

SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES STUDENT GLOSSARY OF TERMS

STUDYING BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

WHO TO ASK FOR HELP

IMPORTANT WEBSITES/PLACES TO KNOW ABOUT

TEACHING AND LEARNING - UNDERSTANDING HOW IT WORKS

ASSESSMENTS AND MARKING

STUDYING BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

SBS (School of Biological Sciences)

Within the School of Biological Sciences there are multiple degree programmes. SBS is part of the Faculty of Biology, Medicine & Health, one of the 3 faculties in the University.

BSc (Bachelor of Science)

This is an undergraduate degree that typically lasts 3 years in England. It covers core knowledge and skills in a science project. A BSc degree can also become 4 years if it is done in conjunction with the following (see placement below):

- ·Industrial/ professional experience (wIE)
- ·Modern Language (wML)
- ·Entrepreneurship (wEnt)

MSci (Masters in Science)

This is an integrated undergraduate Master's degree, made of the combination of a Bachelor's and a Master's into one 4-year programme. In the first 2 years, you study like a BSc student. In the third year, you do more advanced coursework and in the final (4th) year, students undertake a research project in a research laboratory within the University

MSc (Masters of Science)

This is a postgraduate degree taken after completing an undergraduate qualification, such as a BSc. It usually lasts one year full-time and offers more specialised, advanced study in a particular field.

Credit

This represents a specific amount of learning and study time to complete a specific unit. Typically, 10 credits equate to around 100 hours of work (including in-class teaching and studying/revising time). Units can have up to 40 credits, and a total of 120 credits are required to pass each year of study.

Programme/ Course

The programme is the degree you are undertaking which has a selection of units that you can study. There are multiple degree programmes under SBS:

- Biochemistry
- Biology
- Biology with Science and Society
- Biomedical Sciences
- Biotechnology
- Genetics
- Immunology
- Medical Biochemistry
- Medical Physiology
- Microbiology
- Molecular Biology
- Neuroscience
- Pharmacology
- Zoology

Undergraduate

When you study for your first degree, you are called an undergraduate student. You receive your degree when you graduate.

Postgraduate

This is any academic or professional education you pursue after completing a Bachelor's degree, for example, MSc students are called postgraduate students.

Welcome Week

Your first week as a new student (week 0). We don't start teaching until week 1 (the week after Welcome Week), so there is time to settle in. During welcome week there are introductory sessions with lots of things to do and find out about. You may have also heard this referred to as Freshers' Week.

WHO TO ASK FOR HELP

Academic Tutor

Every student has an academic tutor – they are one of the teaching staff in SBS and they will run and organise tutorial sessions with small groups of students (around 10 students). They're a bit like a school/college form tutor and they can change each year.

Academic Advisor

This is usually the member of staff that delivers your tutorials in Year 1, but it can be a different person. They are responsible for your academic, personal and professional development and write your references. You will be meeting with your academic advisor on a 1:1 basis at least twice each semester, so four times each year. Your academic advisor will usually continue to advise you up to the point of graduation.

Programme Director

This is the academic staff member responsible for your entire programme and the way it runs. You can get in touch with them if you are thinking of transferring to a different programme (e.g. if you wanted to change from Pharmacology to Neuroscience).

DASS (Disability Advisory and Support Service)

Our Disability Advisory Support Service works with you to ensure you have fair and equal access to your education. They provide practical support by working with you to identify the practical adjustments you need to enable you to succeed - in your studies, work, and the rest of your University experience. If you experience a disability, long-term condition or a specific learning difficulty, then you may be entitled to appropriate academic support or reasonable adjustments in your teaching and assessments. This can include extra time for assessments, extended book loans from the Library and support for field trips.

More information can be found on:

<https://livemanchesterac.sharepoint.com/sites/UOM-FBMH-SBS-StudentInformation/SitePages/Mitigating-Circumstances-and-Extensions.aspx>

Unit Coordinator

This is the member of staff responsible for each unit you study (see definition of unit below)- they organise the unit, support the teaching staff and can answer any questions about that unit.

Mitigating Circumstances

If you are affected by circumstances outside your control (e.g. you are ill or dealing with a personal crisis) and it affects your studies and your ability to meet a deadline, then use the Mitigating Circumstances process to request help with that. More information can be found on: [Student Support | Support For Your Studies | Mitigating Circumstances | The University of Manchester](#)

PASS (Peer Assisted Study Sessions)

PASS leaders are trained student volunteers from the years above you who have already taken the units you are studying. They provide a weekly opportunity to catch up and review content and interactive sessions where you learn by working with peers, check your understanding and prepare for exams. PASS sessions are optional, and you can choose to sign up.

Student Rep

A student representative (rep) is a student who is elected to represent the views and interests of their fellow students within a programme or course. They act as a bridge between students and staff and attend Student Voice meetings to help improve the student experience for everyone.

SU (Students' Union)

The Students' Union is an organisation within a university that represents students, supports their interests, and organises activities, events, clubs, and campaigns to enhance student life. The SU offers free, confidential and independent advice services to students on a wide range of issues, including academic matters, housing, money, and well-being. More information can be found on: [University of Manchester Students' Union](#)

Student Support Hub (SBS Hub)

They provide student support, advise on assessment and progression, registration, course unit changes, etc. They assist with all non-academic enquiries.

How to contact:

- Email: sbs.hub@manchester.ac.uk
- Phone: 0161 275 1487 (Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm)
- Face-to-face queries (Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm), Ground floor Stopford Building

eLearning Support

They provide help with eLearning applications such as Canvas and Turnitin, and provide support to make your teaching and learning experience better.

[eLearning Support](#)

IT Support

Pop-up IT support stand on the ground floor of Uni Place available during Welcome Week and teaching week 1.

Walk-up support is available in the Main Library and Alan Gilbert Learning Commons (9am–5pm; Monday – Friday)

Support for personal equipment is available including advice on connecting to University services

Speak to someone 24/7 if you need IT support

Support with getting started with online learning

guides to using different technology (e.g. Canva, Zoom)

[Help and support \(The University of Manchester\)](#)

IMPORTANT WEBSITES/ PLACES TO KNOW ABOUT

SBS Student SharePoint

The main source of information for SBS students. For example, you'll find links to the student handbooks, academic contact details, course unit enrolments, assessment information, student support and links to the SBS student newsletter.

[SBS Student SharePoint](#)

Canvas

Our "virtual learning environment" (VLE) – a website where all of the teaching materials and information are stored. Your individual units will be displayed and within each of these you will find teaching materials, assessments and reading lists.

[Canvas Manchester](#)

SEAtS

The Student Engagement and Attendance System (SEAtS) is the system used by both students and staff to log attendance at teaching sessions. Registration to teaching sessions is compulsory for all students.

[SEAtS](#)

Library

Not just a nice building with a good coffee shop!

Books, study space and helpful and knowledgeable librarians.

There is the Main library, the Alan Gilbert Learning Commons which is open 24/7, and Stopford Library (9-5pm).

[The University of Manchester Library \(The University of Manchester Library\)](#)

Outlook

All students are given access to an Outlook student email address. It is essential that you have access to your Outlook account and check it daily.

[Outlook on the web \(The University of Manchester\)](#)

Student Handbook

The Student Handbook is a guide provided to students that outlines important information about their course, university policies, academic rules, support services, deadlines for major submissions, exam periods and student responsibilities. It is an essential source of information to help students understand what is expected of them and how to navigate university life. All student handbooks can be found on the SBS Student Sharepoint website (see above).

Personalised Timetable

Your personalised timetable will be available from the end of Welcome Week and will contain details of all your lectures and other teaching sessions. You should check your personalised timetable regularly as lectures may change locations or times.

My Learning Essentials

This is the library's skills programme that provides you with online tutorials on essential study skills. These include: essay writing, reflective writing, referencing, written and oral communication, and data-handling. They are optional but if you are having difficulty with any aspect of your studies, have a look for a tutorial that may help.

[My Learning Essentials \(The University of Manchester Library\).](#)

TEACHING AND LEARNING- UNDERSTANDING HOW IT WORKS

Academic

A general word describing a member of staff who teaches and researches. Sometimes we use the word “lecturer”, “professor” or “tutor” instead.

Independent Learning

At university you are expected to plan your own time. You have timetabled classes, but you should also follow the instructions on Canvas and given by academics in class, to do independent reading, revise, prepare for classes and assessments.

Please talk to your academic advisor or the SBS Hub if you are struggling.

Hybrid Learning

An educational approach that combines online digital media with traditional in-person classroom methods, allowing flexible participation options.

Unit

A unit is a subject with a set number of credits (usually 10, which equates to around 100 hours of work). Your degree is made up of several units, each year consists of 120 credits, so 360 credits at the end of a 3-year degree. Some units on your course will be core (mandatory/compulsory) and others you can choose to study (optional). Each individual unit will have its own learning outcomes and usually have their own assessments, and you need to gain a certain number of credits to pass each year of study.

Semesters

We have two teaching periods a year – each is called a semester. You study a certain number of units in semester 1 (September to December), then take new units in semester 2 (January to May). The number of units you take each semester can be equal or different, but the credits associated with those units will all add up to 120 each year, and you should try to spread your units out as evenly as possible over semester 1 and semester 2.

Exam Period

There are typically three exam periods in an academic year: 1) January (for semester 1 units), 2) May/June (for semester 2 units) and 3) August (resit exams for students that previously failed or missed an exam)

Reading Week

Reading week is a one-week break in teaching (usually in the middle of semester 1 in year 1) that you can use to catch up on coursework and prepare for upcoming exams.

Lecture

A large group teaching session led by an academic. It can be in a lecture hall, live online, or a pre-recorded video. A lecture gives you an outline or introduction to a subject area. You are expected to take notes and follow this up with reading.

Lecture Podcast

This is a recording of a university lecture that students can listen to later, to help with their revision.

Practical

A practical class is a hands-on session where students apply theoretical knowledge in a real or simulated setting. These classes are common specifically in 1st and 2nd year of your degree programme and they may take place in labs, computer rooms, clinics, or fieldwork environments. The aim is to help students develop technical skills, observe scientific concepts in action, and gain experience using equipment, methods, or procedures relevant to their course.

Workshop

A mid-size teaching session led by an academic. Similar to a tutorial/seminar, but usually involves more group activities. Check Canvas before the class for any instructions left by the lecturer, to prepare.

Tutorial

A tutorial is where you meet an academic as a small group, usually taking place in a smaller room than a lecture or a seminar. The aim of tutorials is to develop skills associated with your degree programme, including transferable skills (e.g. how to write an essay, statistics and data analysis, etc) to help you during your studies and enhance employability. Attendance is compulsory!

Tutorial Plenary

A tutorial plenary is a larger group session that brings together students from smaller tutorial groups to collectively review, discuss, and summarise key concepts, such as how exams work or how to write scientific essays.

Seminar

A seminar is a mixture between a lecture and a tutorial. You often need to prepare for seminars before attending (make sure you check Canvas). These will be led by an academic and include anywhere up to 40 students (sometimes a few more on popular courses). This may differ from course to course. This is a good place to ask questions to help you understand the subject better.

Placement

This is typically a year-long work experience opportunity built into a 4-year university degree. It usually takes place between the second and final year of study.

In SBS, students can enrol on different types of programmes with placements: wIE (with Industrial Experience), wML (with Modern Language) and wEnt (with Entrepreneurship).

Extra/ Further Reading

This refers to any additional material that students read beyond their core textbook and lecture notes when writing an essay or revising for a course, in order to deepen their understanding of a particular topic.

ELM (E-learning Module)

An ELM is an online learning tool used by universities to teach specific topics or skills. It's often part of a course and includes videos, readings, quizzes, or interactive activities that students complete on their own time.

TBL (Team- Based Learning)

This is a structured form of small-group learning where students work in teams to solve problems and apply concepts together. They typically involve individual preparation (such as reading), followed by in-class activities like readiness assurance tests and collaborative case-based problem solving.

Final Degree Classification

In the UK, a final degree classification is the grade you receive when you complete an undergraduate degree (typically a bachelor's degree). It reflects your overall academic performance across all years of study.

Here's a breakdown of the common classifications:

- First-Class Honours (1st): Score Range: Typically, 70% and above. This is the highest classification. It indicates excellent academic performance and a deep understanding of the subject.
- Upper Second-Class Honours (2:1 or 2.1): Score Range: 60–69%. A strong grade, often required for entry into postgraduate courses or competitive jobs.
- Lower Second-Class Honours (2:2 or 2.2): Score Range: 50–59%. A respectable grade, though some employers or postgraduate programs may prefer a 2:1 or higher.
- Third-Class Honours (3rd): Score Range: 40–49%. The minimum passing grade for an honours degree. It shows you met the basic requirements.
- Ordinary/Pass Degree (without honours): Score Range: Usually below 40%. You completed the degree but didn't meet the criteria for honours classification.

ASSESSMENTS AND MARKING

Assessed Work Rules

We have set rules for the formatting of your work to ensure that all students' work is the same length (linked to word/page limits). You can find these in the Programme Handbook. Assessments can be an essay, exam, presentation or other task that evaluates your progress. For each assessment, you will receive an assignment brief which will tell you exactly what you need to do.

Formative Assessment

A piece of work that does not count towards your unit grade/mark. It is optional and usually provided to help consolidate your understanding, help with revision, and gain valuable feedback.

Summative Assessment

A piece of work that does count towards your unit grade/mark. Compulsory – you must do this work.

Marking Rubric/ Criteria

A marking guide showing what you need to do for a piece of work and which the marker will use when assessing/grading your work. These are useful in checking your assignments before submission to ensure you have achieved all the criteria required by the marker.

Referencing

Citations or references in a piece of work show where you got your information from or what influenced your thinking.

Bibliography is a list of ALL the sources you used in preparing the work (not just the ones referred to – that would be a reference list).

For each assignment, the academic will specify the type of reference required.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is using other people's words or ideas as if they are your own, without referencing. We give you lots of advice to avoid plagiarising or cheating (we call this academic misconduct): [Regulations](#) | [Academic-related regulations](#) | [Academic malpractice procedure](#) | [The University of Manchester](#)

Collusion

Collusion is when two or more students work together sharing answers on an assignment which was meant to be completed individually, or when they submit very similar assignments after working together when collaboration was not allowed. Similar to plagiarism, collusion is also considered a form of cheating (academic malpractice).

Turnitin

This is a software which checks your work against a database for similarities with books, websites and other students' university work. The similarity score shows how similar your work is to other people's writing. Turnitin is used by academics to check a piece of work for plagiarism

[Turnitin - Technology Enhanced Learning and Design](#)

Feedback

This is advice on what is going well and how to improve your work – you may get feedback in class, in lectures and in conversations with your tutor. On assessed work you will usually receive generic and individual feedback.

Moderation

A member of staff marks your work, but it is then “moderated” by other staff to ensure that it has been marked fairly and consistently with other students' work and recognised university standards.

Essay Questions

This is a long piece of writing where you make an argument backed up by evidence. The university provides advice and training in tutorials as well as on the MLE website

Oral Presentations

Oral presentations are spoken assessments where students present information or findings on a topic to an audience, often involving visual aids, and are used to evaluate communication skills, understanding, and confidence in delivering academic content.

Lab/ Project Reports

Lab/project reports are structured written documents that present the methods, results, analysis, and conclusions of a laboratory experiment or research project, demonstrating the student's ability to conduct scientific work and reflect on its significance.

SAQ

SAQ stands for Short Answer Question. It's a type of exam question that requires a brief response, usually a few sentences or a short paragraph.

MCQ Negative Marking

MCQ negative marking refers to a scoring system used in multiple-choice question (MCQ) exams where marks are reduced for incorrect answers. This method is designed to discourage random guessing and reward knowledge and accuracy.

Coursework

Coursework refers to the assignments, projects, essays, or practical work that students complete as part of their studies. It is usually assessed and contributes to the final grade of a unit. Students will be given a specific deadline, which is the latest date or time by which the coursework must be completed or submitted by.

In-person exam

An in-person exam is a formal test by students in a physical location, such as a classroom or lecture theatre, under supervised conditions. Typically, all students in the same unit will sit the exam on a specific date, time and place during the exam period.