Biology Information Sheet for entry in 2019

Biology is an exciting and rapidly developing subject area. The study of living things has undergone tremendous expansion in recent years, and topics such as cell biology, developmental biology, evolutionary biology and ecology are advancing rapidly - all of these areas are covered in the taught course. This expansion has been accompanied by a blurring of the distinctions between disciplines. A biologist with an interest in tropical plants may use many of the tools and techniques that are indispensable to a molecular geneticist; contemporary evolution can be studied in laboratory and field settings; and behaviour of animals and plants needs computational perspectives. Our modular structure encourages this cross-disciplinary approach.

The Biology degree is taught jointly by the Departments of Plant Sciences and Zoology. Additional resources include: Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Botanic Garden, Herbarium, 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.

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

Almost all teaching takes place in the Science Area and in the first year can be broken down into the following categories:

- Lectures: around eight hours a week
- Research skills training: around seven hours a week
- Class discussions: around one hour a week
- Tutorials: one hour a week, plus preparation time.

In the second and third year, 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

1st year	
Courses One course which integrates three themes: • Diversity of Life • How to Build a Phenotype • Ecology and Evolution Skills training which includes quantitative methods and a field course to Pembrokeshire, South Wales.	**Assessment** First University examinations: Three written papers: • Short-answer paper • Essay paper • Research skills paper Coursework: four practical write-ups
2nd year	
Courses Students choose three themes from the four on offer. Students may attend lectures in all themes. Themes: • Genomes and Molecular Biology • Cell and Developmental Biology • Behaviour and Physiology of Organisms • Ecology and Evolution Skills training, which includes a compulsory element plus extended one and two week specialist courses.	**Assessment** Final University examinations, Part I: Two written papers: • Essay paper covering the four themes • Research skills paper Coursework: • Two practical write-ups • Detailed report on two-week extended skills course
3rd year	
Courses Eight specialist options are offered. Students are expected to take four, which are chosen freely. *A full list of current options is available on the Biology website.*	**Assessment** Final University examinations, Part II: Three written papers: • Synthetic essay paper • Applications essay paper • Research skills paper Coursework: • Critique and synthesis of a chosen research topic, presented as a scientific report • Critique and synthesis of a second chosen research topic, presented orally

4th year (optional MBiol*)	
Courses Advanced skills training. Extended research project.	**Assessment** Project (25% of MBiol)

* 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 2019.

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home/EU	£9,250
Islands (Channel Islands & Isle of Man)	£9,250
Overseas	£34,678

Information about how much fees and other costs may increase is set out in the University's 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 £1,058 and £1,643 per month in 2019-20. 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.

	Per month		**Total for 9 months**	
	Lower range	Upper range	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£265	£371	£2,387	£3,342
Accommodation (including utilities)	£566	£739	£5,093	£6,655
Personal items	£122	£271	£1,098	£2,435
Social activities	£42	£126	£380	£1,138
Study costs	£40	£88	£359	£788
Other	£23	£48	£208	£432
Total	**£1,058**	**£1,643**	**£9,525**	**£14,790**

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 2019-20, you should allow for an estimated increase in living expenses of 3% each year.