Undergraduate Biological Sciences
Whether it is managing natural resources, conserving species, restoring ecosystems, ensuring global food security or monitoring the emergence of novel disease, biologists will be vital for our planet in the 21st century. A key strength of Bristol’s Biology and Zoology degrees is that they maximise your exposure to the breadth of biological sciences, from the molecular to the ecological, reflecting the truly interdisciplinary subject that modern biology has become.

Few students entering a degree course know exactly which area of the subject they wish to pursue – the inspiration may come from a particular lecturer or experience such as a field trip – and some students will never want to specialise. Our Biology and Zoology BSc degrees therefore start broad and then introduce more choice in years two and three. If you have ambitions to continue in biological research, it is also now possible to stay on for a fourth year and receive an MSci degree. This freedom to specialise or maintain breadth, and the range of skills you will learn (both research-oriented and transferable) will also maximise your employability as a graduate.

Our facilities are outstanding (a new state-of-the-art Life Sciences building is due to open in September 2014) and our lecturers are top researchers in their fields.

Laura
Third year BSc Biology

My course is pretty much the perfect course for me! I really enjoy the labs and field trips.

I also like the fact that I’m being taught by lecturers who regularly have their research published in journals and other publications.

Why study biological sciences at Bristol?

£56m invested in new Life Sciences building
The fourth year, for the MSci students, comprises a major research project of your choosing, plus research skills training.

96% of students agree staff are good at explaining things (National Student Survey 2013)

The primary factor in deciding whether to study biology or zoology is more about how you want to label yourself: in considering a zoology degree, you already know that your main interest is animal biology and you want the world to know this. It is straightforward to switch between the Biology and Zoology degrees should your interests change.

The two MSci degrees are new; students starting a BSc in September 2014 will be able to convert to a MSci and do the additional year, subject to satisfactory progress in years one to three. The MSci degrees are for students with ambitions to continue in biological research and who want the extra experience and a competitive edge in applying for PhDs or research jobs. The first three years of an MSci are identical to the corresponding BSc.

In year one of all our degrees, students study two, year-long, mandatory biology units: Diversity of Life and Life Processes. In addition, students do a half-year unit, Key Concepts in Biology, covering generic principles, skills and techniques, and a half-year unit of their choice, which can be unrelated to biology and taught by a different school. The latter might be Psychology (perhaps suitable for those interested in behaviour), Earth Sciences (for those interested in ecology and climate change), Physiology (for those with biomedical interests) or the cross-school unit Big Ideas on Sciences, where experts in their field discuss everything from quantum physics to consciousness.

Each first year biology unit is assessed by a combination of practical work, tutorial essays, short tests and end of year exams. The average direct teaching contact in lectures and practicals is 18 hours per week, with additional small-group tutorials from the personal tutor you are assigned for the whole degree course. The remaining 20+ hours per week we expect from our students involves analysis and report writing from practical classes, assignments from tutors, and directed reading from lecturers and tutors.

In year two, the choice expands. You will study four mandatory biology units, giving a background in evolutionary theory, molecular biology, statistics and professional skills, together with seven optional lecture units of your choosing. The options range from the molecular to the ecological, pure to applied, and from broad-based to taxon-specific.

The general course structure for Zoology is the same as Biology, but you focus on animal-based study. Most units are assessed through continuous assessment and formal written examinations. At the end of year two, all students do a week-long field or laboratory course chosen from a range of subject areas. A written report from this is handed in at the start of year three.

In year three, there is a completely free choice of lecture units (six from a wide range), which are assessed by formal written examinations at the end of the year. You also carry out a substantial practical research project and a critical literature review.

What will I study?

Single Honours courses
- BSc Biology, three years C100
- MSci Biology, four years C103
- BSc Zoology, three years C300
- MSci Zoology, four years C303

Joint Honours courses
- BSc Geology and Biology, three years FC61
- MSci Palaeontology and Evolution, four years CF16

Our biology and zoology degrees have a common first year, diverging from year two onwards in that zoologists focus on the animal-related options. The primary factor in deciding whether to study biology or zoology is more about how you want to label yourself: in considering a zoology degree, you already know that your main interest is animal biology and you want the world to know this. It is straightforward to switch between the Biology and Zoology degrees should your interests change.

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What are my career prospects?

The world needs biologists, because many of the major threats facing mankind require biological solutions. About 30% of our graduates continue to postgraduate degrees, while a further 30% enter biologically related jobs directly. Many graduates find work in universities, research institutes, conservation, ecological consultancy, public health, the pharmaceutical and agrochemical industries, science education and media (Bristol is home to the BBC’s Natural History Unit and a hub for documentary film companies).

Always remember that around 30% of our graduates continue in careers unrelated to biology and never had aspirations to do so, eg industrial and commercial management, banking and finance, law, computing and the Civil Service. These areas require high levels of literacy, numeracy, the ability to analyse and solve problems; study in the biological sciences provides an ideal general base.

91% of graduates go on to work or further study within six months of graduating*

*Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey 2011/12

Making your application

Entrance requirements

Typical offer for BSc/MSci Biology and BSc/MSci Zoology

Please visit bristol.ac.uk/ug15-biology for Joint Honours and other qualifications

A-levels AAB (contextual offer ABB*) in at least two science/mathematics subjects (science/mathematics AS-levels preferred)*

IB Diploma 35 points overall (contextual offer 33*) with 6,6,6 at Higher level including two science/mathematics subjects

Access Pass Access to HE Diploma (Science) with 30 credits at Distinction, including 12 credits in each of two sciences, and 15 credits at Merit

English Language Profile E*

GCSEs Grades B or above in Mathematics, English language and Sciences

Selection UCAS or Common Application

Part-time study Not available

Deferred entry Considered

*For details of English language profiles please visit bristol.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/language-requirements

Typical candidates receiving offers are studying two or three science A-levels with AAB or better predicted. However, we are flexible according to an applicant’s circumstances and you and your referee should explain any relevant context. Your personal statement should also explain why you have made this degree choice. Applications from non A-level candidates, whether those taking the various forms of baccalaureate, vocational qualifications or Access courses for mature students, are welcomed and are considered on an individual basis.

We strongly support applicants who want to take a gap year, particularly if it involves some biologically related work experience.

Further information

Find out more about the School of Biological Sciences: bristol.ac.uk/biology
Contacts

Undergraduate Admissions Office
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Fax +44 (0)117 331 7391
Email sci-ug-admissions@bristol.ac.uk

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Student Funding Office
Tel +44 (0)117 331 7972
Email student-funding@bristol.ac.uk
bristol.ac.uk/studentfunding

University guide to the city of Bristol
bristol.ac.uk/citybristol

Undergraduate study website
bristol.ac.uk/ug-study

Follow us on Twitter:
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Become a Bristol VIP to receive information tailored to your interests:
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