

Program Rationale

The Astronomy Undergraduate Major program maps easily from quarters to semesters. Nearly all the Astronomy courses are 5-credit hours and these transfer trivially to 3-credit hour semester courses. The one course that does not is Astron 295, a 1-credit hour seminar for first-year prospective majors. Students currently take two quarters of this seminar which features introductions to the Astronomy program, career advice, and introductions to astronomical observing facilities available to Ohio State astronomers. We also have talks from Ohio State astronomers about their research. Under semesters, the equivalent class, Astron 2895, is a one-credit hour course that students will take only one semester. Given the nature of the course, there is no problem cutting back from 20 sessions under the quarter calendar to 14 under semesters.

We have examined the proposed changes in Physics, Math, and CSE (in which our students take both prerequisites and major courses), and our conversion plans are consistent with theirs.

The only change we propose is changing the name of the program from “Astronomy” to “Astrophysics”: this is a long-overdue change that better represents what our students are learning. “Astrophysics” is less likely to be misunderstood by prospective employers of our BS students; many people equate “astronomy” with star-gazing or astrophotography or, even worse, “astrology,” and this more accurate degree name will better serve our students who do not continue in the field.

The undergraduate major program was most recent revised in 1997, with the addition of Astronomy 681 and 682 to the major program.