

Programme Specification (PG)

Awarding body / institution:	Queen Mary University of London
Teaching institution:	Queen Mary University of London
Name of final award and title:	MSc Astrophysics, PGCert Astronomy and Astrophysics
Name of interim award(s):	PGCert Astrophysics
Duration of study / period of registration:	1 Year FT, 2 Years PT
Queen Mary programme code(s):	F5S1, F5S2 and FSEG
QAA Benchmark Group:	
FHEQ Level of Award:	Level 7
Programme accredited by:	N/A
Date Programme Specification approved:	
Responsible School / Institute:	School of Physical and Chemical Sciences

Schools / Institutes which will also be involved in teaching part of the programme:

Collaborative institution(s) / organisation(s) involved in delivering the programme:

N/A

Programme outline

The MSc Astrophysics is a one year FT or two year PT course that is unique in the UK in the scope of material covered. It consists of eight taught modules and a project which gives students a detailed overview of the fundamentals of the subject as well as an up-to-date account of recent developments in research. The wide range of topics covered by the course reflects the breadth of research interests pursued by the members of staff in our large and friendly research group. Lectures cover such diverse topics as the origin of the universe, dark matter, dark energy, galaxies, radiation mechanisms in astrophysics, the life and death of stars, black holes, extrasolar planets, the solar system, space and solar plasma physics and research methods. Students also write a dissertation on a project on an astrophysical topic of a theoretical, computational or observational nature.

Aims of the programme

- 1) To provide an understanding of a wide range of fields in astronomy and astrophysics and to give students a detailed overview of the fundamentals of the subject as well as knowledge of the most recent research results.
- 2) To provide an opportunity for graduates in a subject with substantial mathematical or physical content to pursue their

interest in astronomy, which leads to a formal postgraduate qualification in the subject.

3) To provide a starting point for a research career in astronomy, astrophysics or cosmology, both within the University and elsewhere.

4) To provide an understanding of the contemporary research in an area in astrophysics through completion of an extended project under the guidance of a supervisor at the forefront of research in the relevant subject area.

5) To provide students with a friendly and supportive environment in which to enrich their learning experience through interaction with active research staff and other students.

What will you be expected to achieve?

Students successfully completing the programme will be able to:

Academic Content:

A 1	Demonstrate an advanced understanding of theories and ideas in a number of astrophysical topics.
A 2	Communicate complex scientific ideas, concisely, accurately and informatively.
A 3	Manage their own research, making use of journal articles and other primary sources.

Disciplinary Skills - able to:

B 1	Plan and execute an investigation and critically analyse the results, drawing valid conclusions.
B 2	Learn to carry out original work as well as independent work.
B 3	Develop and demonstrate, through the preparation of their project in writing, an ability to assimilate and understand a topic of current research in astrophysics.

Attributes:

C 1	Acquire and apply knowledge in a rigorous way.
C 2	Explain and argue clearly and concisely.
C 3	Connect ideas and information within their field of study.

C4	Critically evaluate the reliability of different sources of information.
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How will you learn?

With the exception of SPA7xxxP (Galaxies), SPC721P (Research methods), SPA7038P (Practical Astrophysics), and Deep Learning (SPA7037P), all taught modules consist of a three hours each week (33 hours in total), with most modules given as one block of three hours. This is made up of two hours of lectures and one hour of tutorial, during which the students can ask questions to the lecturer and gain a deeper knowledge of materials covered in the lecture.

Galaxies is made up of 28 hours of lectures, and 22 hours of exercise classes during which the students can ask questions to the lecturer and gain a deeper knowledge of materials covered in the lectures.

The practical skills based modules SPC721P (Research methods), SPA7038P (Practical Astrophysics), and Deep Learning (SPA7037P) consist of a variety of interactive sessions and computer lab based sessions.

The research project involves regular one to one meetings with the supervisor.

How will you be assessed?

All taught modules on the MSc bar SPC721P (Research methods), SPA7038P (Practical Astrophysics), and Deep Learning (SPA7037P) are assessed by 90% final exam and 10% coursework.

Research methods SPC721P is a research methods based module which prepares students for their dissertation. This is assessed by 100% coursework.

SPA7038P (Practical Astrophysics) is a practical module providing students with the most common research tools in astrophysics. This is assessed by 100% coursework (the creation of a poster (50%) and a final investigation report (50%)).

Deep Learning (SPA7037P) teaches hands on skills in applications of deep learning and is assessed by 100% coursework via two projects.

The core 60 credit project is weighted as 100% dissertation and should be roughly 10,000 words.

How is the programme structured?

Please specify the structure of the programme diets for all variants of the programme (e.g. full-time, part-time - if applicable). The description should be sufficiently detailed to fully define the structure of the diet.

F55J Full-Time MSc Astrophysics:

Students take eight modules (each of 15 credits) from the compulsory modules and the list of electives taught modules, and the project/dissertation during semesters 1 -3.

F552 Part-Time MSc Astrophysics:

Over the two years, students take eight modules (each of 15 credits) from the compulsory modules and the list of electives taught modules. Students take the project/dissertation in the second year.

Students can choose to take the taught modules in any order, but they should take 2 in semester 1 and two in semester 2 for both years.

F53G Postgraduate Certificate in Astrophysics:

Students should be offered the list of elective taught modules and should register for 60 credits, to be completed in one academic year. PGCert students do not normally take the module "Research Methods".

(For all programmes) The choice of electives has to be agreed by the Programme Director, taking into account the past academic record of student.

Academic Year of Study FT - Year 1

Module Title	Module Code	Credits	Level	Module Selection Status	Academic Year of Study	Semester
Astrophysical Plasmas	SPA7004P	15	7	Elective	1	Semester 2
Extrasolar Planets and Astrophysical Discs	SPA7009P	15	7	Elective	1	Semester 2
Stellar Structure and Evolution	SPA7023P	15	7	Elective	1	Semester 1
MSC ASTROPHYSICS RESEARCH PROJECT	SPA7000P	15	7	Core	1	Semesters 2 & 3
Galaxies	SPA7xxxP	15	7	Elective	1	Semester 2
Relativity and Gravitation	SPA7019P	15	7	Elective	1	Semester 1
Research Methods	SPC721P	15	7	Compulsory	1	Semester 1
Radiative Transfer and Astrochemistry	SPA7036P	15	7	Elective	1	Semester 1
Advanced Cosmology	SPA7028P	15	7	Elective	1	Semester 1
Deep Learning	SPA7037P	15	7	Elective	1	Semester 2
Practical Astrophysics	SPA7038P	15	7	Elective	1	Semester 2

What are the entry requirements?

Students wishing to take the MSc Astrophysics should normally have a first- or second-class honours degree (or equivalent) in a subject with substantial Physics, Mathematics and/or Astronomy content. Students who do not qualify may wish to take the Postgraduate Certificate in Astronomy and Astrophysics (the first year of the MSc Astrophysics programme) which normally requires a pass degree (or equivalent) in a subject with a substantial Physics, Mathematics and/or Astronomy content. Students who do sufficiently well in the Postgraduate Certificate examinations may be allowed to change their registration to the Part-Time MSc Astrophysics and move into its second year.

How will the quality of the programme be managed and enhanced? How do we listen to and act on your feedback?

The Student Voice Committee provides a formal means of communication and discussion between Schools and its students. The committee consists of student representatives from each year in the school/institute together with appropriate representation from staff within the school/institute. It is designed to respond to the needs of students, as well as act as a forum for discussing

programme and module developments. The Student Voice Committee meet regularly throughout the year.

Each school operates an Education Committee, or equivalent, which advises the School/Institute Director of Education on all matters relating to the delivery of taught programmes at school level including monitoring the application of relevant QM policies and reviewing all proposals for module and programme approval and amendment before submission to Taught Programmes Board. Student views are incorporated in this Committee's work in a number of ways, such as through student membership, or consideration of student surveys.

All schools operate an Annual Programme Review of their taught undergraduate and postgraduate provision. The process is normally organised at a School-level basis with the Head of School, or equivalent, responsible for the completion of the school's Annual Programme Reviews. Schools/institutes are required to produce a separate Annual Programme Review for undergraduate programmes and for postgraduate taught programmes using the relevant Undergraduate or Postgraduate Annual Programme Review pro-forma. Students' views are considered in this process through analysis of the NSS and module evaluations.

What academic support is available?

The programme director acts as academic advisor to the students and they are also allocated a project supervisor, based on their research interests. During the project regular supervision meetings are expected.

Programme-specific rules and facts

As part of the Academic regulations the following special regulation applies for the MSc Astrophysics:

Condoned failure

6.40 The examination board may condone failure in the taught component of modules up to a maximum value of 30 credits, where:

- i. A student achieves a module mark of 0.0 or higher; and,
- ii. The student achieves an average mark of 50.0 or higher across all modules.

How inclusive is the programme for all students, including those with disabilities?

Queen Mary has a central Disability and Dyslexia Service (DDS) that offers support for all students with disabilities, specific learning difficulties and mental health issues. The DDS supports all Queen Mary students: full-time, part-time, undergraduate, postgraduate, UK and international at all campuses and all sites.

Students can access advice, guidance and support in the following areas:

- Finding out if you have a specific learning difficulty like dyslexia
- Applying for funding through the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)
- Arranging DSA assessments of need
- Special arrangements in examinations
- Accessing loaned equipment (e.g. digital recorders)
- Specialist one-to-one "study skills" tuition
- Ensuring access to course materials in alternative formats (e.g. Braille)
- Providing educational support workers (e.g. note-takers, readers, library assistants)
- Mentoring support for students with mental health issues and conditions on the autistic spectrum.

Links with employers, placement opportunities and transferable skills

The School has a dedicated SEPnet Employer Engagement Officer who provides links between students and industry, arranging work placement opportunities.

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Programme Specification Approval

Person completing Programme Specification:

Karim Malik

Person responsible for management of programme:

Karim Malik

Date Programme Specification produced / amended by School / Institute Education Committee:

27 Nov 2025

Date Programme Specification approved by Taught Programmes Board:

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