

Biology, AM (Part-Time)

Master's Candidacy

To earn a master's degree at Washington University, a student must complete all courses required by their department; maintain satisfactory academic progress; fulfill all academic and residence requirements; and file an Intent to Graduate. For a general layout of master's degree general requirements in Arts & Sciences, including an explanation of Satisfactory Academic Progress, students should review the Master's Degree Academic Information page of the Arts & Sciences Bulletin.

Program Requirements

- **Total Units Required: 30**
- **Degree Length: 3 years maximum** (Students enrolled in the Master of Arts in Biology program in Fall 2024 have until May 2027 to complete all degree requirements.)
 - **Note:** Students must be enrolled in 9 graduate credits each semester to retain full-time status. As students complete their course work, if enrolled in fewer than 9 graduate credits, they must enroll in a specific Arts & Sciences graduate course that will show 0 units but does count as full-time status. Students should connect with their department to ensure proper enrollment prior to Add/Drop.
 - Students must obtain a minimum grade of B- in graduate courses for them to count toward the degree.

Master of Arts in Biology

Students seeking the Master of Arts in Biology must satisfactorily complete 30 units of graduate courses in the biological sciences, including a required capstone experience, which occurs after they have completed 21 units in the program and is chosen from the following options:

1. Complete a capstone course that is approved by the department
2. Complete a 3-unit independent study
3. Complete a 6-unit master's thesis: Students with appropriate backgrounds, interests, and academic qualifications may, with authorization, write a master's thesis based on original library or laboratory research.

Note: The above options cannot count as the capstone experience if they occur before a student has completed 21 units toward the Master of Arts in Biology.

Credit Transfer

A maximum of 3 units of related and comparable graduate-level course work may be transferred from another university or from a related graduate program at Washington University with the approval of the program director. These must be graduate-level units not used to fulfill undergraduate degree or post-baccalaureate program requirements. Transfer credit may be granted only for authorized courses for which the student received a grade of B or higher.

Please note that the Master of Arts in Biology degree is a terminal graduate degree awarded on the basis of the completion of courses rather than research. Except in rare cases, it is not intended as preparation for a PhD degree. No more than 6 of the 30 credits required for this program may be earned in research courses. Those students interested in graduate research or in earning a PhD should apply to the PhD programs offered by Washington University's Division of Biology and Biomedical Sciences.

Thesis Requirements/Details

Students with appropriate backgrounds, interests, and academic qualifications may, with authorization, write a master's thesis based on original library or laboratory research.

A master's thesis in biology is a form of independent study. The purpose of a master's thesis is to provide a capstone or final project in which the student can use the knowledge and methodology obtained in previous courses for the investigation of some problem in depth. Master's theses involve 6 units of independent study, generally taken in two consecutive semesters (i.e., fall and spring). During the first semester, the student carries out research; during the second semester, the student writes up the project. A thesis project is expected to encompass a larger range of issues or a more in-depth investigation than an individual independent study. Theses can be anywhere from 40 to 50 pages minimum, depending on the topic and type of thesis.

To carry out a thesis project, the student must secure an advisor with whom to work; define the project; fill out the necessary forms to be signed by the advisor, student, and departmental graduate program coordinator; and successfully complete the project with advisor and departmental graduate program coordinator approval.

Required Courses

Students must complete 30 units of graduate course work in Arts & Sciences, including a required capstone experience. These courses must be 500-/5000-level Arts & Sciences Biology or Post-Baccalaureate Premedical program courses to fulfill the degree requirements.

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