

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for:
Molecular, Cellular, Developmental Biology and Genetics (MCDB&G)
or Biochemistry, Molecular Biology and Biophysics (BMBB)

1. When is the application deadline?

December 1

2. Do you take applications after the deadline?

No, once we begin the review and interview process, we do not take any more applications.

3. How do I apply?

You must apply to the Graduate School online through the Slate online system. Please visit [the Graduate School Admissions page](#) and select “Apply Now” to begin your application.

4. Do you accept paper application materials?

No, the application is fully online. You will need to upload all materials to your online graduate school application, including transcripts.

5. Do you offer admission for the spring semester?

No, we admit only for the fall semester.

6. Can I apply for a M.S. degree?

No, MCDB&G and BMBB only offer the Ph.D. degree.

7. Do I need a M.S. degree to apply to the BMBB and MCDB&G programs?

No, you do not need a M.S. degree to apply to the BMBB or MCDB&G programs.

8. Can I apply for more programs at the University other than the BMBB or MCDB&G programs?

Yes, there is no limit to the number of programs that you apply to at the University of Minnesota. However, there will be an application fee for each application submitted.

9. How competitive is the program?

For both BMBB & MCDB&G programs, we receive around 150 applications each and admit approximately 10-15 students. Approximately 4-8 of these students per program are international.

10. Do you admit international students?

Yes, international students will be contacted for a Zoom interview prior to receiving an offer of admission. Each program interviews approximately 8-12 international students.

11. Am I guaranteed funding?

Yes, funding is guaranteed, provided that students demonstrate satisfactory progress toward their PhD. The program pays your annual stipend (\$34,000 - Fall 2023), tuition, student fees, and a portion of your healthcare benefits for the first year. Once you join a lab, your advisor will fund you for the remaining time that you are in the program.

12. Do I pay for any of my healthcare benefits?

Yes, when you choose to opt in to the Graduate Student Health Plan, there is a small portion (less than \$200 per semester) that you have to pay towards your benefits. The rest of your healthcare is paid for by the program or your advisor (~\$8,000/year).

13. Should I contact individual faculty regarding my admission or to evaluate my credentials?

No, the admissions committee reviews your application and offers admission to students, not individual faculty.

14. How do students find an advisor?

Students participate in three 7-week rotations in three different faculty research laboratories. The first begins in late August, and the last finishes in February. MCSB students then select a lab and are either in the BMBB or MCDB&G program for their PhD depending upon the laboratory that they join. Students switch programs if the advisor that they choose is only in the other department. Otherwise, they remain in the department to which they applied.

15. What makes a particular application stand out?

Research Experience! The most successful applicants have significant and productive research experience. They are able to effectively describe the rationale and biological context for their research, as well as what was accomplished. Exceptional research experience (Master's Degrees, many years of experience, publications, etc.) may offset minor deficiencies in GPA. Applicants that have not worked in a laboratory in the past year or two should consider updating their research skills by volunteering in a laboratory or finding a paid laboratory position.

16. What does the admission committee look for in an application?

Our admissions committee follows a holistic admissions process for each candidate, but is also focused on four areas: **Academics, Personal Statement, Research Experience** and **three Letters of Recommendation**.

17. What is required for a Personal Statement?

Your Personal Statement should be no longer than two single-spaced pages. Your list of research publications is excluded from this two-page limit. If there is a lapse in time for your education or employment, explain why. At the end of the Personal Statement, list any research publications on which you are an author. The best personal statements show enthusiasm for science, your research experiences, and career goals.

- Did you perform an independent research project where you were extensively involved in planning and developing experimental approaches?
- What was your project and contribution?
- Do you have any scientific achievements such as publications, leadership roles, awards, and acceptance into internships?
- Why are you considering the University of Minnesota?
- Are there specific faculty or labs that you are interested in?

18. Is the Diversity Statement required?

No, the Diversity Statement is optional. However, If you would like to include a statement that identifies the distinctive characteristics and/or life experiences, such as successfully overcoming obstacles or hardships,

and how that could contribute to the education and enhanced perspectives at the University, [please upload a separate Diversity Statement](#) with your application.

19. Is the Description of Research required?

No, this is optional. If you decide to add a description of your research please include how you became interested in your area of research and what direction you might take in the future.

20. Should I upload a CV?

Yes, a CV or resume is required.

21. What is the average GPA score needed for admittance?

Competitive applications will have a GPA of 3.3 or higher (on a 4.0 scale). If your GPA falls below 3.3, additional graduate level courses can be taken to demonstrate academic ability. The Graduate School minimum is a 3.0.

22. What classes do I need to take to be eligible for admission?

Recommended (but not required) academic preparation includes a strong background in basic biology, including biochemistry and genetics. Excellent grades in the sciences and evidence of improvement over time will help your application.

23. Can I be admitted into a program without being officially graduated from my undergraduate university?

Yes, many students are admitted into the programs who are in their final semester of their undergraduate degree or their master's degree.

24. Do you require the Graduate Record Examination (GRE)?

No. The GRE general and subject scores are NOT required to apply to the program. Note that the University's Graduate School application system still includes a spot for GRE scores; however, you are not required to enter them. Our application review committee will NOT view these scores even if you do submit them.

25. Is the TOEFL or IELTS exam required for international students?

[English Language Proficiency](#)

Yes. Scores must be less than two years old. Your self-reported scores are acceptable, but official scores will be required if you are accepted and decide to join our program. These are the minimum scores required for admission:

TOEFL	Overall: 79	Reading: 19	Writing: 21
IELTS	Overall: 6.5	Reading: 6.5	Writing: 6.5
Duolingo	Overall: 115 or above	Literacy: 115 or above	

26. Do I need to provide official transcripts?

No. [Unofficial transcripts](#) should be uploaded to the application. [Official transcripts](#) are only required when you are admitted into the program. If you are an international student, check the [international student resources](#) page for more information.

27. How many letters of recommendation do I need?

Three letters are required. Letters of recommendation from persons familiar with your academic and research capabilities are strongly encouraged. It is important to have a strong letter of support from your direct research supervisor. Names and complete contact information for the three referees must be entered online.

28. How should my letter writers submit their recommendations?

Referees will be sent instructions from the Slate application system via email. Referees are strongly encouraged to follow these instructions and directly upload their letters to your online application. If they are unable to upload letters online, please contact the BMBB or MCDB&G graduate program coordinators.

29. What do I do if I forgot to upload something and I already submitted my application?

Contact the BMBB or MCDB&G graduate program coordinators. It is very important that you do not mail any paper documents to the Graduate School Admissions Office.

30. Do I have to pay the Graduate School application fee?

Yes, the graduate school does not offer a fee waiver. The application fee is \$75 for domestic students and \$95 for international students.

31. How do I know if my application is being considered for admission?

We review applications starting in December. In January, international students will have a virtual interview. We also invite top domestic students for an in-person interview and campus visit at our expense. Final admission offers are made at the end of February/early March.

If you did not see your question listed above, feel free to contact:

Karen Evans

BMBB Graduate Program

evansk@umn.edu

612-625-5179

Katie Roos

MCDB&G Graduate Program

kroos@umn.edu