Biological Sciences
Undergraduate study
Why study biological sciences at Bristol?

Whether it is managing natural resources, conserving species, restoring ecosystems, ensuring global food security or monitoring the emergence of novel diseases, 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 BSc Biology and Zoology degrees therefore start broad and introduce more choice in years two and three. If you have ambitions to continue in biological research it is also 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 – including a state-of-the-art Life Sciences Building which opened in October 2014 – and our lecturers are top researchers in their fields.

‘The facilities for our course are excellent, especially the Life Sciences Building, which is amazing to work in. My lecturers and supervisors are always keen to help you with their subject and are really excited to talk with someone who shares their passion. They really want you to do well.’

Chris (BSc Biology)
What will you study?

Our biology and zoology degrees have a common first year and diverge from year two onwards where 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. 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.

Year one
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), Sustainable Development, Physiology (for those with biomedical interests) or the cross-school unit Big Ideas in Science, 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 involve analysis and report writing from practical classes, assignments from tutors and directed reading from lecturers and tutors.

Year two
In year two the choice expands. You will study five mandatory biology units, giving a background in evolutionary theory, molecular biology, statistics and professional skills, together with six 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.

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.

For MSci students, the fourth year comprises a major research project of your choosing, plus research skills training.

92% of students are in work or further study six months after graduation.
Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey 2015/16, BSc Biology.
The world needs biologists; many of the major threats facing mankind require biological solutions. About 30 per cent of our graduates continue to postgraduate degrees, while a further 30 per cent 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.

Around 30 per cent of our graduates continue in careers unrelated to biology, for example industrial and commercial management, banking and finance, law, computing and the civil service. These areas require high levels of literacy, numeracy and the ability to analyse and solve problems; study in the biological sciences provides an ideal general base.

**Careers and graduate destinations**

**Making your application**

**Typical offer for BSc Biology**

Visit [bristol.ac.uk/ug18-biology](http://bristol.ac.uk/ug18-biology) for other qualifications.

**A-levels**

AAB (contextual BBB†) including AB in two science/mathematics subjects.

**IB Diploma**

34 overall (contextual 31†) with 17 points at Higher Level (contextual 15†) including 6, 5 Higher Level (contextual 5, 5†) in two science/mathematics subjects.

**English Language Profile** E††

**GCSEs**

Grade B in Mathematics, English Language and Science.

†For information on contextual offers, visit [bristol.ac.uk/ug-apply/#typical-contextual-offers](http://bristol.ac.uk/ug-apply/#typical-contextual-offers).

††For details of English language profiles, visit [bristol.ac.uk/ug-language-requirements](http://bristol.ac.uk/ug-language-requirements).

Science/mathematics subjects include:

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Mathematics
- Botany
- Statistics
- Zoology
- Psychology
- Environmental studies
- Geology
- Geography
- Further Mathematics
- Other Mathematics
- Human Biology
- Engineering
- Electronics

**Selection**

UCAS or Common Application.

**Deferred entry**

Welcomed.

*The typical offer is indicative only and the University accepts a wide range of qualifications. The information is correct at the time of printing (June 2017); however, we recommend you check the University’s website for the most up-to-date information: [bristol.ac.uk/ug-study](http://bristol.ac.uk/ug-study).*

The University of Bristol has one of the best employment records in the UK. We are rated sixth in the UK in the QS Graduate Employability Rankings 2016/17 and are the third most targeted university by top UK employers (High Fliers Research, 2017).
Contact us

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If you have any questions about courses, applications or any aspect of being a UK or international student at Bristol please contact the Enquiries Team.

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University guide to the city of Bristol  
[bristol.ac.uk/citybristol](http://bristol.ac.uk/citybristol)

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