Application FAQs

What do I need to know to APPLY?

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS
• Honours Bachelor's Arts & Science degree.
• Grade requirements: minimum upper second class standing (B+ average).

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS
• Correspond with potential supervisors (may require CV).
• If English is not a native language, prospective students must meet the English language proficiency requirements in writing, speaking, reading, and listening. The School of Graduate Studies requires the following minimum scores: TOEFL (paper-based): 550, (2) TOEFL iBT: Writing (24/30); Speaking (22/30); Reading (22/30); Listening (20/30), for a total of 88/120 (applicants must have the minimum score in each test as well as the minimum overall score), or (3) IELTS: 7.0 (academic module overall band score), or (4) PTE Academic: 65.

KEY DATES & DEADLINES
• Application due: March 1 (domestic students); February 15 (international students).
• Notification of acceptance: Students are accepted on a rolling basis as applications are reviewed.

Before you start your application, please review the Graduate studies application process.

What about FUNDING?

MSc students in Biology receive minimum funding of $24,300 per year for the two years of the program.

Apply for external funding from OGS, NSERC and other sources. Queen’s will automatically issue a one time $5,000 award to incoming Masters students who have won federal government tri-council awards. For more information, see the School of Graduate Studies’ information on awards and scholarships, or see what awards are offered through the Biology Department.

Why GRADUATE STUDIES in BIOLOGY?

There is no end to the fascinating questions we can ask about how the natural world functions, from dissecting the molecular mechanisms at play in cells to understanding the complexity of interactions in the biosphere, the beauty and mystery of nature abounds. It is an incredibly exciting time to do biological research and we are learning about the natural world at a rate unprecedented in history. The remarkable power of modern research tools, from powerful gene-editing techniques to bioinformatics to ecosystem modelling, is driving exciting discoveries daily. These discoveries are made by graduate students. Regardless of your area of interest, there is something in biology for you, questions waiting to be answered, and riddles of nature to be solved.

Why QUEEN’S?

The Biology Department at Queen’s is one of the largest departments on campus with approximately 100 graduate students supervised by 32 faculty with research opportunities in a range of disciplines. Our faculty are world leaders in several research areas including: animal physiology, plant sciences, microbial evolution, biochemistry, molecular biology, ecology, and evolution. We offer a broad and challenging program in one of the top Biology departments in the country. We have an impressive range of sophisticated infrastructure for cell biology, biochemistry, molecular biology, ecology, and evolutionary research including: a confocal microscopy suite, DNA and RNA sequencing facilities, aquatics research facilities, and a state-of-the-art phylogenetics lab. Our field station, comprising more than 3200 hectares of woodland, fields and lakes is a short drive away and has excellent research facilities and living quarters.

Our students work with the world’s best scholars, prize-winning professors and a new network of friends who share an interest and contact a potential supervisor.

“Why were interested in the same biological questions that I was - it was a ton of fun.”

Roslyn Dakin, PhD

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY
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Why

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Program STRUCTURE

MSc (2 years): 4 single-term courses with minimum standing of 70% in each, research thesis and defence.

Students who show exceptional promise in their research have the option to transfer to the PhD program after one year.

RESEARCH Areas

• Animal Physiology
• Cell and Molecular Biology
• Ecology, Evolution and Behaviour
• Plant Sciences
• Mathematical Modeling & Bioinformatics

We encourage you to identify an area of research interest and contact a potential supervisor before applying.
**Getting Started**

- Start with key priorities like developing your relationship with your supervisor, forming your committee, and doing your coursework.
- Complete WHMIS safety training.
- Find your way through the academic process with help from departmental and Expanding Horizons professional development workshops, the department Grad Chair and the SGS Habitat.

**Intermediate Stage**

- Complete your coursework, begin to research and write your thesis.
- Consider participating in the 3 Minute Thesis (3MT) competition.
- Attend and participate in graduate seminars such as Departmental Seminars, EEB Limnology, and MCB Seminar Series, as well as the All Downie Lecture.
- Expand your research audience through social media, such as Twitter.
- Consider putting an article in The Conversation.
- Start keeping an ePortfolio of your skills, experiences and competencies.
- Use a Research Assistant or Teaching Assistant position to develop your competencies.
- Participate in your graduate and professional community through a Career Services workshop.
- Practice articulating the skills you have been developing in settings outside the university, such as casual conversation, networking, interviews. Get help from a Career Services workshop.
- Do some targeted networking with people working in careers of interest to you. Reach out to Queen’s Alumni, professional associations, or meeting with a career councillor. Consider putting an article in The Conversation.

**Wrapping Up**

- Complete and defend your thesis.
- Consider publication options for your research.
- Attend or present at a graduate conference such as those hosted by the Canadian Society for Ecology and Evolution, Society for Experimental Biology, Canadian Society of Plant Biology, or the many other national and international groups that feature graduate research.
- Set up a meeting with the School of Graduate Studies for a Grad Chat to discuss your research interests.
- Practice articulating the skills you have been developing in settings outside the university, such as casual conversation, networking, interviews. Get help from a Career Services workshop.
- Do some targeted networking with people working in careers of interest to you. Reach out to Queen’s Alumni, professional associations, or meeting with a career councillor. Consider putting an article in The Conversation.

**Achieve Your Academic Goals**

- Start with key priorities like developing your relationship with your supervisor, forming your committee, and doing your coursework.

**Maximize Research Impact**

- Start to think about the audiences for your research.
- Consider volunteering with different community organizations.

**Build Skills and Experience**

- Consider positions in student services, the SGPS, or media outlets like the Queen’s Journal, CFRC and the SGS Blog. Look in the AMS Clubs Directory for more ideas.
- Serve on departmental, faculty or university committees. Talk to the Biology Graduate Student Council for tips on getting involved.
- Check out professional development workshops from Expanding Horizons.

**Engage with Your Community**

- Explore how you can connect with your community through experiential opportunities on- and off-campus.

**Launch Your Career**

- Finding a career that fits starts with knowing yourself. Get help by taking a Career Services career planning workshop or meeting with a career counsellor. Check out books like So What Are You Going to Do With That? or Planning a Scientific Career in Industry from the Career Resource Area for advice on various career options.
- Start reading publications like University Affairs and the Chronicle of Higher Education. Browse non-academic labour market websites. Stay on the lookout for special events like School of Graduate Studies Career Week to explore your career pathways.
- Check admission test deadlines, if needed for further studies.

**What Will I Learn?**

A graduate degree in Biology can equip you with:

- Knowledge and technical skills
- Effective communication skills in multiple forms for diverse audiences
- Information management: prioritize, organize and synthesize large amounts of information
- Time management: meet deadlines and manage responsibilities despite competing demands
- Project management: develop ideas, gather information, analyze, critically appraise findings, and act on conclusions
- Creativity and innovation
- Perseverance
- Independence and experience as a collaborative worker
- Awareness and understanding of sound ethical practices, social responsibility, responsible research and cultural sensitivity
- Professionalism in all aspects of work, research, and interactions
- Leadership: initiative and vision leading people and discussion

**Where Can I Go?**

A Master’s degree in Biology can take your career in many directions. Many of our MSc students choose to continue their academic inquiry with a PhD. Our Master’s students are equipped with a strong foundation for careers in:

- Academia and teaching
- Agriculture
- Pharmacy and medicine
- Environmental law, patent law
- Government research centres and organizations
- Biotechnology industries
- Wildlife conservation and environmental consulting

Taking time to explore career options, build experience, and network can help you have a smooth transition to the world of work after graduation.