Biology Information Sheet for entry in 2020

Biology is an exciting and rapidly developing subject area with great relevance to addressing global challenges from disease and poverty to biodiversity loss and climate change. The study of living things has undergone tremendous expansion in recent years, and topics such as cell biology, developmental biology, evolutionary biology and ecology, all of which are covered in the course, are advancing at a great pace. This expansion has been accompanied by a blurring of the distinctions between disciplines: a biologist with an interest in tropical plants may well use many of the tools and techniques that are indispensable to a molecular geneticist.

The modular structure of the Oxford Biology course encourages a cross-disciplinary approach. The options system in the second and third years allows students to study either a general background encompassing a comprehensive range of topics, or specialise in detailed aspects of animals, plants, cells or ecology. The course now incorporates an optional fourth year, meaning students can either leave after three years with a BA or choose to stay on and complete an extended project under the supervision of an academic member of staff (which can be lab or field-based), in addition to advanced research skills training.

The Biology degree is taught jointly by the Departments of Plant Sciences and Zoology, with almost all teaching taking place in the University's Science Area. Additional resources include the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, the Botanic Garden, the Herbarium, the Arboretum, the John Krebs Field Station and Wytham Woods.

Students can choose to leave after three years and graduate with a BA, or they can continue to a fourth year and graduate with an MBiol. Progression to the MBiol is contingent on satisfactory academic performance in the first three years. The fourth year consists of an extended project, which can be lab or field based, plus advanced research skills training.

Fieldwork/work placements/international opportunities

Skills training is an integral part of teaching across all years and there is a compulsory one-week field trip for all first-year students to Pembrokeshire to study ecology. Skills training in second year is also compulsory and covers a whole range of more advanced practical and quantitative skills essential for a modern biologist. At the end of second year, students can choose from a range of extended skills courses that last one or two weeks: examples include ecological fieldwork (in the UK and overseas), genome sequencing and genome editing. In the third year, students specialise on a narrower range of options but skills training continues – this time in the form of learning how to engage with and critique a scientific paper. All overseas work requires financial contributions from the student.

A typical week

In the first year, your typical weekly timetable can be broken down into the following categories:

- Lectures: around eight hours a week
- Practicals: around seven hours a week
- Tutorials: one hour a week, plus preparation time. In the second, third and fourth years, variable hours are also spent on research projects.

In the second and third years, variable hours are also spent on coursework elements. Tutorials are usually 2-4 students and a tutor. Lectures and practical class sizes will vary depending on the options chosen. They will normally range from around 115 students in the class to as few as 20 students in the class. Most tutorials, classes, and lectures are delivered by staff who are tutors in their subject. Many are world-leading experts with years of experience in teaching and research. Some teaching may also be delivered by postgraduate students who are usually studying at doctorate level.

To find out more about how our teaching year is structured, visit our Academic Year page.

Course structure

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">YEAR 1</th></tr>
<tr><td>COURSES
The three compulsory themes are:
Diversity of life
How to build a phenotype
Ecology and evolution
Compulsory skills training including a mini-project in the first term
A week-long field course in Wales in the summer term</td><td>ASSESSMENT
Three written exam papers (assessing lecture material and research skills); assessed practical write-ups</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">YEAR 2</th></tr>
<tr><td>COURSES
In Year 2 there is greater specialisation, and you can choose from three of four themes from:
Genomes and molecular biology
Cell and developmental biology
Behaviour and physiology of organisms
Ecology and evolution
Students can choose from a range of extended skills training courses, lasting for either one or two weeks</td><td>ASSESSMENT
Two written exam papers; practical write-ups; coursework</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">YEAR 3</th></tr>
<tr><td>COURSES
The course broadens into a choice of around eight options, from which students select four from the following overarching themes:
Ecology and evolution
Genomes and molecular biology
Cell and developmental biology
Organisms
Regular skills training regardless of course choices
A full list of current options is available on the Biology website.</td><td>ASSESSMENT
Three written exam papers (including a scientific paper critique); two pieces of coursework</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">YEAR 4 (OPTIONAL MBiol*)</th></tr>
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COURSES The fourth year will give you the chance to pursue an in-depth research project under the supervision of an academic member of staff. There will also be a mini-conference in which all students have the opportunity to present their work to their peers. Progression to the fourth year is contingent on satisfactory academic performance in the first three years, and those who successfully complete the fourth year will leave with an MBiol.	**ASSESSMENT** Research project

* Students can choose to leave after three years and graduate with a BA, or they can continue to a fourth year and graduate with an MBiol. Progression to the MBiol is contingent on satisfactory academic performance in the first three years.

The University will seek to deliver each course in accordance with the descriptions set out above. However, there may be situations in which it is desirable or necessary for the University to make changes in course provision, either before or after registration. For further information, please see the University's Terms and Conditions.

Fees

These annual fees are for full-time students who begin this undergraduate course here in 2020.

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home/EU	£9,250
Islands (Channel Islands & Isle of Man)	£9,250
Overseas	£36,065

Information about how much fees and other costs may increase is set out in the University's Terms and Conditions.

Please note that the course fees you pay include your fees for both University and college services and are divided between the University (including your department or faculty) and your college on a formula basis. More information is provided in your Terms and Conditions.

Additional Fees and Charges Information for Biology

First-year students are required to undertake a one-week residential field course to West Wales (Orielton Field Studies Centre near Pembroke) in the summer term. You will study living organisms in a range of environments, both terrestrial and marine, and the content is assessed as part of the first-year examinations. The University covers all costs for this compulsory trip, including food and accommodation.

There are also two optional overseas fieldtrips in the extended skills courses at the end of second year:

- Tenerife: a one-week trip to study the systematics, diversity and ecology of the local plant communities.
- Borneo: a two-week trip to study tropical rainforest ecology, both animals and plants.

As a guide, costs for these optional courses in 2018 were £625 for Tenerife, plus whatever students spent on lunches and evening meals during the week, and £950 for Borneo, plus the return flights to Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia.

Further details on fieldtrips can be found on the Biology website.

Living costs

Your living costs will vary significantly dependent on your lifestyle. These are estimated to be between £1,135 and £1,650 per month in 2020-2021. Each year of an undergraduate course usually consists of three terms of eight weeks each but you may need to be in Oxford for longer. As a guide you may wish to budget over a nine-month period to ensure you also have sufficient funds during the holidays to meet essential costs.

Living costs breakdown

	Per month		**Total for 9 months**	
	Lower range	Upper range	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£270	£385	£2,430	£3,465
Accommodation (including utilities)	£630	£760	£5,670	£6,840
Personal items	£130	£245	£1,170	£2,205
Social activities	£45	£110	£405	£990
Study costs	£40	£95	£360	£855
Other	£20	£55	£180	£495
Total	**£1,135**	**£1,650**	**£10,215**	**£14,850**

In order to provide these likely living costs, the University and the Oxford University Students' Union conducted a living costs survey to complement existing student expenditure data from a variety of sources including the UK government's Student Income and Expenditure Survey and the National Union of Students (NUS). The likely lower and upper ranges above are based on a single student with no dependants living in college accommodation (including utility bills) and are provided for information only.

When planning your finances for future years of study at Oxford beyond 2020-21, you should allow for an estimated increase in living expenses of 3% each year.