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Biology Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025

Biology, the study of life, is an exciting and rapidly developing subject. Breakthroughs in Biology are playing a key role in addressing global challenges, from disease and poverty to biodiversity loss and climate change.

The study of living things has undergone tremendous progress in recent years. This progress has been accompanied by an integration of different biological disciplines.

This newly 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 and complete an extended research project under the supervision of qualified academic staff. Progression to the 4-year MBiol is contingent on satisfactory academic performance in the first three 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, and optional residential field courses in the UK and overseas are 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 for a modern biologist. Students can choose from a range of extended skills courses that last one or two weeks. Examples include ecological fieldwork (in the UK or overseas), genome sequencing and genome editing.

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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. Please note that despite the University's efforts to subsidise the course, fieldwork in the second, third and fourth years 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
- 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.

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

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 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.

Course structure

YEAR 1	
COURSES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The three compulsory themes are:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Diversity of life○ Building a phenotype○ Ecology and evolution• Compulsory skills training including a group mini-project in the first term• A residential field course in the summer term	ASSESSMENT <p>Three written exam papers (assessing lecture material and research skills); assessed practical write-ups</p>

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](#).

ASSESSMENT

Three written exam papers; coursework

YEAR 4 (Optional MBiol*)

COURSES

The fourth year will give you the chance to pursue an in-depth research project

ASSESSMENT

Dissertation

YEAR 4 (Optional MBiol*)

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.

* 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 content and format of this course may change in some circumstances. Read further information about [potential course changes](#).

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](#).

Fees

These annual fees are for full-time students who begin this undergraduate course here in 2025.

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

Please note that while the University sets out its annual fees as a single figure, this is a combined figure for both your University and college fees. More information is provided in your [Terms and Conditions](#).

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home (UK, Republic of Ireland, Channel Islands & Isle of Man)	£9,535
Overseas (including most EU students – see Note below)	£59,260

Note: Irish nationals living in the UK or Ireland, EU, other EEA, and Swiss nationals who have been granted settled or pre-settled status in the UK under the EU settlement scheme are eligible for 'Home fee' status and student loan support, subject to meeting residency requirements. We will contact you directly if we need further information from you to determine your fee status.

Please refer to the [Undergraduate fee status](#) pages for more information.

Living costs

Living costs for the academic year starting in 2025 are estimated to be between £1,425 and £2,035 for each month you are in Oxford. 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

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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	£330	£515	£2,970	£4,635
Accommodation	£790	£955	£7,110	£8,595
Personal items	£200	£335	£1,800	£3,015
Social activities	£45	£100	£405	£900
Study costs	£40	£90	£360	£810
Other	£20	£40	£180	£360
Total	£1,425	£2,035	£12,825	£18,315

In order to provide these likely living costs (which are rounded to the nearest £5), the University and the Oxford SU 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 current economic climate and high national rate of inflation make it very hard 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 2025-26, 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

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 a two-week skills course. A range of courses will be offered and will include some optional field trips away from Oxford. In 2024, this will include:

- 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 2024 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 project. Depending on your choice of topic and the research tools required, you may have to contribute to

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costs, but only in exceptional circumstances, for example, if you choose to conduct extensive fieldwork in expensive locations. You may choose a project that will incur no extra costs.