Master of Science in Biology

The WKU Biology Department offers a 100% online, non-thesis Master of Science in Biology, in addition to the traditional thesis option that's taught on campus. Training in Biology provides many opportunities in teaching, research and public service, and provides excellent preparation for many other areas of basic and applied sciences.

Admission Requirements

Applicants must meet the following minimum requirements and complete the following steps for admission:

- Submit an online application for admission to WKU’s Graduate School, which can be found at http://www.wku.edu/graduate/
- Provide an official transcript to document receipt of a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university with minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0 (4.0 scale)
- Have adequate preparation in the field (Typically, students have earned a minimum of a minor in biology; however, additional areas may meet requirement. Please contact Dr. Emani to learn more.)
- Submit qualifying GRE scores: GRE scores for admission to the Master of Science in Biology must meet the following standards: GRE general score (quantitative + verbal) ≥300 if taken on or after August 1, 2011 or ≥1050 if taken prior to August 1, 2011, and analytical writing score of ≥3.5. If the GRE has not been taken previously, exam scores from the MCAT (≥24) or DAT (≥16) may be substituted.
- Submit a statement of purpose in which the applicant must specify the program to which they are applying (online M.S. in Biology or face-to-face M.S. in Biology): A well-written Statement of Purpose (SOP) is critical. A strong component for acceptance into the MS in biology programs is a clear vision of why the degree is important, especially in terms of career development, academic and career interests, and past experiences.
- Applicants who hold teacher certification or have a statement of eligibility for certification, must submit a copy of the current teaching certificate or statement of eligibility

Please send all application materials to Graduate.School@wku.edu by the dates listed below:

- Fall Term: July 1
- Spring Term: December 1
- Summer Term: Depends on course schedule/course start dates
Please note: These are not the same dates as the application deadlines for the Graduate School. Deadlines for the Graduate School are simply for processing time, without consideration to space available, specifically, in the MS or MAE in Biology programs.

Those interested in applying, but unsure if they meet minimum requirements should talk with the advisor for the program. The advisor for the online master’s is **Dr. Chandrakanth Emani**. He can be reached by email at chandrakanth.emani@wku.edu or by phone at 270-852-6406.

**Program Requirements**
Both thesis and non-thesis options require students to complete a minimum of 30 hours of coursework and have a supervised research experience. The two programs differ in number of courses required and the emphasis on research.

**Course Requirements for Online Non-Thesis Option:**

**Core Curriculum (8 credit hours)**
- BIOL 500 Introduction to Graduate Study and Research (3 hrs, first year)
- BIOL 598 Graduate Seminar in the final term of coursework (2 hrs)
- BIOL 516 Investigations in Biology (3 hrs)

**Approved Electives (22 hours)**
- Online non-thesis students will work closely with the online program advisor to select remaining coursework. Course descriptions are available at [http://catalog.wku.edu/graduate/course-index/biol/](http://catalog.wku.edu/graduate/course-index/biol/)

**Course Requirements for Thesis Option:**

Thesis students may take all courses on campus or enroll in a blended schedule (online + face-to-face). For more information on the thesis option, please visit: [http://www.wku.edu/biology/grad_degrees_requirements.php](http://www.wku.edu/biology/grad_degrees_requirements.php).

**Studying Online**

Online classes require self-discipline and motivation, especially since you do not have a specific time and place established for class meetings. Familiarizing yourself with what’s required of an online student and the many tools available to support online learners is key!

Distance Learning 101 provides guest access to Blackboard, along with helpful information ranging from pre-enrollment through registration. It is designed to walk you through the different processes involved with admissions, financial aid, advising and registration. The Student Resource Portal provides one-click access to academic support and student resources across campus. The link to each area is provided below:

**Distance Learning 101:** [http://www.wku.edu/online/dl101/](http://www.wku.edu/online/dl101/)
**Student Resource Portal:** [www.wku.edu/online/srp](http://www.wku.edu/online/srp)
In addition to online support, which is accessible in these areas, there is also a team of distance learning professionals available to answer questions, listen to your concerns and provide solutions. You can reach us at learn.online@wku.edu.

Financial Aid

Eligibility
Financial Aid includes grants and loans for educational purposes. The government requires the student to file a form online to the government agency for this purpose which is called FAFSA at www.fafsa.ed.gov to apply. Once that form is completed and filed, the student will receive an email from WKU about the status. All financial aid comes through the WKU Student Financial Aid office and they communicate mostly through email. The email will explain all the grants and/or loans that are available to the student and how to receive the money.

If you would like to apply for financial assistance (loans, grants, scholarships, veteran's benefits) the first step is to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Please refer to the Financial Aid Guide for additional information and complete instructions.

Please keep in mind, you must maintain satisfactory academic progress to continue to qualify for financial aid. For additional information on receiving, and keeping your financial aid, please refer to the WKU Financial Aid website to review the complete policy on Satisfactory Academic Progress at http://www.wku.edu/financialaid/sap.php.

Helpful Resources

- Distance Learning 101: www.wku.edu/online/dl101
- The Student Resource Portal: www.wku.edu/online/srp
- The WKU Graduate School: www.wku.edu/graduate

Career Resources and Average Salary Information
Resources to aid in finding a major right for you, as well as the most current information regarding average salary, job outlook and the most common positions within the field, may be found on the websites below:

- Find Occupations, Salary Information and Job Outlook: http://www.onetonline.org/find/career
- Identifying A Career Based on Personal Interests: https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/explore-careers
- Choosing a Graduate Degree: http://www.onlinemastersprograms.org/

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I meet all of the requirements for admission. Does this guarantee that I will be accepted into one of the Biology graduate programs?

A: No. Admission is competitive and often depends on the number of applicants, along with their specific credentials.
Q: I meet most but not all of the requirements for admission. Should I still apply?

A: Yes, please do! Admission to the MS in Biology programs is also contingent on space available, and the current competition, in terms of the quality of applications. However, reasonable explanations for substandard criteria will be considered. Furthermore, students not admitted to the program can consider applying as a non-degree seeking student. Non-degree seeking students are not admitted to a graduate program, but can take up to 12 hours of graduate courses at WKU. This might be sufficient for increasing one’s GPA, completing missing but pertinent courses, or retaking the GRE to bolster one’s application to a graduate program.

Q: When are the application deadlines?

A: Deadlines for applications to the non-thesis online degree are:

- Fall Term: July 1
- Spring Term: December 1
- Summer Term: Depends on course schedule/course start dates

Please note: These are not the same dates as the application deadlines for the Graduate School. Deadlines for the Graduate School are simply for processing time, without consideration to space available, specifically, in the MS or MAE in Biology programs.

Q: I'm not sure if I want to pursue a thesis. Does that matter when I apply?

A: Yes! WKU Biology does not allow switching between thesis and non-thesis options except for in special (and rare) circumstances. Students should have a vision for the future in place before applying. Pursuing a thesis should be a plan that starts before the application, involving finding an advisor who is willing to serve as a research mentor. The student's SOP in the application should make it clear why a thesis or non-thesis online option is being chosen.

Q: If I choose the non-thesis online option, can I get a master's degree without coming to WKU?

A: Yes. One can complete a (non-thesis) degree without ever setting foot on campus. However, it should be understood that this does not mean a compromise in the integrity of the degree. All required components of the MS (non-thesis) degree are upheld, including examinations, but using distance-learning facilities and/or personal video conferencing software like Skype and/or Adobe Connect.

Q: What are the general requirements of a Master's degree in Biology at WKU?

A: The answer depends on the type of degree sought, but in general, a student must

- Complete 30 hours of coursework
- Pass an oral comprehensive exam
- Have an approved thesis or research experience

Q: What is the typical time-commitment to a Masters in Biology at WKU?
A: The answer depends on the type of degree sought and the number of courses that can be taken in any semester. Thesis students follow a strict two-year format. Non-thesis students can work more at one's desired pace, but all course work must be complete within 6 years.

Q: How can I be sure that I will meet all expectations in a MS in Biology program?

A: In the first year of study, all students are required to take an Introduction to Graduate Study and Research (BIOL 500) course. This course is designed to help students navigate their program, write a research proposal, learn how to keep a research journal, search scientific literature and understand compliance procedures associated with scientific research. This course will inform you of exactly what is expected throughout the program.

Q: I'm not really interested in research. I am a science teacher and need to obtain a degree for my job. Do I really have to do a research project?

A: Yes, if one pursues a MS degree in Biology at WKU. We also offer an MAE in Biology. However, MS degrees through WKU Biology require experiential science. Students do not have to pursue a thesis, but there is a required course in the non-thesis curriculum associated with applied research.

Contact Information

WKU Online: Nikki Roof
Email: learn.online@wk.edu
Phone: (270) 745-5173
Toll-Free: (888) 4WKUWEB / (888) 495-8932

Non-Thesis Online Option
Online Program Advisor: Dr. Chandrakanth Emani
Email: chandrakanth.emani@wku.edu
Phone: 270-852-6406

Thesis Option
Program Advisor: Dr. Carl Dick
Email: carl.dick@wku.edu
Phone: 270-745-2043