

Biological Sciences



Undergraduate study

Courses

Single Honours

BSc Biology

three years C100

BSc Zoology

three years C300

MSci Biology

four years C103

MSci Zoology

four years C303

Why study biological sciences at Bristol?

Whether they are 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 how truly interdisciplinary modern biology has become.

Few students entering a degree course know exactly which area of the subject they wish to pursue. 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 degrees therefore start with a broad first year 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 maximise your employability as a graduate.

Many of our lecturers are leaders in their fields and our facilities, which include the state-of-the-art Life Sciences building, are outstanding.

'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 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 would already know that your main interest is animal biology and you would 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 ideal for students with ambitions to continue in biological research who want extra experience and a competitive edge when applying for PhDs or research jobs. The first three years of an MSci are identical to the corresponding BSc.

Year one

In the first year of all our degrees, you will study two year-long, mandatory biology units: Diversity of Life and Life Processes. In addition, you'll take the Key Concepts in Biology unit, which covers generic principles, skills and techniques. You also have the opportunity to select an open unit of your choice, which can be unrelated to biology or zoology and taught by a different school. Outside the subject, you might choose

to study units from psychology (perhaps suitable for those interested in behaviour), physiology (for those with biomedical interests) or sustainable development, or you could choose the cross-school unit Big Ideas in Science, where experts in their field discuss everything from quantum physics to consciousness.

First-year biology units are assessed by a combination of practical work, tutorial essays, short tests and end-of-year exams. The average direct teaching time in lectures and practicals is 18 hours a week, with additional small-group tutorials with your personal tutor. We expect a further 20+ hours per week from our students, and this time will involve analysis and report writing from practical classes, assignments from tutors and directed reading from lecturers and tutors.

Year two

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

The general course structure for zoology is the same as biology, but you will focus on animal-based study.

Most units are assessed through continuous assessment and formal written examinations. At the end of year two, you will attend a week-long field or laboratory course chosen from a range of subject areas. A written report from this is submitted at the start of year three.

Year three

In year three you will choose six units ranging from cell and molecular to organismal and ecological, and from pure to applied, all of which are assessed by formal written examinations at the end of the year. Both BSc and MSci students will also carry out a substantial practical research project, with MSci students taking an Advanced Practical Skills unit to prepare them for their fourth year. Students will also complete a critical literature review.

If you are on the MSci course, your fourth year comprises a major research project of your choosing, plus research skills training.



Careers and graduate destinations

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 biology-related jobs directly. Many graduates find work in universities, research institutes, conservation, ecological consultancy, public health, the pharmaceutical and agrochemical industries, science education and the media – Bristol is home to the BBC's Natural History Unit and is a hub for documentary film companies.

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

'Each week you will be presented with a different scientific topic, from the dissection of a fish and its stomach contents to investigating the diet of a barn owl. Each experiment is well planned and has direct application to our course and interests.'

Isaac (MSci Biology)



Making your application

Typical offer for BSc Biology*

Visit bristol.ac.uk/ug19-biology for other qualifications.

A-levels AAB (contextual BBB[†]) including two science-related subjects.

IB Diploma 34 overall (contextual 31[†]) with 17 at Higher Level (contextual 15[†]), including 6, 5 (contextual 5, 5[†]) at Higher Level in two science-related subjects.

English Language profile E^{††}

GCSEs No specific subjects required.

[†]For information on contextual offers, visit bristol.ac.uk/contextual-offers.

^{††}For details of English language profiles, visit bristol.ac.uk/ug-language-requirements.

Selection UCAS or Common Application.

*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 2018); however, we recommend you check the University's website for the most up-to-date information: bristol.ac.uk/ug-study.

Typical BSc candidates receiving offers are studying two or three science A-levels with AAB or better predicted; for MSci candidates an AAA offer is typical. 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 applied for this degree.

Applications from non-A-level candidates taking the various forms of baccalaureate, vocational qualifications or Access courses for mature students are welcomed and considered on an individual basis.

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

Further information

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

Contact us

Enquiries Team

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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

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