

MSc Bioinformatics and Systems Biology

Description

1. Introduction

1.01 Welcome to the University of Manchester and the School of Biological Sciences

1.02 This handbook is accurate at the start of the 2025/6 academic year

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1.04 Key Contacts

If you have any queries or concerns at any time during your period of study at The University of Manchester, there is a range of people you can approach. The Programme Administration Teams will be your first point of call for general issues. Alternatively, you may wish to contact the Programme Director for specific aspects to do with the course or your Academic Advisor for career development issues. If you wish to raise a confidential matter at School level, you should approach the Head of Teaching, Learning and Student Experience â?? contact details below.

Responsibility for overall management of the Programme lies with the Programme Director who has assembled a Programme Committee, which meets regularly, to advise on content, structure, management, student supervision, and regulatory matters such as Programme improvement and refinement. The Committee also includes the student representative who is democratically elected by you to attend these meetings.

Programme Administration Team

Your first point of call should be directed as follows:

Student SharePoint site: [School of Biological Sciences Student Information â?? Home](#)

Student Hub

- sbs.hub@manchester.ac.uk

Student Support

- sbs.wellbeing@manchester.ac.uk

Assessments

- sbs.assessment@manchester.ac.uk

Programmes and Curriculum

- sbs.programmes@manchester.ac.uk

Student Representative

- To be appointed democratically

Director of Education (UG and PGT)

- Professor Nicky High
- nicky.high@manchester.ac.uk

Head of Teaching, Learning and Student Experience

- Kerry Mycock
- kerry.mycock@manchester.ac.uk

Teaching and Learning Manager

- Kelly Salimian
- kelly.salimian@manchester.ac.uk

Student Service, Support & Development Manager

- Sam Green
- sam.green-1@manchester.ac.uk

Programme Directors

- Dr Jean-Marc Schwartz
- jean-marc.schwartz@manchester.ac.uk
- Dr David Talavera
- david.talavera@manchester.ac.uk

1.05 Key dates in the academic year

A summary of the key dates is given below and additional information can be found here

<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/key-dates/>

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1.09 Changes/Updates to your personal details recorded in the Student System

It is your responsibility to ensure that the Student System is kept up to date with changes to your recorded personal or programme details. Any change of personal details must be completed online via My Manchester. Incorrect information can lead to problems with your fees and funding, at Examination times and with other official processes.

Please read guidance available on the University of Manchester Student Support webpage for details on [Updating your bank details](#) and changes to your [personal information](#) (for example, your address or name).

If you need any help, please contact the [Student Support Hub](#)

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2. About your programme

2.01 Programme overview for MSc Bioinformatics and Systems Biology

2.02 Aims and Learning outcomes of the programme

- Equip students with an up-to-date knowledge of bioinformatics and systems biology techniques, their usage and the technical background to enhance and develop their skills; enabling them to play roles in the key areas of data integration and interpretation, in the era of high throughput experimental biology.
- Produce trained and skilled graduates who are able to move easily on from the programme, into academic and industrial settings.
- Produce graduates who have gained enough basic knowledge and critical understanding of the main areas in bioinformatics and systems biology to quickly adapt to the new requirements in these rapidly evolving fields.
- To train students in the importance and methods of science communication, and to promote an understanding of science in a wider societal context.

2.03 Summary of the programme structure

In Semester 1, you will complete BIOL62000 Academic Malpractice and Health and Safety, BIOL60201 Programming Skills, BIOL60791 Bioinformatics, BIOL66021 Computational Approaches to Biology and BIOL65161 Statistics and Experimental Design.

In Semester 2, you will complete Research Project 1 and Research Project 2. More information on all course units can be found below.

2.04 Modes of Study

This is a full-time Master's course.

2.05 Programme specification

These documents are stored internally within the School.

2.06 Course Units

All course unit specifications were reviewed March 2025

BIOL60201 Programming Skills

[Course unit information | MyManchester](#)

BIOL60791 Bioinformatics

[Course unit information | MyManchester](#)

BIOL61230 Research Project 1-Bioinformatics

[Course unit information | MyManchester](#)

BIOL61280 Research Project 2-Bioinformatics

[Course unit information | MyManchester](#)

BIOL65161 Statistics and Experimental Design

[Course unit information | MyManchester](#)

BIOL66021 Computational Approaches to Biology

[Course unit information | MyManchester](#)

2.07 Information on the way in which a student can progress through the programme

Please be aware this programme has some higher requirements to the University degree regulations and details of these are outlined below:

In order to progress to the dissertation/research project you must have satisfactorily achieved the relevant pass mark in taught course units, including by use of resit and/or compensation as outlined in the degree regulations.

The Pass mark for BIOL65161-Statistics and Experimental Design is 65% but is Pass/Fail and not included in averages.

Compensation rules will apply to BIOL65161 within the mark range of 55-64%

The University Postgraduate degree regulations can be found online:

[Postgraduate Degree Regulations](#)

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2.13 Degree classification algorithm

During your degree programme, you will complete 180 credits; which will comprise of both Taught (teaching-based) course units and two larger Research-based course unit. Each course unit carries a weighting in credits and an average is calculated at the end of your degree programme of the marks you have achieved and this serves as your final degree mark out of 100. Course units are counted in to your degree mark based on their weighting in credits, so a 60 credit course unit would be counted in to the average 4 times, whilst a 15 credit course unit would be counted in to the average once. All degree marks are rounded to 1 decimal place. Please see below an example degree mark calculation:

Unit 1 (15 Credits): 67

Unit 2 (15 Credits): 55

Unit 3 (15 Credits): 78

Unit 4 (15 Credits): 70

Unit 5 (60 Credits): 75

Unit 6 (60 Credits): 66

The calculation would be:

$$67 + 55 + 78 + 70 + 75 + 75 + 75 + 75 + 66 + 66 + 66 + 66 = 834 / 12 = 69.5$$

Please note that in cases where students have approved mitigating circumstances for some of their marks, the final mark may be calculated differently, at the discretion of the exam board, for example a 15 credit unit where the student has under-performed may be excluded from the final calculation.

Degree Classification

For Masters Programmes, students must achieve an overall average of at least 50 to be eligible for an MSc award. If you achieve an average below 50, you will not be awarded an MSc award, but may be eligible for a lower exit award of a Postgraduate Diploma or a Postgraduate Certificate.

Degree classifications are awarded as follows:

Final mark of 50 – 59.9 : Pass

Final mark of 60 – 69.9: Merit

Final mark of 70 or above: Distinction

Classification Review:

For final degree marks which fall within the boundary zone; within 2 marks of the higher classification (68 – 69.9 for a Distinction or 58 – 59.9 for a Merit), the examination board will consider whether there is a case for the student to be awarded the higher classification and in some cases students will be awarded the higher classification where their final degree mark falls in the boundary zone.

PLEASE NOTE: There is no guarantee if your final degree mark falls in the boundary zone that you will be awarded the higher degree classification. This will only be awarded automatically if you have achieved a degree mark above the degree classification boundary (e.g. 70 for a Distinction).

If your mark falls in the boundary zone; you will be awarded the higher degree classification in the following situations:

- If two thirds or more of the credits you have completed during your degree programme (120 credits or more) are marks at the higher degree classification, you will be automatically promoted

to the higher degree classification (so 120 credits with marks above 70 would be needed to be promoted to a distinction)

- If you do not have two thirds of credits at the higher classification but are in the boundary zone, there will be an independent review of your final research project by the external examiner who will make a recommendation to the board as to whether or not there is a case for the student being awarded the higher degree classification. The board will then make a decision based on this and on the mark profile whether or not to promote the student to the higher classification. This is at the discretion of the examination board, is not a guarantee, and is a decision that cannot be questioned or challenged.

There is no classification review available for the classification of Pass; any degree mark below 50 cannot be awarded an MSc degree under any circumstances.

3. Assessment and academic standards

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3.04 Laboratory work and practical reports

Not relevant to programme.

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3.06 Programme-specific assessment requirements

Regulations and arrangements for special circumstances, re-sits, compensation

Information specifically related to PSRBs is in section 2.10

Consequences of unsatisfactory progress is in section 2.08

Programme Specific Regulations is in 2.09

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3.12 External Examiner

External Examiners are individuals from another institution or organisation who monitor the assessment processes of the University to ensure fairness and academic standards. They ensure that assessment and examination procedures have been fairly and properly implemented and that decisions have been made after appropriate deliberation. They also ensure that standards of awards and levels of student performance are comparable with those in equivalent higher education institutions.

The External Examiner for the MSc Bioinformatics and Systems Biology is Dr Alasdair Ivens from the University of Edinburgh

Please note that it is inappropriate for students to make direct contact with External Examiners under any circumstances, in particular with regards to a studentâ??s individual performance in assessments. Other appropriate mechanisms are available for students, including the Universityâ??s appeals or complaints procedures and the UMSU Advice Centre. In cases where a student does contact an External Examiner directly, External Examiners have been requested not to respond to direct queries. Instead, External Examiners should report the matter to the School contact who will then

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4. Student Voice

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4.03 Role of the Programme meeting

The PGT Programme meeting meets twice a year. The committeeâ??s functions and responsibilities are to maintain the standards of teaching, to evaluate and revise the programme in the light of feedback, to monitor student progression and to provide a forum for discussion between the University and the students.

The meeting reviews the annual monitoring report and acts on recommendations arising from the annual monitoring process.

The membership of the meeting includes: the Programme Directors; the Programme Administration Team; Teaching Staff and Student Representatives.

The PGT Programme meeting reports to the PGT Programme Committee.

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5. Attendance requirements, interruptions and mitigating circumstances

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5.04 Procedure for reporting ill health

Absence from examinations due to ill health

You should make every effort to participate in all examinations. It will not be possible to make special arrangements to take the exams in an alternative location, unless this has been arranged through the Disability Advisory Support Service.

If you are so ill you are unable to take an exam, you **must** contact the SBS Hub â?? email sbs.hub@manchester.ac.uk or telephone **0161 275 1387** as soon as possible, and certainly **no later than the day and start time of your examination**. You should complete a Mitigating Circumstances application which must be accompanied by appropriate evidence.

Illness not resulting in absence from examinations

You may be unwell but able to proceed with an examination but feel that your performance will have been impaired. If you wish this to be taken into account, you must follow the same procedures as stated in the earlier Section Absence from Examinations due to Ill Health by applying for mitigation. Note that typical levels of exam stress that are not diagnosed as a long-term condition, would not normally be considered a mitigating circumstance. If you anticipate or experience high levels of stress related to your exams, or studies in general, we strongly recommend you contact the Student Support and

Wellbeing team (sbs.wellbeing@manchester.ac.uk), who will be able to support you.

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6. Support for students

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