

BIOCHEMISTRY, MICROBIOLOGY, AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGY

Graduate Program Head	Santhosh Girirajan
Program Code	BMMB
Campus(es)	University Park (Ph.D., M.S.)
Degrees Conferred	Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Master of Science (M.S.) Dual-Title Ph.D. in Biochemistry, Microbiology, and Molecular Biology and Astrobiology Dual-Title Ph.D. in Biochemistry, Microbiology, and Molecular Biology and Biogeochemistry
The Graduate Faculty	View (https://secure.gradsch.psu.edu/gpms/?searchType=fac&prog=BMMB)

The major goal of the program in Biochemistry, Microbiology, and Molecular Biology is to train students for independent research and teaching in the principal areas of those scientific disciplines. Students may enter the program from a variety of backgrounds such as biochemistry, biology, biophysics, cell biology, chemistry, genetics, microbiology, molecular biology, physics, and other related disciplines. The student's research may begin during the first year.

Research areas of faculty include:

- antibiotic discovery
- cell and developmental biology
- cell cycle control
- chromatin structure
- cryo-electron microscopy
- DNA binding proteins
- electron paramagnetic resonance spectroscopy
- enzymology
- genomics
- iron, lipid, cellulose and xenobiotic metabolism
- neurobiology
- metabolomics
- metallobiochemistry
- microbiology
- nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy
- parasitology
- pathogenesis
- photosynthesis
- plant biology
- proteomics
- regulation of gene expression
- RNA binding proteins
- RNA structure
- signal transduction
- transcriptomics

- virology
- X-ray crystallography

Admission Requirements

Applicants apply for admission to the program via the Graduate School application for admission (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-admissions/how-to-apply/>). Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-300 Admissions Policies (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>).

Entering students should have taken courses in biology, biochemistry, chemistry, physics, genetics, and/or microbiology. Admission to the program is based on prior research experience, answers to program specific questions, course records and grades, letters of recommendation, and interviews.

All students are admitted with the intent of obtaining a Ph.D. degree, although a master's degree is obtained in some cases. The program does not admit for the terminal master's degree.

Degree Requirements

Master of Science (M.S.)

Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-600 Research Degree Policies. (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>)

A minimum of 30 credits at the 400, 500, 600, or 800 level is required, with at least 18 credits at the 500 and 600 level, combined. Master's students must complete the following core courses in BMMB:

Code	Title	Credits
Required Courses		
BMMB 502	Critical Analysis of the Biochemical, Microbial, and Molecular Biology Scientific Literature	2
BMMB 801	Foundations of Teaching in Biochemistry, Microbiology, and Molecular Biology	1
BMMB 509	Ethics in Biomedical Science	1
BMMB 582	Advances in Genetics and Genomics	3
BMMB 581	Advances in Biochemistry	3
Culminating Experience		
BMMB 600	Thesis Research	6-15

Students are required to write a thesis, and at least 6 credits in thesis research (BMMB 600 or BMMB 610) must be taken in conjunction with completing the thesis. The thesis must be accepted by the advisers and/or committee members, the head of the graduate program, and the Graduate School, and the student must pass a thesis defense.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-600 Research Degree Policies. (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>)

Each student must take a total of 19 credits in 400-,500- and 800-level courses, required and elective, from a list approved by the program faculty. Doctoral students must complete the core courses in BMMB:

Code	Title	Credits
Required Courses		
BMMB 502	Critical Analysis of the Biochemical, Microbial, and Molecular Biology Scientific Literature	2
BMMB 509	Ethics in Biomedical Science	1
BMMB 581	Advances in Biochemistry	3
BMMB 582	Advances in Genetics and Genomics	3
BMMB 801	Foundations of Teaching in Biochemistry, Microbiology, and Molecular Biology	1

Additional course work and research are individually planned by the student and the research adviser in consultation with the Ph.D. committee. The Ph.D. committee is established in compliance with Graduate Council policy (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/phd-dissertation-committee-formation/>) once the student has passed the qualifying examination.

Doctoral students must pass a qualifying examination, a comprehensive oral examination, and a final oral examination (the dissertation defense). Continuation in the Ph.D. program is decided on the basis of the student's performance in courses, research and teaching. In addition, an oral qualifying examination is taken during the fall semester of the second year. This examination tests the student's ability to utilize what they have learned in solving problems based on the scientific method. A comprehensive oral examination is taken before the student's Ph.D. committee within approximately three semesters after the student has passed the qualifying examination. The student is expected to present a written dissertation proposal including data that has been gathered, future research directions, and experimental approaches. Questioning may involve, but is not limited to, that dissertation proposal.

The faculty requires that each student demonstrate the ability to collect, organize, and present the results of their research in a professional manner before graduation. This is accomplished by preparing a manuscript based on the Ph.D. dissertation research. The manuscript must be written by the student and submitted for publication in a refereed journal prior to the final oral examination (the dissertation defense). The dissertation defense is taken before the student's Ph.D. committee at the end of the program. The student must also present a public seminar on the dissertation research within the two-week period preceding the dissertation defense. To earn the Ph.D. degree, the student's dissertation must be accepted by the Ph.D. committee, the head of the graduate program, and the Graduate School.

Other Relevant Information

The director of graduate studies is in charge of advising students about academic and related matters until they have chosen a dissertation adviser. Beginning students carry out a series of rotation projects in at least three different faculty laboratories before deciding on a research area. Students generally decide on their dissertation research adviser at the end of their first fall semester.

All students are required to participate as teaching assistants in undergraduate laboratory courses as part of their training. Students are required to register for BMMB 602 (Supervised Experience in College Teaching) for two semesters; however, these credits cannot be counted towards the minimum credits required for the degree.

Dual-Titles

Dual-Title Ph.D. Program in BIOCHEMISTRY, MICROBIOLOGY, AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGY and Astrobiology

Requirements listed here are in addition to requirements listed in GCAC-208 Dual-Title Graduate Degree Programs (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-208-dual-titles/>).

Graduate students with research and educational interests in astrobiology may apply to the Astrobiology Dual-Title Ph.D. Program. Students must apply and be admitted to the graduate program in BMMB and The Graduate School before they can apply for admission to the dual-title degree program. After admission to their primary program, students must apply for admission to and meet the admissions requirements of the Astrobiology dual-title program. Refer to the Admission Requirements section of the Astrobiology Bulletin page (<http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/astrobiology/>). Doctoral students must be admitted into the dual-title degree program in Astrobiology no later than the end of the fourth semester (not counting summer semesters) of entry into the graduate major program.

To qualify for the dual-title degree, students must satisfy the degree requirements for the Ph.D. degree in BMMB, listed on the Degree Requirements tab. In addition, students must complete the degree requirements for the dual-title in Astrobiology, listed on the Astrobiology Bulletin page (<http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/astrobiology/>).

The Qualifying Examination in the major area alone will satisfy the Qualifying Exam requirement for the dual-title program.

In addition to the general Graduate Council requirements for Ph.D. committees (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/phd-dissertation-committee-formation/>), the Ph.D. committee of a BMMB and Astrobiology dual-title Ph.D. student must include at least one member of the Astrobiology Graduate Faculty. Faculty members who hold appointments in both programs' Graduate Faculty may serve in a combined role. If the chair of the Ph.D. committee is not also a member of the Graduate Faculty in Astrobiology, the member of the committee representing Astrobiology must be appointed as co-chair. The Astrobiology representative on the student's Ph.D. committee will develop questions for and participate in the evaluation of the comprehensive examination.

Students in the dual-title program are required to write and orally defend a dissertation on a topic that is approved in advance by their Ph.D. committee and reflects their original research and education in BMMB and Astrobiology. Upon completion of the doctoral dissertation, the candidate must pass a final oral examination (the dissertation defense) to earn the Ph.D. degree. The dissertation must be accepted by the Ph.D. committee, the head of the graduate program, and the Graduate School.

Dual-Title Ph.D. Program in BIOCHEMISTRY, MICROBIOLOGY, AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGY and Biogeochemistry

Requirements listed here are in addition to requirements listed in GCAC-208 Dual-Title Graduate Degree Programs (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-208-dual-titles/>).

Graduate students with research and educational interests in biogeochemistry may apply to the Biogeochemistry Dual-Title Ph.D. Program. Students must apply and be admitted to the graduate program in BMMB and The Graduate School before they can apply for admission to the dual-title degree program. After admission to their primary program, students must apply for admission to and meet the admissions requirements of the Biogeochemistry dual-title program. Refer to the Admission Requirements section of the Biogeochemistry Bulletin page (<http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/biogeochemistry/>). Doctoral students must be admitted into the dual-title degree program in Biogeochemistry prior to taking the qualifying examination in their primary graduate program.

Students in the Biogeochemistry Dual Title program are required to have two advisers from separate disciplines: one individual serving as a primary adviser in their major degree program and a secondary adviser in an area within a field covered by the dual-title program and a member of the Biogeochemistry faculty. To qualify for the dual-title degree, students must satisfy the degree requirements for the Ph.D. degree in BMMB, listed on the Degree Requirements tab. In addition, students must complete the degree requirements for the dual-title in Biogeochemistry, listed on the Biogeochemistry Bulletin page (<http://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/biogeochemistry/>).

The qualifying examination committee for the dual-title Ph.D. degree will be composed of Graduate Faculty from BMMB and must include at least one Graduate Faculty member from the Biogeochemistry program. Faculty members who hold appointments in both programs' Graduate Faculty may serve in a combined role. There will be a single qualifying examination, containing elements of both BMMB and Biogeochemistry. Dual-title graduate degree students may require an additional semester to fulfill requirements for both areas of study and, therefore, the qualifying examination may be delayed one semester beyond the normal period allowable.

In addition to the general Graduate Council requirements for Ph.D. committees (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/phd-dissertation-committee-formation/>), the Ph.D. committee of a BMMB and Biogeochemistry dual-title Ph.D. student must include at least one member of the Biogeochemistry Graduate Faculty. Faculty members who hold appointments in both programs' Graduate Faculty may serve in a combined role. If the chair of the Ph.D. committee is not also a member of the Graduate Faculty in Biogeochemistry, the member of the committee representing Biogeochemistry must be appointed as co-chair. The Biogeochemistry representative on the student's Ph.D. committee will develop questions for and participate in the evaluation of the comprehensive examination.

Students in the dual-title program are required to write and orally defend a dissertation on a topic that is approved in advance by their Ph.D. committee and reflects their original research and education in BMMB and Biogeochemistry. Upon completion of the doctoral dissertation, the candidate must pass a final oral examination (the dissertation defense) to earn the Ph.D. degree. The dissertation must be accepted by the Ph.D. committee, the head of the graduate program, and the Graduate School.

Minor

A graduate minor is available in any approved graduate major or dual-title program. The default requirements for a graduate minor are stated in Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-600 Research Degree Policies (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>) and GCAC-700 Professional Degree Policies (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>), depending on the type of degree the student is pursuing:

graduate-education-policies/), depending on the type of degree the student is pursuing:

- GCAC-611 Minor - Research Doctorate (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-611-minor-research-doctorate/>)
- GCAC-641 Minor - Research Master's (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-641-minor-research-masters/>)
- GCAC-709 Minor - Professional Doctorate (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-700/gcac-709-professional-doctoral-minor/>)
- GCAC-741 Minor - Professional Master's (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-700/gcac-741-masters-minor-professional/>)

Student Aid

Graduate assistantships available to students in this program and other forms of student aid are described in the Tuition & Funding (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-funding/>) section of The Graduate School's website. Students on graduate assistantships must adhere to the course load limits (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gsad/gsad-900/gsad-901-graduate-assistants/>) set by The Graduate School.

Courses

Graduate courses carry numbers from 500 to 699 and 800 to 899. Advanced undergraduate courses numbered between 400 and 499 may be used to meet some graduate degree requirements when taken by graduate students. Courses below the 400 level may not. A graduate student may register for or audit these courses in order to make up deficiencies or to fill in gaps in previous education but not to meet requirements for an advanced degree.

Biochemistry, Microbiology, and Molecular Biology (BMMB) Course List (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/university-course-descriptions/graduate/bmmb/>)

Biological Chemistry (BCHEM) Course List (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/university-course-descriptions/graduate/bchem/>)

Cell and Molecular Biology (CMBIO) Course List (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/university-course-descriptions/graduate/cmbio/>)

Learning Outcomes

Master of Science (M.S.)

- Each student will be able to engage in a knowledgeable scientific conversation across BMMB topics.
- Each student will have detailed knowledge on the specific subject of their thesis research.
- Each student will be able to critically evaluate science and use the scientific method.
- Each student will have the skills to conduct experiments effectively, safely, and with high rigor and reproducibility.
- Each student will be prepared to work in a collaborative environment.
- Each student will be able to conduct research in an ethical manner and understand the impact of science on society.
- Each student will be able to communicate their work to scientists.
- Each student will demonstrate effective teaching strategies.

- Each student will have acquired the skills necessary to succeed in their chosen careers.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

- Each student will be able to engage in a knowledgeable scientific conversation across BMMB topics.
- Each student will be a world expert on the specific subject of their dissertation research.
- Each student will be able to critically evaluate science and use the scientific method.
- Each student will have the skills to conduct experiments effectively, safely, and with high rigor and reproducibility. These skills will be used to make a significant scientific contribution to the field of BMMB.
- Each student will be prepared to work in a collaborative environment to address cross-disciplinary questions.
- Each student will conduct research in an ethical manner and understand the impact of science on society.
- Each student will be able to communicate with experts in the field, non-expert scientists, and non-scientists.
- Each student will demonstrate effective teaching strategies.
- Each student will be able to lead a research endeavor.
- Each student will have acquired the skills necessary to succeed in their chosen careers.

Contact

Campus	University Park
Graduate Program Head	Santhosh Girirajan
Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or Professor-in-Charge (PIC)	Ying Gu
Program Contact	Kalysta Long 107 Althouse Laboratory University Park PA 16802 kjl5737@psu.edu (814) 865-2538
Program Website	View (https://science.psu.edu/ bmb/graduate/)