



# University of Pretoria Yearbook 2016

## Waves, thermodynamics and modern physics 255 (PHY 255)

**Qualification** Undergraduate

**Faculty** [Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences](#)

**Module content**

Vibrating systems and waves (14 lectures)  
Simple harmonic motion (SHM). Superposition (different frequencies, equal frequencies). Perpendicular vibrations (Lissajous figures). Damped SHM. Forced oscillations. Resonance. Q-value. Transverse wave motion. Plane wave solution using method of separation of variables. Reflection and transmission at a boundary. Normal and eigenmodes. Wave packets. Group velocity.

Modern physics (30 lectures)  
Special relativity: Galilean and Lorentz transformations. Postulates. Momentum and energy. 4 vectors and tensors. General relativity. Quantum physics. Failure of classical physics. Bohr model. Particle-wave duality. Schrödinger equation. Piece-wise constant potentials. Tunneling. X-rays. Laser. Nuclear physics: Fission. Fusion. Radioactivity.

Heat and thermodynamics (12 lectures)  
Heat. First Law. Kinetic theory of gases. Mean free path. Ideal, Clausius, Van der Waals and virial gases. Entropy. Second Law. Engines and refrigerators. Third Law. Thermodynamic potentials: Enthalpy Helmholtz and Gibbs free energies, Chemical potential. Legendre transformations (Maxwell relations). Phase equilibrium. Gibbs phase rule.

Modelling and simulation (7 practical sessions)  
Introduction to programming in a high level system: Concept of an algorithm and the basic logic of a computer programme. Symbolic manipulations, graphics, numerical computations. Applications: Selected illustrative examples.

Error Analysis (7 practical sessions)  
Experimental uncertainties. Propagation of uncertainties. Statistical analysis of random uncertainties. Normal distribution. Rejection of data. Least-squares fitting. Covariance and correlation.

**Module credits** 24.00

**Programmes** [BEd Senior Phase and Further Education and Training Teaching](#)

[BSc\(Computer Science\) Computer Science](#)

[BSc Applied Mathematics](#)

[BSc Environmental and Engineering Geology](#)

[BSc Environmental Sciences](#)

[BSc Geography](#)

[BSc Geoinformatics](#)



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BSc Geology

BSc Meteorology

BSc Physics

**Service modules** Faculty of Education

**Prerequisites** [PHY114 and PHY124] or [PHY171] or [PHY143 and PHY153 and PHY163] and [WTW211#] and [WTW218#]

**Contact time** 4 lectures per week, 1 practical per week, 2 discussion classes per week

**Language of tuition** English

**Academic organisation** Physics

**Period of presentation** Semester 1

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