BSc (Hons) Molecular Biology

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Introduction
Molecular biology aims to understand living systems by focusing on the molecular components upon which they are built. Molecular biology is one of great successes of 20th century science. It has revolutionised our understanding of biology over the last half-century, culminating in the determination of the complete human genome sequence, and is central to current investigations to understand the genetic basis of human disease and pathology, as well as to the development of improved crops.

Graduates in molecular biology have a wide range of career options, including virtually all areas of biology, medicine, agriculture and forensics. The explosion of genomic information and its impact on human health and society means that well qualified Molecular Biology graduates are much in demand.

Aims and Outcomes
This degree course aims to instill a broad base of knowledge regarding molecular biology at the molecular, cellular and organismal levels. Additionally, students will gain an in depth understanding of selected aspects of Biochemistry which will reflect the research expertise and strengths within the School, and will be instructed in the many applications of this subject. A thorough understanding of the scientific method and the development of a critical approach to problem solving and research literature also will be gained. In carrying out a research-based project and the presentation of the project findings as a thesis, students will gain expertise in time management, data handling, and in the transferable skills associated with mastering statistics, graphics and word processing software packages.

General Enquiries
The Degree Programme Co-ordinator is Dr Jonathan Pettitt: j.pettitt@abdn.ac.uk tel: 01224 437516) and any query concerning the degree programme should be addressed to him. Enquiries concerning a specific module should be made to the course co-ordinator for that module (See University Catalogue of Courses or SMS World Wide Web Pages for names). The Head of School of Medical Sciences is always available for advice regarding any of the degree schemes run by his School as well as matters such as careers advice. In the first instance appointments to see any of the above staff should be made with the School Office, Room 2:62:3 sited on level 2, Phase 2, Institute of Medical Sciences (01224-437471 internal 7471).

General Requirements
In order to complete the degree scheme the student’s programme of studies must comply with the Supplementary Regulations for the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Pure Science (BSc) supplied to the student in the extract from the University Calendar "Degrees in Science". This will involve taking a number of modules outwith the School of Medical Sciences during years 1 and 2.
Industrial Placements

There is scope within the degree schemes for students with very good academic records to undertake a 1 year, paid, industrial placement as part of their degree. The placement is undertaken in year 4 of the degree scheme and students return to the University to complete their honours year in year 5. This work experience is co-ordinated by the School although placements are in companies outside the University. Students interested in industrial placements are encouraged to contact Dr Allison Carrington in the first instance to discuss their plans. Students must also register for, and complete, the pre-placement course, BT3006, in the first half of their third year. On successful completion of a placement and their honours year students will graduate with an MSci. Further details of this initiative can be obtained from Dr Allison Carrington (a.carrington@abdn.ac.uk).

Looking Forward to the Honours Year

Many of you will be intending to continue for a 4th year and to complete an Honours degree in the School of Medical Sciences. There are a few points you should bear in mind if this is your intention.

1. Standard of entry

We try to welcome as many students as possible into the Honours year, but it must be recognised that it will only benefit the more able students. If 3rd year is a real struggle, then it may be too much for you to take on. As a general rule, we think grades at lower second class level or better in each 3rd year module is a reasonable sign that you have reached the appropriate standard. Exceptions can be made if there is good reason, and a mixture of excellent results and one or two slightly poorer ones may sometimes be acceptable. Do let us know if there is an explanation for any poor performance, so that we can do our best to take it into account.

2. Know what’s involved

The teaching in the Honours year in general involves fewer lectures and more input from you than in previous years. You will take the modules specified for your particular degree scheme, these amounting to 120 credits of study. You are required to include three compulsory courses and an Honours Project in your study programme. You will write a thesis and give a short presentation on your project. For all students taking an Honours project, the final degree assessment will comprise contributions from set essays and a research thesis, with the remainder coming from the papers associated with the taught modules taken in the Honours year, a paper on data analysis and interpretation, and a general essay paper.

3. Prerequisites

Check that the courses you plan for 3rd year provide the foundation for the Honours degree you hope to take. Please refer to the appropriate Degree Programme Guide (Available from the www SMS home page or from the School Office, IMS Building). If in doubt, consult your Degree Programme Co-ordinator (Dr Jonathan Pettitt, tel. 437516). Please do this in plenty of time.

4. Summer research projects

It is possible to apply for funding for summer projects (8-10) weeks between 3rd and 4th year. This is a helpful base for your Honours project, which must be in a different area of research and usually with a different supervisor. Dr Allison Carrington will email members of the class at the end of November asking for CVs if they wish to be considered for a summer vacation studentship, and if they have any preferences for staff in whose laboratory they would wish to undertake the work.

Assessment

Throughout your course, assessment takes the form of continuous assessment (based upon performance in prescribed tasks such as practical reports and essays) and written degree examinations (multiple choice or essay questions) taken in the examination diets allotted to each
half session. The final year assessment is made up of 5 examination papers, continuous assessment essays and the submission of a thesis based on your project. Some students may be required to attend an oral examination (viva) with the external examiner. Details concerning assessments and course work within each module are provided in the Course Handbooks. These Course Handbooks are available either from the School Office or on the SMS World Wide Web Pages. Details concerning the relationship between credits and weightings may be found on http://www.abdn.ac.uk/sms

**Academic Appeals**

1. From time to time a student may seek to appeal against a decision involving academic judgement taken, in terms of the Regulations for the degree or other qualification for which he or she is studying, among others, by a Head of School refusing an award of a Merit Certificate, or admission to a higher level course; by Examiners refusing to award a pass or awarding an unacceptable class of Honours (or making no award); by the Examiners appointed to examine a thesis for a higher degree; or by the relevant Undergraduate Programme Committee or Academic Postgraduate Officer in relation to terms of study. Specific rights of appeal are very limited indeed but the Senate has a general duty to regulate and superintend the teaching of the University, and the Court has the authority to review any decision of the Senate which may be appealed against by a member of the University.

2. Academic appeals must be lodged with the Academic Registrar within 14 days from the date of the issue of the decision being appealed against, unless the relevant Appeals Committee constituted under 7 or 8 below is satisfied that the decision had not become known to an appellant until too late to submit an appeal within that period.

3. Notwithstanding the above time limit, details of illness (which must be certified by a medical practitioner) and/or other personal circumstances which students believe may have affected their performance in an element of prescribed degree assessment will be accepted as grounds for appeal only if the Head of the relevant School has received written notification of them no later than one week after the date on which a student submitted or appeared for the assessment concerned. Where good reasons have prevented a student from notifying the Head of School within this period, the student should write to the Head of School as soon as is practicable and give details both of the illness (which must be certified by a medical practitioner) and/or other personal circumstances and of the events which prevented him or her from notifying the Head of School within the prescribed period. Details reported after notification of a result will be accepted as grounds of appeal only in exceptional circumstances.

**Problems with Course Work**

If students have difficulties with any part of the course that they cannot cope with alone they should notify someone immediately. If the problem relates to the subject matter you may be best advised to contact the member of staff who is teaching that part of the course. Students with registered disabilities should contact either the IMS based School Office (Mrs Jenna Reynolds, Email: j.reynolds@abdn.ac.uk) to ensure that the appropriate facilities have been made available. Otherwise, you are strongly encouraged to contact any of the following as you see appropriate:

- Course student representatives.
- Course co-ordinator.
- Convenor of the relevant student-staff liaison committee (Dr J Pettitt, j.pettitt@abdn.ac.uk).
- Personal Tutor.
- School Disabilities Co-ordinator, Dr Derryck Shewan (d.shewan@abdn.ac.uk)

Staff are based at Foresterhill (IMS & Polwarth Building) and we strongly encourage the use of e-mail or telephone the School office (Mrs Jenna Reynolds) tel: 437471. You may be wasting your time to travel to Foresterhill only to find staff unavailable.
Course Details

All courses run in the School have practical and general skills (enterprise) components as integral parts of the teaching package. For detailed descriptions of the courses that make up the BSc (Hons) Molecular Biology Degree consult the University Course Catalogue (http://www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/courses), or in the case of modules taught within the School of Medical Sciences consult the SMS World Wide Web Pages.

This document supplements the regulations in the University Calendar and the descriptions of modules given in the University "Catalogue of Courses". It is correct at the time of going to press but is open to change.

1st Year Molecular Biology Course

Requirements

There are no courses in Molecular Biology in the 1st Year (Level 1). Intending Honours students in Molecular Biology require a basic level of general physical and chemical principles and hence are required to take (or gain exemptions from) in the first half session CM1020 Chemistry for Life Sciences 1 and in the second half session CM1512 Chemistry for Life Sciences 2. Pre-requisites for second year biochemistry/molecular biology courses, in addition to chemistry, include in the first half session SM1001 Introduction to the Medical Sciences and in the second half session SM1501 The Cell. The modules will provide a general background in animal biology, thus preparing the student for the more detailed studies of mammalian biochemistry and molecular biology that will be made in the second year of study.

Prescribed Level One Courses

First Half Session

- SM1001 Introduction to the Medical Sciences (15 credit points)
- CM1020 Chemistry for Life Sciences 1 (15 credit points)
- Plus TWO other courses of your choice worth 15 credit points each

Second Half Session

- SM1501 The Cell (15 credit points)
- CM1512 Chemistry for Life Sciences 2 (15 credit points)
- Plus TWO other courses of your choice worth 15 credit points each

Timetable for Year 1

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<td>SM1501</td>
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<td>CM1020</td>
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<td>2 other modules</td>
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2nd Year Molecular Biology Course

Requirements

Four modules covering Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Genetics and Microbiology are required in the 2nd Year (Level 2). These are: Molecular Biology of the Gene (BI20M3), Genes & Evolution (BI2017), Microbes, Infection & Immunity (BI25M5) and Energy for Life (BI25M7). In addition, students must take 2 compulsory key skills courses, which are Foundation Skills for Life Sciences (SM2001) and Research Skills for Life Sciences (SM2501).
Prescribed Level Two Courses

First Half Session
- BI20M3 Molecular Biology of the Gene (15 credit points)
- SM2001 Foundation Skills for Life Sciences (15 credit points)
- BI2017 Genes & Evolution (15 credit points)
- One other 15 credit course of your choice

Second Half Session
- BI25M7 Energy for Life (15 credit points)
- SM2501 Research Skills for Life Sciences (15 credit points)
- BI25M5 Microbes, Infection & Immunity (15 credit points)
- One other 15 credit course of your choice

Timetable for Year 2

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<thead>
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<tr>
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<td>BI25M5</td>
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<td>1 other module</td>
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3rd Year Biochemistry Course Requirements

One hundred and twenty credits in Molecular Biology are required in the 3rd Year (Level 3). Modules taken in the first half session of the third year in molecular biology build on the modules taken at Level 2 by enhancing the students’ understanding of the major applications of biochemistry and molecular biology. Modules taken in the second half session will provide detailed insights into specific areas of mainstream cellular biology.

To meet the requirements for Enhanced Study, in addition to the 90 credits prescribed for your Degree Programme, you are required to take another 30 credit level 3 course of your choice. The School of Medical Sciences runs the following three 30 credit Disciplinary Breadth courses at level 3 which may be of interest to students studying Medical Sciences Degree Programmes.

- SM3001 Frontiers of Molecular Medical Sciences
- SM3002 Frontiers of Biomedical Sciences
- SM3003 Frontiers of Applied Medical Sciences

Prescribed Level Three Courses

First Half Session
- MB3006 The Molecular Biology of the Cell (30 credit points)
- Plus ONE other 30 credit point course of your choice

Second Half Session
- BC3503 The Molecular Control of Cell Function (30 credit points)
4th Year Molecular Biology Course

Requirements

One hundred and twenty credits in Molecular Biology are required in the 4th Year (Level 4). Modules taken in the first half session will provide detailed insights into specific areas of mainstream physiology. The second half session is fully occupied with a research project chosen from a list based on the research interests of the staff of the School of Medical Sciences. There are NO examinations at the end of the first half session. Instead the students proceed straight to their research projects and sit a diet of final honours examinations at the end of the second half session.

Prescribed Level Four Courses

First Half Session

- Honours Genetics – Option 1 (GN4010, 15 credit points)
- Honours Biochemistry – Option 2 (BC4314, 15 credit points)
- Honours Advanced Molecular Biology (MB4050, 30 credit points)

Second Half Session

- Molecular Biology Honours Research Project (MB4502, 60 credit points)

Timetable for Year 4

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<td>MB4050</td>
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<tr>
<td>MB4901</td>
<td>Honours Data Analysis Exam Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>MB4902</td>
<td>Honours General Essay Exam Paper</td>
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