



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

# Physics MS Graduate Program Handbook

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# Physics MS

Together, the [Graduate Student Handbook](#) and your graduate program handbook should serve as your main guide throughout your graduate career. The Graduate Student Handbook includes university information, policies, requirements and guidance for all graduate students. Your program handbook describes the details about graduate study and requirements in your specific program. While both of these handbooks are wonderful resources, know that you are always welcome to talk with faculty and staff in your program and in the Graduate College.

The central activities and missions of a university rest upon the fundamental assumption that all members of the university community conduct themselves in accordance with a strict adherence to academic and scholarly integrity. As a graduate student and member of the university community, you are expected to display the highest standards of academic and personal integrity.

Here are some resources to help you better understand your responsibilities:

- [Academic Honesty](#)
- [Academic Integrity Training](#) - Open to all graduate students at no cost
- [Plagiarism](#)

## Introduction

The Master of Science in Physics degree is flexibly designed to prepare students for the widest possible range of industrial careers or further study at the doctoral level, according to student interests and goals. With a 12-credit common core, the student's other 18 remaining required credit hours are planned in consultation with an academic adviser. These may include courses from other departments. Courses must be selected so that at least one-half of the required courses are taken at the 6000 level. Additionally, 3 hours of directed research or 6 thesis hours are required. Students pursuing a non-thesis master's degree must take at least one Directed Research course as part of their elective work. In this course students will work on a research project under the supervision of a faculty member and present a final report.

## Satisfactory Academic Performance

Satisfactory performance involves maintaining the standards of academic progress and professional integrity expected in a particular discipline or program. Failure to maintain these standards may result in termination of the student from the program.

A program GPA below 3.00 at the end of any semester will result in a student being placed on "academic probationary" status. In this status, a student is not eligible for tuition waiver support or employment as graduate assistant (teaching or research). The students are given the next nine hours of their program coursework to improve their GPA to 3.00 or better. Further, exceeding six credit hours of C or lower grades or a program GPA of 2.00 or lower will result in removal from the program.

4000-level coursework is acceptable in a graduate plan of study if taken while a graduate student, but is limited to six credit hours and the grade has to be that of a B- or higher. An approved 4000-level course is not counted toward completion of the program requirement, but it is calculated in the graduate GPA.

## Curriculum

Please visit the [Graduate Catalog](#) to see the current curriculum for our program.

# Timeline for Completion

## Advising and Mentoring

All graduate students will be advised by the graduate program director and the program assistant upon entering the program. Full-time, regular faculty members of the Department of Physics serve as the student's advisors for students with a research assistantship. He or she will help the student to devise a coursework plan besides offering research opportunities. For formal matters, such as course waivers, credit transfers, and petitions, the student must always consult the graduate program director. Students with a teaching assistantship will be advised by the graduate program director on academic issues, tuition, petitions, teaching assignments, etc.

It is possible to change a thesis advisor. Permission must be requested from the graduate program director. A new advisor must be identified by the student before the end of the term during which the change took place.

It is the thesis advisor's role to supervise the research work performed by the student. In most cases the advisor will provide a theme or a research project that can be developed within a reasonable timeframe and using available resources. It is the student's responsibility to perform the research and follow the guidance provided by the advisor as well as the recommendations of the thesis committee.

## Thesis Requirements

### University Dissertation Requirements

The College of Graduate Studies [Thesis and Dissertation page](#) contains information on the university's requirements for dissertation formatting, format review, defenses, final submission, and more. A step-by-step completion guide is also available on [Thesis and Dissertation Services](#) Site.

All university deadlines are listed in the [Academic Calendar](#). Your program or college may have other earlier deadlines; please check with your program and college staff for additional deadlines.

#### **The following requirements must be met by dissertation students in their final term:**

- Submit a properly formatted file for initial format review by the format review deadline
- Submit the Thesis and Dissertation Release Option form well before the defense
- Defend by the defense deadline
- Receive format approval (if not granted upon initial review)
- Submit signed approval form by final submission deadline
- Submit final dissertation document by final submission deadline

Students must format their dissertation according to the standards outlined in [Thesis and Dissertation Webcourse](#). Formatting questions or issues can be submitted to the Format Help page in the [Thesis and Dissertation Services](#) site. Format reviews and final submission must be completed in the [Thesis and Dissertation Services](#) site. The Dissertation Approval Form is also available in the Thesis and Dissertation Services site.

The College of Graduate Studies offers several thesis and dissertation [Workshops](#) each term. Students are highly encouraged to attend these workshops early in the dissertation process to fully understand the above policies and procedures.

The College of Graduate Studies thesis and dissertation office is best reached by email at [editor@ucf.edu](mailto:editor@ucf.edu).

# Graduate Research

## Areas of Research

The Physics department has very successful research programs in the areas of materials for energy needs, physics at the nanoscale, planetary science, surface science, biological physics, atomic and molecular physics which includes the recent addition of attosecond physics, and a conglomeration of efforts in computational physics. There are also emerging research initiatives in the areas of physics education research and mathematical physics. In the past three years, physics faculty members have published collectively about 150 papers per year and their work has been cited over 3000 times per year.

To learn more, please visit the [Physics website](#).

Research is a fundamental part of the Physics Graduate Program. Starting with Directed Research hours and then continuing with Thesis hours, if applicable. Students gain a solid experience in how to carry competitive research programs in their fields of specialization. It is expected that they will adhere to the highest standards of conduct and act responsibly. Academic dishonesty and plagiarism are sufficient for the dismissal of the student from the Program. For additional information, refer to the College of Graduate Studies, graduate student forms and files, Student Services Records, Academic Honesty flyer at [graduate.ucf.edu/students/](http://graduate.ucf.edu/students/).

Students should also be aware that any laboratory or experimental work must comply with certain regulations and safety standards set by UCF. Students should discuss this subject with their research supervisor before starting any laboratory research activity. Additional information about required laboratory training and training registration may be found online at the UCF Environmental Health & Safety website at [ehs.ucf.edu/](http://ehs.ucf.edu/).

The student is also expected to participate in a minimum 2 professional conferences in his or her field of specialization. These events are important not just for communicating results, but also for making contacts that may help open future employment opportunities. Funding for participating in conferences, summer schools, and workshops is usually available from the supervisor's research grants. There are also some in-house sources, such as the events coordinated by the graduate student societies (GSPS and PWS). Find out more about these events by visiting their websites at [sciences.ucf.edu/physics/gsp/](http://sciences.ucf.edu/physics/gsp/) and [sciences.ucf.edu/physics/pws/](http://sciences.ucf.edu/physics/pws/).

The College of Graduate Studies offers a Graduate Travel Award that provides funding for master's, specialist, and doctoral students to deliver a research paper or comparable creative activity at a profession meeting. Students must be the primary author and presenter. More information can be found on the Graduate Studies website: [graduate.ucf.edu/presentation-fellowship/](http://graduate.ucf.edu/presentation-fellowship/).

Graduate Students Travel Funding is available to pay transportation expenses for graduate students who are delivering a research paper or comparable creative activity at a professional meeting. Contact the Student Government Association at 407/823-3291 for more information or go to [facebook.com/groups/UCFgsa/](https://facebook.com/groups/UCFgsa/).

## Human Subjects

If the student chooses to conduct research that involves human subjects (i.e. surveys, interviews, etc.), he or she must gain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval prior to beginning the study. For access to the IRB submission form and sample consent forms, please visit the Office of Research website: [research.ucf.edu/Compliance/IRB/Investigators/pi\\_manual.html](http://research.ucf.edu/Compliance/IRB/Investigators/pi_manual.html).

## Animal Subjects

If the student chooses to conduct research that involves animal subjects, he or she must gain Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) approval prior to beginning the study. For access to the IACUC submission forms, please visit the Office of Research website: [research.ucf.edu/Research/OfficeOfAnimalWelfare.html](http://research.ucf.edu/Research/OfficeOfAnimalWelfare.html).

If you have questions regarding human or animal subjects, please contact IRB Coordinator, at 407/823-2901. You may also e-mail [IRB@ucf.edu](mailto:IRB@ucf.edu).

## Ethics in Research

Researchers in every discipline have a responsibility for ethical awareness as the status of the profession rests with each individual researcher. It is important to be honest and ethical in conducting research as well as in taking classes. The ethical collection and use of information includes, but is by no means limited to, the following: confidentiality, accuracy, relevance, self-responsibility, honesty, and awareness of conflict of interest. The University of Arizona's Code of Research Ethics provides our students with guidelines for responsible practice in research. This code of ethics can be found here: [facultygovernance.arizona.edu/resource/code-research-ethics](http://facultygovernance.arizona.edu/resource/code-research-ethics).

## Patent and Invention Policy

UCF is authorized to manage, protect, and license inventions and work products developed by University Personnel. As per UCF Policy, "Graduate students are required to maintain accurate and complete laboratory notebooks and/or other written documentation of invention(s) and creations of work. Prior to leaving UCF, students must submit the original copy of all and any such documentation including any reports, software codes, and/or any other outstanding items to their mentor, although students may retain a copy for their files." The Office of Technology Transfer (OTT) identifies, assesses, protects, markets, and licenses commercially viable intellectual property developed at UCF. Additional information is available online from the Graduate Catalog: [ucf.catalog.acalog.com/index.php?catoid=4](http://ucf.catalog.acalog.com/index.php?catoid=4) > Policies > General Graduate Policies > Ownership of Intellectual Property.

## Financial Support

The Physics Department offers financial support in the form of Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs). These positions are renewable on an academic term basis. When granted, they are guaranteed in the Fall and Spring terms during the first year provided the student maintains a good academic standing. They may also be offered during Summer terms depending on the availability of positions and departmental funds. All Graduate Teaching Assistants are required to be full-time students and that means enrolling in at least 9 credit-hours during Fall and Spring terms and 6 credit-hours in the Summer if they have not yet passed the candidacy exam. Eligible students receive an assistantship with a minimum of \$20,600 per year or more. This amount does not include any tuition waiver and health insurance. Students are responsible for paying their fees. After being one year in the program, the GTA positions are not guaranteed, but typically eligible second year students who did not receive a Research Assistantship receive a GTA position.

The maximum FTE (Full Time Employment) a GTA can take is 0.50, corresponding to 20 hours/week. Stipends range between US\$ 15 to 20 per hour. Non-matriculation fees are not included in the waiver. All graduate students with an assistantship and full-time status are not charged out-of-state tuition or the non-resident financial aid fee. If a student with a financial package does not maintain full-time status out-of state fees will not be waived.

All students who apply to the program before the target deadline of January 15 are automatically considered candidates for UCF-sponsored fellowship. If you were never contacted by the graduate program director regarding these fellowships, either your application was not complete by the target deadline or you were not eligible.

It is important that all students communicate their interest in renewing their GTA to the graduate program director at least one month before the beginning of the next term. They must also pre-register for all courses they plan to attend in order to facilitate the assignments of laboratory sections and cause the minimal schedule conflict with their classes.

Regular and affiliated faculty members of the Department of Physics often pay graduate research assistants to work in their projects. These positions go by the name of Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs) and carry an hourly rate similar to a GTA. Eligible students are required to be in good academic standing to take GRAs. UCF also provides full tuition waiver for matriculation fees for the GRAs and the rules are similar to those mentioned above for the case of GTAs. GRA positions can be renewed indefinitely, depending upon mutual interest and the supervisor's funds availability.

## International Students

Several types of employment are available to international students, including on-campus employment. For more information about the types of employment available to international students, and the requirements and restrictions based in visa-type, please see the International Affairs and Global Strategies' website: [global.ucf.edu/](http://global.ucf.edu/) > Current Students > Employment.

## Assistantships and Tuition Waivers

For complete information about university assistantship and tuition waivers, please see the UCF Graduate Catalog: [ucf.catalog.acalog.com/index.php?catoid=4](http://ucf.catalog.acalog.com/index.php?catoid=4) > Financial Information.

To be employed and to maintain employment in a graduate position, the student must be:

- In good academic standing
- Enrolled full-time

To be awarded and continue receipt of a tuition waiver, the student must be:

- In good academic standing
- Enrolled full-time
- Employed in a graduate position (GTA, GRA, GA) or receiving a University fellowship.

## GTA Training Requirements

If the student is hired in the position of Graduate Teaching Associate, Assistant or Graders, there are training requirements that must be met in order for the contract to be processed. Graduate teaching associates must complete the online GTA Grader Training and GTA Assistant Training, complete the online Part I GTA Associate Training, and attend an all day, face-to-face workshop presented by the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning. Graduate teaching assistants must complete the online GTA Grader Training and GTA Assistant Training. Graduate teaching graders must complete the online GTA Grader Training. For more information, visit the [Graduate Teaching](#) section of the Graduate Student Handbook on the College of Graduate Studies Students website.

In addition to the required GTA Training, the student may be required to complete the FERPA and EHS training. Additional information on both of these trainings may be found online at [registrar.ucf.edu/training/](http://registrar.ucf.edu/training/) and [ehs.ucf.edu/Training](http://ehs.ucf.edu/Training).

International students who will be hired in GTA positions must be proficient in the English language. This is determined by successfully passing the SPEAK test with a score of 55 or better. This test (also known as the Oral Proficiency Exam) is administered by the Center for Multicultural and Multilingual Services (CMMS). International

students with a GTA may register for the SPEAK examination by visiting [global.ucf.edu/english-language-institute/speaktest/](http://global.ucf.edu/english-language-institute/speaktest/).

## **GTA Performance Assessment**

At the completion of each semester the student is employed as a GTA, the student's performance will be evaluated by the faculty supervisor. The supervisor is typically the faculty member who coordinates the sections of the course where the GTA is an instructor. In addition to the supervisor's evaluation, student perception of instruction forms may be collected for GTAs to be used as part of their performance evaluation. These assessments will be used to review strengths and weaknesses in the student's performance in preparation for future employment.

## **Annual Performance Appraisal**

At the beginning of each year the students' performance will be evaluated by the faculty and/or the graduate program director. This annual assessment reviews performance in course work and in assistantship positions. This appraisal may also include an update to the students' Plan of Study.

## **Miscellaneous**

GTA positions are assigned usually one month before the beginning of classes. The assignments are based on academic standing, past performance, and availability of funds. Students who want to be considered for these positions must register at least two (2) months in advance in order to minimize conflicts between their course schedule and teaching assignments. GTAs are required to attend the coordination meeting the week before the start of class of each semester. GTAs may be required to assist faculty with proctoring final exams.

GRA positions are made available by individual faculty members of the Physics Department and are not the responsibility of the Graduate Program. Students are strongly encouraged to inquire about these positions by contacting regular and affiliated faculty members of the Department.

Office space is provided to all graduate teaching assistants. A few personal desktop computers for their use are also available. All students admitted into the doctoral program receive a departmental e-mail account, a mailbox, and are listed on the departmental web directory. Students need consent by the office manager to use the copy machine and to receive departmental stationary and supplies.

## **Graduate Student Associations**

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) is UCF's graduate organization committed to enrich graduate students' personal, educational and professional experience. To learn more or get involved, please visit [facebook.com/groups/UCFgsa/](https://facebook.com/groups/UCFgsa/). For individual department or graduate program organizations, please see program advisor.

## **Professional Development**

Students may take advantage of several professional developmental opportunities on campus, such as grant-proposal writing workshops, graduate research fair, and others. Also, every year the College of Graduate Studies sponsors several graduate Award Recognitions. Nominations typically happen in January. Additionally, the Department of Physics annually presents an award to the best Graduate Teaching Assistants named the Jack Noon prize. Nominations are sought during the Spring term.

The Department of Physics runs a weekly colloquium series open to all faculty and students. The schedule is available on the Department web page at [sciences.ucf.edu/physics/graduate/](http://sciences.ucf.edu/physics/graduate/) > Department > Colloquia.

Graduate students are expected to attend the colloquia. An effort is made to try to bring speakers who can give a broad overview of a certain research area and talk in accessible terms about research in the forefront of their fields. Several faculty members also run periodic group meetings and seminar series. Students are encouraged to contact faculty members to learn about their research projects and the positions they may have available in their groups.

## Travel Support

The College of Graduate Studies offers a Graduate Presentation Fellowship that provides funding for master's, specialist, and doctoral students to deliver a research paper or comparable creative activity at a profession meeting. Students must be the primary author and presenter. Visit [Graduate Presentation Fellowship](#) for more information.

Student Government Association Funding is available to pay transportation expenses for graduate students who are delivering a research paper or comparable creative activity at a professional meeting. Contact the Student Government Association at 407/823-3291 for more information.

## Instructor Training and Development

The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL) promotes excellence in all levels of teaching at the University of Central Florida. They offer several programs for the professional development of Graduate Teaching Assistants at UCF.

- **GTA Training** (mandatory for employment as a GTA)  
This training provides information and resources for students who will be instructors. The training covers a variety of topics, including course development, learning theories, lecturing, and academic freedom.
- **Preparing Tomorrow's Faculty Program**  
This certificate program (12-weeks) consists of group and individualized instruction by Faculty Center staff and experienced UCF professors. Textbooks and materials are provided.

For more information, go to [fctl.ucf.edu/](http://fctl.ucf.edu/) > Events > GTA Programs or call 407/823-3544.

## Pathways to Success Workshops

Coordinated by the College of Graduate Studies, the Pathways to Success program offers free development opportunities for graduate students including workshops in Academic Integrity, Graduate Grantsmanship, Graduate Teaching, Personal Development, Professional Development, and Research. For more information and how to register, please visit [graduate.ucf.edu/pathways-to-success/](http://graduate.ucf.edu/pathways-to-success/).

## Graduate Student Association

[facebook.com/groups/UCFgsa/](https://facebook.com/groups/UCFgsa/)

## Graduate Research Forum

Sponsored by the College of Graduate Studies, the Research Forum is an opportunity for students to showcase their research and creative projects and to receive valuable feedback from faculty judges. Awards for best poster and best oral presentation in each category will be given and all participants will receive recognition.

## Graduate Excellence Awards

Each year, the College of Graduate Studies offers graduate students who strive for academic and professional excellence the opportunity to be recognized for their work. The award categories include the following:

**Award for Excellence by a Graduate Teaching Assistant** – This award is for students who provide teaching support and assistance under the direction of a lead teacher. This award focuses on the extent and quality of the assistance provided by the student to the lead instructor and the students in the class. (Not intended for students who are instructor of record)

**Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching** – This award is for students who serve as instructors of record and have independent classroom responsibilities. The focus of this award is on the quality of the student's teaching and the academic contributions of those activities.

**Award for the Outstanding Master's Thesis** – It recognizes graduate students for excellence in the master's thesis. The focus of this award is on the quality and contribution of the student's thesis research. Excellence of the master's thesis may be demonstrated by evidence such as, but not limited to: publications in refereed journals, awards and recognitions from professional organizations, and praise from faculty members and other colleagues in the field. The university award will be forwarded to a national-level competition sponsored by the Council of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS) when the thesis discipline corresponds to the annual submission request.

For the nomination process and eligibility criteria, see the College of Graduate Studies website [graduate.ucf.edu/awards-and-recognition/](http://graduate.ucf.edu/awards-and-recognition/).

## Other

For information about the Council of Southern Graduate Schools (CSGS) thesis and dissertation awards, see their website: [csgs.org/](http://csgs.org/) > Awards.

For grant-proposal writing resources: [uwc.cah.ucf.edu/](http://uwc.cah.ucf.edu/) > Writing for Graduate School.

## Job Search

### Career Services and Experiential Learning

[career.ucf.edu/](http://career.ucf.edu/)

Graduate career development issues are unique and include evaluating academic and nonacademic career choices, discussing graduate school effect on career choices, as well as learning, evaluating, and refining networking and interviewing skills. Whatever your needs, the offices of Career Services and Experiential Learning offer services and resources to aid in the career exploration and job search of Master and Doctoral students in every academic discipline.

## Forms

- [College of Graduate Studies Forms and References](#)  
A complete listing of general forms and references for graduate students, with direct links, may be found here.
- [Graduate Petition Form](#)  
When unusual situations arise, petitions for exceptions to policy may be requested by the student. Depending on the type of appeal, the student should contact his/her program adviser to begin the petition process.

- [Physics Graduate Forms](#)  
All forms must be typed and submitted directly to the department's Program Assistant.
- [Traveling Scholar Form](#)  
If a student would like to take advantage of special resources available on another campus but not available on the home campus; for example, special course offerings, research opportunities, unique laboratories and library collections, this form must be completed and approved.

## Useful Links

- [Physics MS](#)
- [College of Sciences](#)
- [College of Graduate Studies](#)
- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Bookstore](#)
- [Campus Map](#)
- [Counseling Center](#)
- [Financial Assistance](#)
- [Golden Rule Student Handbook](#)
- [Graduate Catalog](#)
- [Graduate Student Association](#)
- [Graduate Student Center](#)
- [Housing and Residence Life](#)
- [Housing, off campus](#)
- [Knights Email](#)
- [Learning Online](#)
- [Library](#)
- [NID Help](#)
- [Pathways to Success](#)
- [Recreation and Wellness Center](#)
- [Shuttles Parking Services](#)
- [Student Health Services](#)
- [Thesis and Dissertation \(ETD\)](#)
- [UCF Global](#)
- [UCF IT](#)
- [University Writing Center](#)

## Grad Faculty

**Asterisk** = has previous committee experience, which qualifies the person to serve as vice chair

### **Bennett, Christopher**

College: College of Sciences

Disciplinary affiliations: Physics

Contact Info: [Christopher.Bennett@ucf.edu](mailto:Christopher.Bennett@ucf.edu)

### **Bhattacharya, Aniket \***

College: College of Sciences

Disciplinary affiliations: Physics

Contact Info: [Aniket.Bhattacharya@ucf.edu](mailto:Aniket.Bhattacharya@ucf.edu)

**Britt, Daniel \***

College: College of Sciences

Disciplinary affiliations: Physics

Research interests: Physical Properties of Asteroids and Meteorites, Surface Processes of Comets, Mineralogy Reflectance, Spectroscopy of Asteroids, Calibration Targets for Imaging Systems, Physical Properties of Lunar Materials

Contact Info: [dbritt@ucf.edu](mailto:dbritt@ucf.edu)

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**Campins, Humberto \***

College: College of Sciences

Disciplinary affiliations: Physics

Research interests: Astronomy, Solar System, Asteroids, Comets

Contact Info: [Humberto.Campins@ucf.edu](mailto:Humberto.Campins@ucf.edu)

**Chen, Zhongzhou**

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Disciplinary affiliations: Physics

Contact Info: [Zhongzhou.Chen@ucf.edu](mailto:Zhongzhou.Chen@ucf.edu)

**Chernyak, Leonid \***

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Disciplinary affiliations: Physics

Contact Info: [Leonid.Chernyak@ucf.edu](mailto:Leonid.Chernyak@ucf.edu)

**Chini, Jacquelyn \***

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Disciplinary affiliations: Physics

Contact Info: [jchini@ucf.edu](mailto:jchini@ucf.edu)

**Chini, Michael \***

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Disciplinary affiliations: Physics

Contact Info: [Michael.Chini@ucf.edu](mailto:Michael.Chini@ucf.edu)

**Colwell, Joshua \***

College: College of Sciences

Disciplinary affiliations: Physics

Research interests: Origin and Evolution of the Solar System, Planetary Rings, Microgravity Physics

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Websites: <http://physics.ucf.edu/~jcolwell/>

**Cooney, James**

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**Del Barco, Enrique \***

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Disciplinary affiliations: Physics

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**Dove, Adrienne**

College: College of Sciences  
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**Efthimiou, Costas \***

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**Fernandez, Yan \***

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Research interests: Comets, Asteroids, Solar System Dust  
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**Harrington, Joseph \***

College: College of Sciences  
Disciplinary affiliations: Physics  
Research interests: Planetary and Exoplanetary Atmospheres, Cometary Impacts into Atmospheres, Astronomical Data Analysis methodology, Infrared observing techniques  
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Websites: [http://planets.ucf.edu/people/Joseph\\_Harrington](http://planets.ucf.edu/people/Joseph_Harrington)

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**Kaden, William \***

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**Kara, Abdelkader \***

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Disciplinary affiliations: Physics  
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**Khondaker, Saiful \***

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Disciplinary affiliations: Physics  
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**Klemm, Richard \***

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Disciplinary affiliations: Physics  
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**Kokoouline, Viatcheslav \***

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Disciplinary affiliations: Physics  
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**Leuenberger, Michael \***

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