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If you have any questions about courses, applications or student life at Bristol, please contact the Enquiries Team.

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Biological Sciences



Undergraduate study

Courses

Single Honours

BSc Biology

three years C100

BSc Plant Sciences

three years C201

BSc Zoology

three years C300

MSci Biology

four years C103

MSci Plant Sciences

four years C203

MSci Zoology

four years C303

This leaflet contains information for students planning to start university in autumn 2020. We have made every effort to ensure all details are correct at the time of going to press (May 2019). However, since this information is subject to change, you are advised to check the University's website, bristol.ac.uk/ug-study, for the latest updates.

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, zoology and plant sciences 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, zoology and plant sciences 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.

- Study in our state-of-the-art Life Sciences building, opened in 2014 by Sir David Attenborough.
- Benefit from our strong links with local organisations such as Bristol Zoo and the BBC Natural History Unit.

Top 10 UK university for Biological Sciences

QS World University Rankings by Subject 2019

What will you study?

Our biology, zoology and plant sciences degrees have a common first year and diverge from year two onwards, where zoologists and plant scientists focus on their more specialised areas. The primary factor in deciding whether to study biology, zoology or plant sciences is more about how you want to label yourself. In considering a zoology or plant sciences degree you would already know that your main interest is animal biology or plants, and you would want the world to know this. It is straightforward to switch between the three degrees offered by the school 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 biological sciences 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 fields discuss everything from quantum physics to consciousness.

First-year biological sciences units are assessed by a combination of practical work, essays, short tests and end-of-year exams. The average direct teaching time in lectures and practicals is typically around 18 hours per 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 and plant sciences is the same as biology, but you will focus on animal- or plant-based study, respectively.

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.

Year four (MSci only)

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

92 per cent overall student satisfaction

National Student Survey 2018

The Life Sciences building houses a five-storey laboratory wing, and its external living wall is comprised of more than 6,700 plants.



'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)

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.

'A strong focus on transferable skills, from public speaking to data analysis, has been particularly useful in preparing us for a wide variety of possible careers post-graduation.'

Monica (MSci Biology)



Graduate employers

Cancer Research UK
Medical Research Council
UNEP-WCMC
AIG
RBS



Career destinations

Campaign Officer
Information Analyst
Programme Officer
Insurance Underwriter
Analyst

Source: Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey 2016/17. Find out more at bristol.ac.uk/careers/be-inspired.

Making your application

Visit bristol.ac.uk/ug20-biology for more information about our courses.

Typical offer for BSc Biology

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

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

Our contextual offer is a grade reduction of up to two grades below the standard entry requirements, made to applicants from under-represented groups. Find out more at bristol.ac.uk/contextual-offers.

GCSEs No specific subjects required.

Selection process UCAS.

For other accepted qualifications, and for our English language requirements, visit bristol.ac.uk/ug20-biology.

Application advice for biological sciences courses

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.

This information is correct at the time of printing (May 2019), but we recommend you check the University website for the latest information: bristol.ac.uk/ug20-biology.



Read more about how we support you when you are here:

bristol.ac.uk/students