



Biology or Biotechnology?

The Extension School offers two graduate programs in the life sciences, one in [biotechnology](#) and one in [biology](#). There are many similarities between the two programs. Both award the Master of Liberal Arts degree, include graduate coursework in the life sciences, begin with a writing-intensive proseminar, and culminate in a research thesis, and most [biology courses](#) in subjects such as biochemistry, cellular biology, and immunology fulfill requirements for both degrees.

Students in both programs come from a broad range of industries, and graduates have gone on to careers in the biotechnology industry or to earn doctoral degrees. However, there are important differences between the two programs. These have been highlighted below.

Finding the Right Program

The biotechnology program is designed for students who already have a strong foundation in science. To be admitted, you must possess an undergraduate degree in science and have postgraduate research experience. The biotechnology curriculum places an emphasis on building professional skills, requiring a mix of courses in biology, policy, management principles, and information technology.

In contrast, the biology concentration focuses primarily on building a stronger background in science. Students come from a broader array of industries, including ecology, education, journalism, and biotechnology. Many want to begin or continue a career in biotechnology or academic laboratories and are seeking deep and concentrated study in science.

Prerequisites and Requirements for Each Degree

Biotechnology

Degree prerequisites: An undergraduate degree in science and postgraduate research experience

Degree requirements include:

- Five courses in your chosen field of concentration (life sciences, management principles, or bioinformatics)
- Two courses from a secondary field (those who choose management principles or bioinformatics as a primary field have life sciences as a secondary field)
- One course from the elective field of ethics and policy
- Demonstrated competency in statistics before thesis work begins
- See a more complete description of the [requirements](#)

Biology

Degree prerequisites: An undergraduate degree

Degree requirements include:

- Six biology courses, encompassing such areas as cellular and molecular biology, evolution, genetics, ecology, health, nutrition, behavior, and genomics
- Two electives from related fields to provide an interdisciplinary perspective
- A graduate-level course in statistics
- See a more complete description of the [requirements](#)

Advising is Available

Research and academic advisors are available in the both the [biology program](#) and [biotechnology program](#) to help you navigate this decision. In addition, because many of the same courses can be used for admission to either program (with the exception of courses in ecology, which only count toward the concentration in biology), you can start taking classes that apply toward both degrees. Be sure to see the full admission requirements for each program prior to enrolling in courses.