted textbooks). The Director of Graduate Studies may request additional information, or impose requirements that may include, but are not limited to: requiring the student to enroll in the course and be assessed through one or more assignments in the first few weeks of classes; taking an oral examination with the instructor of the course; or taking a written exam. In any case a final decision must be made no later than two business days before the final date for dropping courses without record of enrollment as specified in the academic calendar.

In specific circumstances, the Director of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the student’s advisor, can allow the student, during the first semester, to take a more advanced course (e.g., Advanced Quantum Mechanics, PHY263, or General Relativity, PHY167) in place of one of the basic courses, while still taking a full load of courses. In this case, if the student shows excellent performance in the first semester, he/she can petition for a waiver of the remaining basic courses.