

Computational Biology

Under the auspices of the Center for Computational Biology, the Computational Biology Graduate Group offers the PhD in computational biology as well as the Designated Emphasis in computational and genomic biology, a specialization for doctoral students in affiliated programs. The PhD is concerned with advancing knowledge at the interface of the computational and biological sciences, and is therefore intended for students who are passionate about being high functioning in both fields. The Designated Emphasis augments disciplinary training with a solid foundation in the different facets of genomic research, and provides students with the skills needed to collaborate across disciplinary boundaries to solve a wide range of computational biology and genomic problems.

Admission to the University

Uniform minimum requirements for admission

The following minimum requirements apply to all programs and will be verified by the Graduate Division:

1. A bachelor's degree or recognized equivalent from an accredited institution;
2. A minimum grade-point average of B or better (3.0);
3. If the applicant comes from a country or political entity (e.g. Quebec) where English is not the official language, adequate proficiency in English to do graduate work, as evidenced by a TOEFL score of at least 570 on the paper-and-pencil test, 230 on the computer-based test, 90 on the iBT test, or an IELTS Band score of at least 7 (note that individual programs may set higher levels for any of these); and
4. Enough undergraduate training to do graduate work in the given field.

Applicants who already hold a graduate degree

The Graduate Council views academic degrees as evidence of broad research training, not as vocational training certificates; therefore, applicants who already have academic graduate degrees should be able to take up new subject matter on a serious level without undertaking a graduate program, unless the fields are completely dissimilar.

Programs may consider students for an additional academic master's or professional master's degree if the additional degree is in a distinctly different field.

Applicants admitted to a doctoral program that requires a master's degree to be earned at Berkeley as a prerequisite (even though the applicant already has a master's degree from another institution in the same or a closely allied field of study) will be permitted to undertake the second master's degree, despite the overlap in field.

The Graduate Division will admit students for a second doctoral degree only if they meet the following guidelines:

1. Applicants with doctoral degrees may be admitted for an additional doctoral degree only if that degree program is in a general area of knowledge distinctly different from the field in which they earned their original degree. For example, a physics PhD could be admitted to a doctoral degree program in music or history; however, a

student with a doctoral degree in mathematics would not be permitted to add a PhD in statistics.

2. Applicants who hold the PhD degree may be admitted to a professional doctorate or professional master's degree program if there is no duplication of training involved.

Applicants may only apply to one single degree program or one concurrent degree program per admission cycle.

Any applicant who was previously registered at Berkeley as a graduate student, no matter how briefly, must apply for readmission, not admission, even if the new application is to a different program.

Required documents for admissions applications

1. **Transcripts:** Upload unofficial transcripts with the application for the departmental initial review. Official transcripts of all college-level work will be required **if admitted**. Official transcripts must be in sealed envelopes as issued by the school(s) you have attended. Request a current transcript from every post-secondary school that you have attended, including community colleges, summer sessions, and extension programs. If you have attended Berkeley, upload unofficial transcript with the application for the departmental initial review. Official transcript with evidence of degree conferral **will not** be required if admitted.
2. **Letters of recommendation:** Applicants can request online letters of recommendation through the online application system. Hard copies of recommendation letters must be sent directly to the program, not the Graduate Division.
3. **Evidence of English language proficiency:** All applicants from countries in which the official language is not English are required to submit official evidence of English language proficiency. This requirement applies to applicants from Bangladesh, Burma, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Latin America, the Middle East, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, and most European countries. However, applicants who, at the time of application, have already completed at least one year of full-time academic course work with grades of B or better at a U.S. university may submit an official transcript from the U.S. university to fulfill this requirement. The following courses will not fulfill this requirement: 1) courses in English as a Second Language, 2) courses conducted in a language other than English, 3) courses that will be completed after the application is submitted, and 4) courses of a non-academic nature. If applicants have previously been denied admission to Berkeley on the basis of their English language proficiency, they must submit new test scores that meet the current minimum from one of the standardized tests.

Admission to the Program

Applicants for the Computational Biology PhD are expected to have a strong foundation in the basic sciences (e.g., biology, mathematics, chemistry), in addition to training in computing/informatics, significant programming experience, and substantial research experience. Typical students admitted to the program have demonstrated outstanding potential as a research scientist and have clear academic aptitude in multiple disciplines, as well as excellent communication skills. This is assessed based on research experience, grades, standardized exams, course selection, essays, personal background, and letters of recommendation. Three letters of recommendation are required as is the Graduate Record Examination, and a GRE subject examination in

an appropriate area is recommended. The program does not accept applicants interested in a Master of Science in Computational Biology.

Normative Time Requirements

Normative Time to Advancement: Two years

Year 1

Students perform three laboratory rotations with the chief aim of identifying a research area and thesis laboratory.

Year 2

Students attend seminars, prepare a dissertation prospectus, and prepare for their PhD oral qualifying examination. With the successful passing of the orals, students select their thesis committee and advance to candidacy for the PhD degree.

Normative Time in Candidacy: Three years

Years 3 to 5

Students undertake research for the PhD dissertation under a three-person committee in charge of their research and dissertation. Students conduct original laboratory research, and then write the dissertation based on the results of this research. On completion of the research and approval of the dissertation by the committee, the students are awarded the doctorate.

Total Normative Time: 5-5.5 years

Time to Advancement

Curriculum

Courses Required

CMPBIO 201	Classics in Computational Biology	3
CMPBIO 294A	Introduction to Research in Computational Biology	2-12
CMPBIO 294B	Introduction to Research in Computational Biology	2-12
Three graduate Foundation electives, as per core list, in consultation with the faculty advising committee:		12
At least on in biological sciences		
At least one in informatics		
Two graduate electives, as per core list, in consultation with the faculty advising committee, from course offerings in Molecular and Cell Biology, Bioengineering, Physics, Computer Science, Statistics, Public Health, Mathematics, Integrative Biology, Chemistry, and Plant & Microbial Biology		8
Three related graduate seminars		12
MCELLBI 293C	Responsible Conduct of Research	1

Lab Rotations

Three 10-week laboratory rotations in the first year.

Prospectus

The prospectus will include a description of the specific research problem (the inside proposal) and the complementary area, e.g., experimental approach, if student’s focus is computation, used to address the research problem (the outside proposal).

Proposals will be written in the manner of a NIH-style grant proposal. The prospectus must be completed no fewer than three weeks prior to the oral Qualifying Examination.

Qualifying Examination

The Qualifying Examination will evaluate a student’s depth of knowledge in his or her research area, breadth of knowledge in fundamentals of computational biology, ability to formulate a research plan, and critical thinking. Specifically, the examination will cover the overall subject area of computational biology, the subject of the student’s outside concentration area, and the subject of the student’s inside concentration area. Students are expected to pass the Qualifying Examination by the end of the fourth semester in the program.

Time in Candidacy

Advancement

After passing the qualifying exam by the end of the second year, students have until the fifth semester to select a thesis committee and submit the Advancement to Candidacy paperwork to the Graduate Division.

Dissertation

Primary dissertation research is conducted in years 3-5/5.5. Requirements for the dissertation are decided in consultation with the thesis adviser and thesis committee members. To this end, students are required to have yearly thesis committee meetings with the committee after advancing to candidacy.

Dissertation Presentation/Finishing Talk

There is no formal defense of the completed dissertation; however, students are expected to publicly present a talk about their dissertation research in their final year.

Required Professional Development

Presentations

All computational biology students are expected to attend the annual retreat, and will regularly present research talks there. They are also encouraged to attend national and international conferences to present research.

Teaching

Computational biology students are required to teach one semester, and may teach more. The teaching requirement may be waived if the student creates and teaches a computational biology module (student-run 5-week workshops)

Curriculum/Coursework

To qualify for the designated emphasis students must demonstrate competency by completing coursework, with a grade of B or better, in three of five areas: biology; computer science and engineering; chemistry, chemical engineering, and physics; biostatistics, mathematics, and statistics; and computational biology. Students with backgrounds in biology are expected to demonstrate competency in informatics (e.g., statistics, mathematics, computer science), and vice versa for students with quantitative backgrounds. Course lists are maintained on the CCB website (<http://ccb.berkeley.edu/decgb>). Prior coursework may be used to fulfill requirements if the courses are comparable.

Qualifying Examination

The Qualifying Examination committee must include at least one, but preferably two, faculty members from the Computational Biology

Graduate Group. The faculty member(s) may either represent the home department or serve as an outside member. Satisfactory performance on the Qualifying Examination for the doctorate will be judged independently from the Designated Emphasis.

Dissertation

The Dissertation committee must include at least one, but preferably two, faculty members from the Computational Biology Graduate Group.

Computational Biology

CMPBIO 201 Classics in Computational Biology 3 Units
Research project and approaches in computational biology. An introduction to the diverse ways biological problems are investigated computationally through critical evaluation of the classics and recent peer-reviewed literature. This is the core course required of all Computational Biology graduate students.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Acceptance in the Computational Biology PhD program; consent of instructor

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 1 hour of lecture and 2 hours of discussion per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Computational Biology/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

CMPBIO 290 Special Topics - Computational Biology 1 - 4 Units
A graduate seminar class in which students closely examine recent computational methods in molecular and systems biology, for example for modeling mechanisms related to the regulation of gene expression and/or high-throughput sequencing data. The course will focus on computational methodology but will also cover relevant and interesting biological applications.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Graduate standing in EECS, MCB, Computational Biology or related fields; or consent of the instructor

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit when topic changes.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 1-3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Computational Biology/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

Instructor: Yosef

CMPBIO 294A Introduction to Research in Computational Biology 2 - 12 Units

Closely supervised experimental or computational work under the direction of an individual faculty member; an introduction to methods and research approaches in particular areas of computational biology.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Standing as a Computational Biology graduate student

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit. Course may be repeated for credit when topic changes.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 2-20 hours of laboratory per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Computational Biology/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

CMPBIO 294B Introduction to Research in Computational Biology 2 - 12 Units

Closely supervised experimental or computational work under the direction of an individual faculty member; an introduction to methods and research approaches in particular areas of computational biology.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Standing as a Computational Biology graduate student

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit. Course may be repeated for credit when topic changes.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 2-20 hours of laboratory per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Computational Biology/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

CMPBIO 295 Individual Research for Doctoral Students 1 - 12 Units
Laboratory research, conferences. Individual research under the supervision of a faculty member.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Acceptance in the Computational Biology PhD program; consent of instructor

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit. Course may be repeated for credit when topic changes.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 1-20 hours of laboratory per week

Summer: 10 weeks - 1.5-30 hours of laboratory per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Computational Biology/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

CMPBIO 477 Introduction to Programming for Bioinformatics Bootcamp
1.5 Unit

The goals of this course are to introduce students to Python, a simple and powerful programming language that is used for many applications, and to expose them to the practical bioinformatic utility of Python and programming in general. The course will allow students to apply programming to the problems that they face in the lab and to leave this course with a sufficiently generalized knowledge of programming (and the confidence to read the manuals) that they will be able to apply their skills to whatever projects they happen to be working on.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: This is a graduate course and upper level undergraduate students can only enroll with the consent of the instructor

Hours & Format

Summer: 3 weeks - 40-40 hours of workshop per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Computational Biology/Other professional

Grading: Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.