Molecular Biology and Biochemistry Major

Admission to the Major

Students are encouraged to begin coursework toward the MB&B major in the first year so that they can take maximum advantage of upper-level MB&B courses, research, and study-abroad opportunities in later years. However, the major can certainly be completed successfully if initiated during sophomore year.

A prospective MB&B major can begin with the core introductory biology series (MB&B181 MB&B181/BIO181 BIO181 and MB&B182 MB&B182/BIO182 BIO182: associated laboratory MB&B191 BIO191 BIO191 and MB&B192 MB&B192/BIO192 BIO192) and/or the core general chemistry series (CHEM141 CHEM141/CHEM143 CHEM143 and CHEM142 CHEM142/CHEM144; associated laboratory, CHEM152 CHEM152). MB&B181 MB&B181 is offered in small sections rather than a single, large lecture class. These small sections allow for problem-based learning at a more individualized pace as students master the first semester of university-level biology.

Major Requirements

The molecular biology and biochemistry major requires the following coursework:

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<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tr>
<td>MB&amp;B181</td>
<td>Principles of Biology I: Cell Biology and Molecular Basis of Heredity and Principles of Biology I-Laboratory</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<td>&amp; MB&amp;B191</td>
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<td>MB&amp;B182</td>
<td>Principles of Biology II and Principles of Biology II-Laboratory</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<td>&amp; MB&amp;B192</td>
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General Chemistry

CHEM141/143 Introductory Chemistry I 1
CHEM142/144 Introductory Chemistry II 1
CHEM152 Introductory Chemistry Laboratory 0.5

Gateway Molecular Biology

MB&B208 Molecular Biology 1

Organic Chemistry

CHEM251 Principles of Organic Chemistry I 1
CHEM252 Principles of Organic Chemistry II 1

Mathematics

Select one Mathematics course (calculus or statistics recommended) 1

Physical Chemistry

MB&B381 Physical Chemistry for the Life Sciences 1

Biochemistry

MB&B383 Biochemistry 1

Advanced Laboratory

MB&B394 Advanced Laboratory in Molecular Biology and Genetics or MB&B395 Structural Biology Laboratory 1

Electives

Select two elective courses, at least one of which must be a 300-level MB&B course 2

Students are encouraged to take our seminar course, MB&B209 MB&B209, in the spring of their first or second year.

Chemistry’s introductory lab may be taken in fall or spring.

One semester of college mathematics is required (AP credit is not accepted). Students with deep theoretical knowledge in areas of mathematics, as evidenced by advanced coursework (e.g., in physics) or quantitative forms of research, may petition for the use of a less theoretical mathematics course (e.g., QAC courses) to satisfy the MB&B math major requirement.

One advanced laboratory class is required. Majors interested in a concentration in molecular biology should take MB&B394 MB&B394, which is offered every spring semester and generally taken in the junior or senior year. Students interested in the molecular biophysics certificate (https://catalog.wesleyan.edu/certificates/molecular-biophysics) should take MB&B395 MB&B395, which is offered every other year in fall semester. The Chemistry Integrated Laboratory courses (CHEM375 CHEM375 and CHEM376 CHEM376) do not satisfy this requirement. Students taking both of the advanced lab courses (MB&B394 MB&B394 and MB&B395 MB&B395) may count one of the two courses as their 300-level elective.

MB&B381 MB&B381 may be replaced by two semesters of Introductory Physics (PHYS111 PHYS111 and PHYS112 PHYS112, or PHYS113 PHYS113 and PHYS116 PHYS116) or by Physical Chemistry (CHEM337 CHEM337 and CHEM338 CHEM338). In this case MB&B381 MB&B381 may count as one of the required 300-level electives.

One of the two required electives must be a 300-level MB&B course. This may be fulfilled by taking a 1.0-credit 300-level course, or by taking two 0.5-credit 300-level courses.

The second elective may be a 200-level or 300-level MB&B course. Two consecutive semesters of research (in the same laboratory) for credit (MB&B423 MB&B423 and MB&B424 MB&B424, Advanced Research Seminar) with an MB&B faculty member (or a pre-approved faculty member in another department conducting research in molecular biology/biochemistry/biophysics) can be substituted for the 200-level elective, provided that it is taken for 1.0 credit each semester and a grade of B or higher is achieved. Honors Thesis (MB&B409 MB&B409 and MB&B410 MB&B410) may not be used to satisfy an elective requirement.

For potential elective courses outside of MB&B, including study abroad courses, students must consult with their faculty advisor and the MB&B chair in a timely manner. Prior approved courses outside MB&B that can be taken to satisfy the lower-level elective requirement include BIO121 BIO121 Developmental Biology, BIO134 BIO134 Shaping the Organism, and CHEM396 CHEM396 Molecular Modeling and Design. These courses offered by other (non-MB&B) departments may only be used to satisfy the 200-level elective requirement for completion of the MB&B major (even if the course has a 300-level designation).

Pre-meds and pre-gsads: Organic chemistry laboratory courses (CHEM257 CHEM257 and CHEM258 CHEM258) are requirements for virtually all graduate and medical schools. Most medical schools also require one year of physics with related labs and two semesters of mathematics. Many MB&B majors take 200- and 300-level courses over the curriculum requirement to better prepare for graduate or medical school.

MB&B majors are also encouraged to attend the MB&B and biology seminars (https://www.wesleyan.edu/mbb/seminars) (Wednesdays at noon), the
chemistry colloquium (Fridays at 3:30 p.m.), and/or the biological chemistry seminars (Mondays at 4 p.m.), wherein distinguished scientists from other institutions are invited to present their research to our community.

**COURSES FOR NONMAJORS**

Non-life-science majors are encouraged to consider MB&B103 MB&B103, MBB107 MBB107, MBB110 MBB110, MBB181 MBB181, and MBB182 MBB182 as part of their program to meet NSM requirements. See WesMaps (https://www.wesleyan.edu/wesmaps) for current course offerings.

MB&B228 MB&B228 is an introductory biochemistry course for nonmajors intending to pursue a medical degree.

**STUDENT LEARNING GOALS**

- Acquire mastery of core foundational knowledge of molecular biology and biochemistry
- Acquire selective familiarity with our primary literature and bioinformatic databases
- Achieve familiarity with major questions at the forefront of our field
- Acquire mastery of analytical, quantitative, and creative approaches to analyze problems in our field and to synthesize them in order to create logical hypotheses and experimental plans
- Acquire ability to use multidisciplinary approaches to synthesize a cogent experimental plan
- Acquire mastery of important methodologies in our field
- Acquire mastery of a subset of hands-on methodologies in our field
- Acquire proficiency in oral, written, and visual modes of effective scientific communication

**ADVANCED PLACEMENT**

Prospective MB&B majors who have achieved a score of 4 or 5 in AP Biology may consider replacing one of the introductory biology courses (MB&B181 or MBB182 MBB182 ) with an upper-level course. Students must consult with an MB&B faculty member if they wish to try to place out of an introductory course. Permission to place out of MB&B181 MB&B181 is based on a short interview with one of the MB&B faculty instructors and a short placement test.

Prospective MB&B majors who have achieved a score of 4 or 5 in AP Chemistry must meet the chemistry department requirements for advanced placement credit. Students should consult with the Chemistry department, as their approval is required in order to be exempted from Introductory Chemistry and to advance into higher-level Chemistry courses (e.g., Organic Chemistry). AP credit is not accepted for the math requirement.

**PRIZES**

Hawk Prize: The gift of Philip B. Hawk, Class of 1898, as a memorial to his wife, Gladys, to the students who have done the most effective work in biochemistry.

Scott Biomedical Prize: Awarded to a member or members of the molecular biology and biochemistry senior class who have demonstrated excellence and interest in commencing a career in academic or applied medicine.

William Firshein Prize: In honor of founding faculty member William Firshein, awarded to the graduating MB&B student who has contributed the most to the interests and character of the molecular biology and biochemistry department.

American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biochemistry Honor Society: The ASBMB Honor Society recognizes exceptional undergraduate juniors and seniors pursuing a degree in the molecular life sciences. Students are recognized for their scholarly achievement, research accomplishments, and outreach activities in the molecular life sciences.

American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biochemistry Research Award: The ASBMB rewards exceptional rising seniors pursuing a degree in the molecular life sciences who have developed an exciting research project. More information is available on the ASBMB web page (http://www.asbmb.org/education/studentchapters/awards/ugresearch).

Dr. Neil Clendeninn Prize: Established in 1991 by George Thornton, Class of 1991, and David Derryck, Class of 1993, for the African American student who has achieved academic excellence in biology and/or molecular biology and biochemistry. This student must have completed his or her sophomore year and in that time have exemplified those qualities of character, leadership, and concern for the Wesleyan community as shown by Dr. Neil Clendeninn, Class of 1971.

**RELATED PROGRAMS OR CERTIFICATES**

Certificate program in molecular biophysics (catalog.wesleyan.edu/certificates/molecular-biophysics). An interdisciplinary program with faculty in the MB&B, chemistry, physics, and biology departments. To receive a certificate in molecular biophysics, a student should major in either the chemistry or MB&B department. Interested students must take MB&B307, MB&B308, or CHEM338; two upper-level elective courses in molecular biophysics; and two semesters of Molecular Biophysics Journal Club (MB&B310 and MB&B308). Students are strongly encouraged to conduct independent research in the laboratory of a molecular biophysics program faculty member. Students interested in the molecular biophysics certificate should contact Professor I. Mukerji.

Certificate program in informatics and modeling (https://www.wesleyan.edu/imcp). The Integrative Genomic Sciences (IGS) pathway is an integrative program of coursework and research in the areas of bioinformatics, genomics, computational biology, and bioethics. IGS involves faculty and students in the life sciences, physical sciences, information sciences, and philosophy. The IGS course requirements are listed here (https://www.wesleyan.edu/imcp/igscourses_reqs.html). Students interested in the IGS certificate should contact Professor R. Lane.

**BA/MA PROGRAM**

This program provides an attractive option for life science majors to enrich their course and research background. Students are advised to begin research by their junior year if they intend to pursue the BA/MA. Admission is competitive and based on GPA, faculty recommendations, and research experience. For more information, please visit the BA/MA Program (http://www.wesleyan.edu/grad/degree-programs/bama.html) page.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES
Undergraduate research is an important part of the program for many MB&B majors. Wesleyan’s small but excellent graduate program makes it possible for majors to work alongside PhD and MA students at the cutting edge of discovery in molecular biology and biochemistry. To complement laboratory experiences, MB&B majors are also encouraged to gain exposure to current research through journal clubs and seminars. Undergraduate research encompassing multiple semesters or summers may be used towards completion of a senior honors thesis, as well as the basis for pursuing a Master of Arts in MB&B through the BA/MA program.

For initial entry into the world of research, most students sign up for a semester of research for 0.5 or 1.0 credit (MB&B423 MB&B423 or MB&B424 MB&B424). This option allows students to test the waters with respect to research topics, environment, faculty, and graduate students in the department, without an overly long or binding commitment. Students are expected to dedicate at least 10 hours per week on their research project, which includes attendance in weekly group meetings and reading and discussion of current literature with group members, in addition to planning and performing experiments. In order to register for this individual tutorial, students must choose a faculty research mentor and submit an electronic tutorial form using the drop/add system in their Portal. This course may be taken more than once.

MB&B majors not interested in laboratory work are encouraged to gain exposure to current research through journal clubs and seminars.

HONORS
To be considered for departmental honors, a student must:

• be an MB&B major and be recommended to the department by a faculty member. The student is expected to have a B average (grade point average 85) in courses credited to the major.
• submit a thesis based on laboratory research or library research, performed under the supervision of an MB&B faculty member or pre-approved faculty member in another department conducting research in the fields of molecular biology, biochemistry, or biophysics.

Two readers (in addition to the research mentor) must be selected for review of honors theses in MB&B. It is expected that these readers will be MB&B research faculty; any exception requires approval of the MB&B department chair.

Additional information about the [honors process can be found here.](https://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/honors/honors_program.html)

CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE
Independent laboratory research is strongly encouraged as it provides students with an exceptionally valuable learning experience. As research students, MB&B majors interact with faculty and graduate students in an environment that fosters strong intellectual and social connections. Moreover, many graduate and professional schools specifically recruit candidates with research experience. MB&B majors not interested in laboratory research can get a measure of this experience through participation in departmental and inter-departmental seminar series and journal clubs.

Faculty research interests cover an exciting range of current topics in molecular and cellular biology and biochemistry. Research areas include DNA replication and repair mechanisms, membrane transport processes, DNA-protein interactions, gene regulation, genome organization and structure, and membrane protein structure-function and dynamics. Students are encouraged to learn more about ongoing research [here](https://www.wesleyan.edu/mbb/grad_studies/research_areas.html) in the MB&B department.

We also recommend the course MB&B209 MB&B209, which is taught every spring. This course provides students opportunities to discuss research with current MB&B majors and graduate students.

All MB&B majors participate in independent research projects as part of our experimental-based advanced laboratory courses MB&B394 MB&B394 and MB&B395 MB&B395, at least one of which is required. Students interested in additional research can pursue the following options:

• [Independent Research for Course Credit](https://www.wesleyan.edu/mbb/credit.html)
• [Summer Research Program](https://www.wesleyan.edu/mbb/summer.html)
• [Honors Thesis Research](http://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/honors/honors_program.html)
• [BA/MA Fifth Year Master’s Program](http://www.wesleyan.edu/grad/degree-programs/ba-ma.html)