

Biophysics

The Biophysics Graduate Group is an interdisciplinary PhD program hosted by the California Institute for the Biosciences (QB3). Our program trains graduate students for careers at the interface of the biological and physical sciences. This interdisciplinary group provides an opportunity for interested students to receive training leading to the PhD in Biophysics. Approximately 60 faculty members are affiliated with the Biophysics Group, spanning over a dozen departments and groups at UC Berkeley. Students may work under the supervision of any faculty member belonging to the group.

Students interested in pursuing graduate work in biophysics typically acquire undergraduate training in one of the basic physical or biological sciences and during the first two years at UC Berkeley take self-selected courses in topics such as biology, physics, and chemistry to fill in any gaps in foundational knowledge.

Admission to the University

Minimum Requirements for Admission

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

1. A bachelor's degree or recognized equivalent from an accredited institution;
2. A 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 90 on the iBT test, 570 on the paper-and-pencil test, or an IELTS Band score of at least 7 on a 9-point scale (note that individual programs may set higher levels for any of these); and
4. Sufficient undergraduate training to do graduate work in the given field.

Applicants Who Already Hold a Graduate Degree

The Graduate Council views academic degrees not as vocational training certificates, but as evidence of broad training in research methods, independent study, and articulation of learning. Therefore, applicants who already have academic graduate degrees should be able to pursue new subject matter at an advanced level without the need to enroll in a related or similar graduate program.

Programs may consider students for an additional academic master's or professional master's degree only 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 apply only to one single degree program or one concurrent degree program per admission cycle.

Required Documents for Applications

1. **Transcripts:** Applicants may upload *unofficial* transcripts with your application for the departmental initial review. *If the applicant is admitted*, then *official* transcripts of all college-level work will be required. Official transcripts must be in sealed envelopes as issued by the school(s) attended. If you have attended Berkeley, upload your unofficial transcript with your application for the departmental initial review. *If you are admitted*, an official transcript with evidence of degree conferral *will not* be required.
2. **Letters of recommendation:** Applicants may 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 or political entities in which the official language is not English are required to submit official evidence of English language proficiency. This 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, most European countries, and Quebec (Canada). 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 US university may submit an official transcript from the US university to fulfill this requirement. The following courses will not fulfill this requirement:
 - courses in English as a Second Language,
 - courses conducted in a language other than English,
 - courses that will be completed after the application is submitted, and
 - 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. Official TOEFL score reports must be sent directly from Educational Test Services (ETS). The institution code for Berkeley is 4833. Official IELTS score reports must be mailed directly to our office from the British Council. TOEFL and IELTS score reports are only valid for two years.

Where to Apply

Visit the Berkeley Graduate Division application page (<http://grad.berkeley.edu/admissions/apply/>).

Admission to the Program

Applicants should have sufficient undergraduate training to undertake graduate work in the chosen field. This includes such undergraduate majors as: biological sciences, structural biology, physics, math, and/or chemistry. Laboratory experience is expected.

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.

GRE general and subject tests are not required, but will be reviewed if submitted with the application.

Normative Time Requirements

Normative Time to Advancement

Normative time to advancement is two years.

Year 1

Students perform three laboratory rotations with the chief aim of identifying a research area and selecting a thesis laboratory. In their first year, all students must pass two graded STEM courses. Passing is a grade of "B" or higher for graduate students. This requirement can be met by: a) completing a total of 5 units of graduate level coursework (200* and above), or b) completing 6 units of combined graduate and upper-division (100 and above) undergraduate courses. Any exceptions to this policy (ie, completing coursework in 2nd year, using non-STEM course to fulfill requirement) must be approved by the Head Graduate Advisor

Year 2

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

Normative Time in Candidacy

Years 3 to 5

Students undertake research for the PhD dissertation under a self-selected four-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

Total normative time is 5-5.5/6 years.

Time to Advancement

Curriculum

Courses Required

BIOPHY 293A	Research Seminar: Faculty Evening Research Presentations (FERPS) and Student Evening Research Presentations (SERPS)	2
BIOPHY 293B	Research Seminar: Faculty Evening Research Presentations (FERPS) and Student Evening Research Presentations (SERPS)	2
Electives, as per approved study list: four semesters		
MCELLBI 293C	Responsible Conduct in Research	1

Lab Rotations

Students conduct three 10-week laboratory rotations in the first year. The thesis lab, where dissertation research will take place, is chosen at the end of the third rotation in late April/early May.

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 biophysics, ability to formulate a research plan, and critical thinking. The QE prospectus/proposal will include a description of the specific research problem but will serve as a framework for the QE committee members to probe the student's foundational knowledge in the field and area of research. Proposals will be written in the manner of a NIH-style grant proposal. The prospectus must be completed and submitted to the QE chair no fewer than four weeks prior to the oral qualifying examination.

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 online advancement to candidacy form 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 advisor 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 biophysics students are expected to attend the annual retreat and present research talks there. They are also encouraged to attend national and international conferences to present research from the second year onwards.

Teaching

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

Biophysics

Expand all course descriptions [+] Collapse all course descriptions [-]

BIOPHY 292 Research 3 - 12 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2021, Summer 2021 10 Week Session, Spring 2021

Individual research under the supervision of a faculty member.

Research: Read More [+]

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Consent of instructor

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3-12 hours of independent study per week

Summer: 10 weeks - 3-12 hours of independent study per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Biophysics/Graduate

Grading: Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

Research: Read Less [-]

BIOPHY 293A Research Seminar: Faculty Evening Research Presentations (FERPS) and Student Evening Research Presentations (SERPS) 2 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2021, Fall 2020, Fall 2019

Seminar on presentation and evaluation of results in area of student's individual research interests.

Research Seminar: Faculty Evening Research Presentations (FERPS) and Student Evening Research Presentations (SERPS): Read More [+]

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: 292

Hours & Format

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

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Biophysics/Graduate

Grading: Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only. This is part one of a year long series course. A provisional grade of IP (in progress) will be applied and later replaced with the final grade after completing part two of the series.

Research Seminar: Faculty Evening Research Presentations (FERPS) and Student Evening Research Presentations (SERPS): Read Less [-]

BIOPHY 293B Research Seminar: Faculty Evening Research Presentations (FERPS) and Student Evening Research Presentations (SERPS) 2 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2021, Spring 2020, Spring 2019

Seminar on presentation and evaluation of results in area of student's individual research interests.

Research Seminar: Faculty Evening Research Presentations (FERPS) and Student Evening Research Presentations (SERPS): Read More [+]

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: 293A, and 292

Hours & Format

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

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Biophysics/Graduate

Grading: Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only. This is part two of a year long series course. Upon completion, the final grade will be applied to both parts of the series.

Research Seminar: Faculty Evening Research Presentations (FERPS) and Student Evening Research Presentations (SERPS): Read Less [-]