DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE FIELD OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Our departmental graduate program is highly interactive in which students move easily among disciplines within the department and interact with other programs and institutions. Graduate research is generally in one of two areas 1) cell and molecular biology, and 2) systematics, evolution, and ecology. Students in the program often take advantage of other researchers, faculty, and facilities at GW and elsewhere in the Washington area. These include the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History.

A strong background in cell and molecular biology is essential for many competitive careers. Graduate students in this area conduct research on both well-studied model systems and non-model organisms, and often use comparative approaches. Common research themes among department faculty include cell signaling processes, and the genetic and cellular mechanisms governing virulence, behavior, immune responses, neurobiology, development, and the phenotypic expression of a variety of morphological traits. Students are trained in both experimental and comparative approaches and use a diverse array of modern research methods, ranging from precision imaging to gene editing to the assembly and analysis of genomes/proteomes/metabolomes.

Amid increasing concern about global change and biodiversity decline, expertise in systematics and ecology is more important than ever. GW’s Systematics, Evolution, and Ecology (SEE) program is one of the few in the world specializing in the principles and methods of phylogenetic analysis and comparative biology, putting the university at the forefront of biodiversity studies. Departmental research in evolution and ecology spans a wide array of taxa and study systems, including both vertebrate (amphibians, reptiles, fishes) and invertebrate (social and non-social insects, arachnids, oysters) animals, plants, fungi, and bacteria. In addition to systematics, students can join labs conducting research on behavioral, ecosystem, community, and population ecology as well as ecomorphology and biomechanics.

To complement their classroom education, students can get involved in ongoing field research at both terrestrial and aquatic field sites around the world. Recent graduate students have studied termites and wood decomposition in Australian rainforests, collected ants in Brazilian savannas, discovered new reptiles and amphibians in Sri Lanka, and unearthed rare dinosaur fossils in the Gobi Desert of China.

The department regularly supports graduate student attendance at graduate short courses offered around the US and abroad, including those available through our membership in the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS) as well as regularly offered short courses at Friday Harbor, Southwestern Research Station, and Woods Hole.

The M.S. program has a thesis or non-thesis option, allowing students to pursue laboratory or classwork-only research in one of the two areas described above.

The Ph.D. and M.S. in Biological Sciences are STEM-designated programs.

REQUIREMENTS

The following requirements must be fulfilled:

The general requirements stated under Columbian College of Arts and Sciences, Graduate Programs (http://bulletin.gwu.edu/arts-sciences/#degreeregulationstext).

The requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Program (http://bulletin.gwu.edu/arts-sciences/#doctoralttext).

The required curriculum and program requirements as outlined below:

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<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<td>Requirements for students entering with a bachelor’s degree:</td>
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<td>72 credits prior to graduation.</td>
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<td>48 credits of approved graduate-level coursework to be advanced to candidacy.</td>
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<td>6 to 24 credits of dissertation research (BISC 8999).</td>
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<td>Successful completion of a general examination, comprising both written and oral examinations, to be advanced to candidacy.</td>
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<td>Requirements for students entering with a master’s degree:</td>
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<td>72 credits prior to graduation.</td>
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<td>48 credits of approved graduate-level coursework to be advanced to candidacy (includes up to 30 credits transferred from the master’s degree).</td>
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<td>6 to 24 credits of dissertation research (BISC 8999).</td>
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The program of study and fields of study are determined in consultation with an advisory committee appointed for each candidate.

Major research fields
- Cell and molecular biology
- Systematics
ADMISSIONS

Admission deadlines:
- Fall - December 1 (Ph.D.); January 15 (M.S.)

Standardized test scores:
- GRE general test (institutional code 5246). Waived for applicants who hold a JD, MD, or PhD.
- The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the academic International English Language Testing System (IELTS), or the PTE Academic is required of all applicants except those who hold a bachelor’s, master’s, or doctoral degree from a college or university in the United States or from an institution located in a country in which English is the official language, provided English was the language of instruction.

Minimum scores for the PhD and M.S. program are:
- Academic IELTS: an overall band score of 7.0 with no individual score below 6.0; or
- TOEFL: 600 on paper-based or 100 on Internet-based; or
- PTE Academic: 68;

Recommendations required:
- Three (3) recommendations

Prior academic records:
- Transcripts are required from all colleges and universities attended, whether or not credit was earned, the program was completed, or the credit appears as transfer credit on another transcript. Unofficial transcripts from all colleges and universities attended must be uploaded to your online application. Official transcripts are required only of applicants who are offered admission.
- If transcripts are in a language other than English, English language translations must be provided. The English translation alone should be uploaded into your application.

Statement of purpose:
- In an essay of 250 - 500 words, state your purpose in undertaking graduate study in your chosen field. Include your academic objectives, research interests, and career plans. Also discuss your related qualifications, including collegiate, professional, and community activities, and any other substantial accomplishments not already mentioned on the application. If you are applying for an assistantship or fellowship, you should also describe any teaching experience you have had.

For more information on the admission process, please visit the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences Frequently Asked Questions page.

Supporting documents not submitted online should be mailed to:
Columbian College of Arts and Sciences - Graduate Admissions Office
The George Washington University
801 22nd Street NW, Phillips Hall 215
Washington DC 20052

Contact for questions:
askccas@gwu.edu ~ 202-994-6210 (phone) ~ 202-994-6213 (fax)
8:30 am - 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday

International applicants only:
Please follow this link - https://graduate.admissions.gwu.edu/international-student-application-requirements (https://graduate.admissions.gwu.edu/international-student-application-requirements/) - to review the International Applicant Information carefully for details on required documents, earlier deadlines for applicants requiring an I-20 or DS-2019 from GW, and English language requirements.

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