

# Molecular, Cellular & Structural Biology (MCSB) Graduate Program

Includes Molecular, Cellular, Developmental Biology and Genetics (MCDB&G) & Biochemistry, Molecular Biology and Biophysics (BMBB) Graduate Programs

## Application Process

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MCDB&G and BMBB are two distinct graduate programs. However, all students admitted to *either* program begin their first year in a joint program called **Molecular, Cellular and Structural Biology (MCSB)** graduate studies. After completion of year one, students will either continue in their respective program of entry or switch programs. Switching will be determined by the Graduate Program and Directors of Graduate Studies.

Applications must be submitted to the University of Minnesota Graduate School through the Slate online system. Please see the Application Checklist for a complete list of required materials.

Prospective students must apply to either MCDB&G or BMBB, not to MCSB. You will not find MCSB as an application choice. If both programs interest you, **you need to apply to both programs**. If you do apply to both, please indicate in your personal statement that you applied to the other program too.

### Reminders:

- Upload all materials, including transcripts, to the [online application](#).
- Do not submit your application until all materials are uploaded.
- Do submit your application even if all of your letters of recommendations have not been submitted.
- Encourage all your referees to submit their letters online.
- Check your email frequently. If you are missing materials or if there are any problems with your application, we will contact you only by email.
- If you have a publication, please submit only the abstract.

### Application Timeline:

- **December 1:** Application deadline
- **By January 15:** Applications reviewed, candidates invited to recruiting visits
- **Late January and early February:** Recruiting visits
- **By early February:** International applicants interviewed
- **By the end of February:** Offers made

If you have a question about the admissions process, please see the frequently asked questions below. If you do not see your question listed below, feel free to contact the MCDB&G or BMBB graduate program.

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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**1. When is the application deadline?**

December 1

**2. Do you take applications after the deadline?**

No, we do not accept applications after the December 1 deadline.

**3. How do I apply?**

You must apply to the Graduate School online via the Slate online system. Please visit <https://www.grad.umn.edu/admissions> and select “Apply Now” to begin your application.

**4. Do you accept paper application materials?**

No, you must upload all materials to your online graduate school application, including transcripts. **Do not send paper documents to the Graduate School.**

**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. There will be an application fee for each application submitted.

**9. How competitive is the program?**

Per graduate program, we receive around 150 applications and each program brings in between 40-50 students for in person visits. Out of the final offers made, each program admits approximately 8-12 students. Approximately 2-4 of these students are international per program.

**10. Do you admit international students?**

Yes, international students will be contacted for a Skype or Zoom interview prior to receiving an offer of admission. Each program interviews approximately 2-6 international students.

**11. Am I guaranteed funding?**

Yes, funding is guaranteed for five years, provided students exhibit satisfactory progress toward their PhD degree. The program pays your annual stipend (\$34,000 - Fall 2024), 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 you are in the program. **The University is currently in collective bargaining with the graduate assistant union (GLU-UE) and compensation amounts are subject to change**

**pending the outcomes of bargaining. Under Minnesota law, new employees have the right to meet with Union representatives within their first 30 days of employment.**

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

If you opt-in to the University's health care benefits, there is a small portion (~\$210) that you have to pay per semester towards your benefits, which is the premium.

**13. Do I need to complete the financial aid forms listed on the Graduate School?**

No, completion of these financial aid forms is not necessary.

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

No, only the admissions committees can review your application and offer admission.

**15. How do students find an advisor?**

Students conduct three 7-week rotations in faculty research laboratories with the first beginning in September and the last finishing in February. MCSB students then select thesis laboratories and enter either the BMBB or MCDB&G program for their Ph.D. degree, depending upon the laboratory that they join.

**16. 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.

**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.** Convey to the committee that you are seriously considering the University of Minnesota based on your indication of specific labs who are doing work you would be interested in joining.

Here are some questions to think about when crafting your personal statement:

- Did you concisely describe 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. Are the Diversity Statement and Writing Sample documents required?**

Neither are required, however we encourage you to submit a diversity statement. 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. You do not need to submit a writing sample document.

**19. What do I upload in the Description of Research section?**

You can either leave it blank or 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 better (on a 4.0 scale). If your GPA falls below 3.3, additional graduate level courses can be taken to demonstrate academic ability.

**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.

**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?**

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. If you attended an English speaking University full time (at least 16 semester credits of 24 quarter credits) during the past two or more years while living in an English speaking country, and the coursework does not include ESL courses, the TOEFL or IELTS score is waived. If you are an international student, please see the [English Language Proficiency](#) page from the Graduate School.

**26. Do I need to provide official transcripts?**

No. [Unofficial transcripts](#) should be uploaded to the application. [Official transcripts](#) are **only required when you accept an offer of admission to the program**. If you are an international student, check out 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.

**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. 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 and invite our top candidates who are currently residing in the United States to visit campus at our expense in January and February. Skype or Zoom interviews are conducted for the top international applicants sometime in February.

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

Karen Evans  
BMBB Graduate Program  
[evansk@umn.edu](mailto:evansk@umn.edu)

Katie Roos  
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