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Biology (BA) (three-year course); (MBiol) (four-year course) Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026

Entry requirements

Visit [Admission requirements for 2026 entry](#) to view a summary table of each undergraduate course's entry requirements.

If English is not your first language you may also need to meet our [English language requirements](#).

About the course

Biology, the study of life, is an exciting and rapidly developing subject. Recent years have witnessed tremendous progress catalysed by technological breakthroughs and the integration of different biological approaches and disciplines. Breakthroughs in Biology are playing a key role in addressing global challenges, from disease and poverty to biodiversity loss and climate change.

This revised and upgraded Oxford Biology course was first introduced in 2019. The structure of the course encourages a cross-disciplinary approach. Following an introduction to fundamental biological principles in the first year, the second and third years allow students to choose options of particular interest and specialise in these areas with increasing depth. The options cover a comprehensive range of topics, which currently include but are not limited to:

- animal behaviour and physiology
- cell biology
- conservation
- developmental biology
- disease biology and host-microbe interactions
- ecology
- evolutionary biology
- genomics
- plant physiology and molecular biology.

The course offers an optional fourth year. This means that students can either leave after three years with a BA or choose to stay on for the fourth year, where they complete an extended research project under the supervision of qualified academic staff. Progression to the fourth year is contingent on satisfactory academic performance in the second and third years.

The Biology degree is taught by the Department of Biology, 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](#). There is a compulsory UK residential field course to study ecology in the first year. Optional residential field courses are also available in the second year.

The course puts a strong emphasis on research skills training, which is an integral part of teaching across all years. Compulsory skills training in the first year includes carefully selected dissections that have been designed with animal welfare and conservation principles in mind.

Skills training in the second year is also compulsory and covers a whole range of more advanced practical and quantitative skills essential to a modern biologist. In the last part of the second year, students choose from a range of extended skills courses that last one or two weeks. Examples include avian behaviour, digital morphology, ecological fieldwork, genome sequencing and genome editing, plant molecular biology, and technological applications to ecological monitoring.

In the third year, students specialise on a narrower range of options, and skills training continues in the form of journal clubs and computer classes.

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
- Research skills: around six hours of laboratory practical demonstrations (practicals), one hour of computer practicals and one hour of group discussion sessions each week
- Tutorials: this will depend on individual colleges, but on average one hour a week, plus preparation time.

In the second and third years, the lecture and research skills workload remains roughly the same although there is a greater element of choice over the subjects studied.

In the third and fourth years, variable hours are also spent on research projects.

Lectures and practical class sizes will vary depending on the options chosen, ranging from as few as 20 students in a class up to potentially 120 students in a class.

Most tutorials, classes, and lectures are delivered by staff who are also college tutors in their subject. Many are world-leading experts with years of experience in teaching and research. Some teaching may also be delivered by trained PhD students and early career researchers with hands-on research experience.

To find out more about how our teaching year is structured, visit our [Academic Year](#) page.

Significant self-study is expected of all students – for further details see [workload and independent study](#) information. Undergraduate courses at Oxford are full-time during term time. Students typically spend approximately 40 hours per week on academic work.

Course structure

YEAR 1	
COURSES	ASSESSMENT
The three compulsory themes are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diversity of life• Building a phenotype• Ecology and evolution	Three written exam papers (assessing lecture material and research skills); assessed practical write-ups

YEAR 1

- Compulsory skills training including a group mini-project in the first term
- A residential field course in the summer term

YEAR 2

COURSES

In Year 2 there is greater specialisation, and you will choose at least three out of four themes:

- Genomics and Host-microbe interactions
- Cell and developmental biology
- Organisms - behaviour and physiology
- Ecology and evolution

Compulsory skills training, including two-week extended skills training courses, covering a range of topics such as microbiome research, gene transfer, ornithology, tropical ecology.

ASSESSMENT

Two written exam papers;
coursework

YEAR 3

COURSES

- The course broadens into a choice of eight options arising from the four second year themes. Students select a minimum of four of the eight options.
- Compulsory skills training in the form of computing classes and journal club.

A full list of current options is available on the [Biology website](#). (Not all options may be available every year - these are subject to change, as explained in the [Terms & Conditions](#) and for reasons of staff availability and student demand. The department may add extra options.)

ASSESSMENT

Three written exam papers;
coursework

YEAR 4 (Optional MBiol*)

COURSES	ASSESSMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">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.	Dissertation

*** 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 second and third years.**

Most Oxford courses are assessed by examinations. These are typically at the end of the first and last years but you may have assessments at other times and some courses have exams in the second year also. First year examinations are often called Prelims or Moderations, and you need to pass these exams to progress to the second year. You must pass your final year exams, or 'finals', to pass your degree. For more information on assessment for your course, please see the Course Structure.

Finals also determine the classification of your degree. For some courses you may also be assessed on your practical work, or you may be required to submit a dissertation. Please check the assessment details for your course.

The University will seek to deliver this course in accordance with the description 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](#) and information about [potential course changes](#).

You are also referred to the [Student Handbook](#) (which is updated every September).

Fees

These annual fees in 2026/27 are for full-time students who begin this undergraduate course here in 2026. Information about how much fees and other costs usually increase each year is set out in the [University's Terms and Conditions](#).

For details of annual increases, please see our [guidance on likely increases to fees and charges](#).

Fee status	Annual Course fees in 2026/27
Home	£9,790
Overseas	£62,820

In the 2027-28 academic year course fees for Home fee status students will rise to £10,050 (in line with the government fee cap.)

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[Further details about fee status eligibility](#) can be found on the fee status webpage.

Living costs

Living costs for the academic year starting in 2026 are estimated to be between £1,405 and £2,105 for each month you are in Oxford. Students at Oxford can benefit from our [world class resources](#) and [college provision](#), which may help to keep costs down. Entitlement to certain types of support may depend on your personal financial circumstances.

Our academic year is made up of three eight-week terms, so you would not usually need to be in Oxford for much more than six months of the year but may wish to budget over a nine-month period to ensure you also have sufficient funds during the holidays to meet essential costs. For further details please visit our [living costs webpage](#).

Living costs breakdown

	Per month		Total for 9 months	
	Lower range	Upper range	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£315	£545	£2,835	£4,905
Accommodation (including utilities)	£825	£990	£7,425	£8,910
Personal items	£160	£310	£1,440	£2,790
Social activities	£50	£130	£450	£1,170
Study costs	£35	£90	£315	£810
Other	£20	£40	£180	£360
Total	£1,405	£2,105	£12,645	£18,945

In order to provide these estimated likely living costs (which are rounded to the nearest £5), the University in collaboration with the Oxford SU conducted a living costs survey in May 2025 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 current economic climate and periods of high national inflation in recent years make it harder to estimate potential changes to the cost of living over the next few years. When planning your finances for any future years of study in Oxford beyond 2026-27, it is suggested that you allow for potential increases in living expenses of around 4% each year – although this rate may vary depending on the national economic situation.

Additional Fees and Charges Information for Biology

Please note that despite the University's efforts to subsidise the course, fieldwork may require financial contributions from the student.

First-year students are required to undertake a UK-based residential field course in the summer term (typically 6 days). 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.

Towards the end of the second year, you will complete one of a range of optional skills courses. The range of courses offered will include some optional field trips away from Oxford. In 2026, these trips will include:

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- Oxford and Dorset: to study conservation programmes aiming to reverse biodiversity loss;
- Northern Ireland and Wytham: to study the field ecology of birds, split between Northern Ireland and our field-study centre in Oxford;
- Borneo: to study tropical rainforest ecology of both animals and plants.

As a guide, estimated costs for these optional courses in 2026 are:

- £440 for Oxford/Dorset;
- £475 for Northern Ireland/Wytham, plus whatever students spend on lunches and evening meals during the trip;
- £1900 for Borneo.

If you stay on for the fourth year, as part of your course requirements, you will undertake a research project. While the Department provides funds toward reasonable research expenses for each project, depending on your choice of topic and the research tools required, the project may require additional financial support, and in exceptional circumstances, for example, if you choose to conduct supplementary work, you may be asked to contribute to these costs.

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