DOCTORATE IN PHILOSOPHY BIOCHEMISTRY

Summary

- Degrees offered: Doctorate in Philosophy
- Registration status option: Full-time
- Language of instruction: English
- Program option (expected duration of the program):
  - with thesis (16 full-time terms; 64 consecutive months)
- Academic units: Faculty of Medicine (http://med.uottawa.ca/graduate-postdoctoral), Department of Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology (http://med.uottawa.ca/bmi).

Program Description

The programs prepare candidates for a variety of careers in teaching and research both within and outside of academia.

Graduate students are actively involved in laboratory research, course work, and presentation of research seminars. Thus, they acquire autonomy in conducting research and in preparing publications.

The programs create a stimulating and challenging environment which will allow students to achieve excellence in research. Graduates of the programs must demonstrate research skills and credibility as professionals in their area of research.

The Department is a participating unit in the following collaborative programs: the Bioinformatics program (at the master’s level), the Human and Molecular Genetics program (at the master’s and doctoral levels), and the Pathology and Experimental Medicine program (at the master’s and doctoral levels).

The doctoral program participates in the Combined MD / PhD Program, which allows students to graduate with both a PhD in Biochemistry and an MD. For more information please see the website of the Faculty of Medicine (http://www.med.uottawa.ca/md-phd/eng).

Main Areas of Research

- General biochemistry
- Molecular biology
- Nutrition and metabolism

Other Programs Offered Within the Same Discipline or in a Related Area

- Master of Science Biochemistry (MSc)
- Master of Science Biochemistry Specialization in Human and Molecular Genetics (MSc)
- Master of Science Biochemistry Specialization in Bioinformatics (MSC)
- Master of Science Biochemistry Specialization in Pathology and Experimental Medicine (MSc)
- Doctorate in Philosophy Biochemistry Specialization in Human and Molecular Genetics (PhD)
- Doctorate in Philosophy Biochemistry Specialization in Pathology and Experimental Medicine (PhD)

Fees and Funding

- Program fees:
  The estimated amount for university fees (https://www.uottawa.ca/university-fees) associated with this program are available under the section Finance your studies (http://www.uottawa.ca/graduate-studies/programs-admission/finance-studies).

  International students enrolled in a French-language program of study may be eligible for a differential tuition fee exemption (https://www.uottawa.ca/university-fees/differential-tuition-fee-exemption).

- To learn about possibilities for financing your graduate studies, consult the Awards and financial support (https://www.uottawa.ca/graduate-studies/students/awards) section.

Notes

- Programs are governed by the general regulations (http://www.uottawa.ca/graduate-studies/students/general-regulations) in effect for graduate studies.
- In accordance with the University of Ottawa regulation, students have the right to complete their assignments, examinations, research papers, and theses in French or in English.
Admission Requirements

For the most accurate and up to date information on application deadlines, language tests and other admission requirements, please visit the specific requirements webpage.

To be eligible, candidates must:

- Have a master's degree in science (or equivalent) with a minimum average of 75% (B+).
  
  Note: International candidates must check the admission equivalencies for the diploma they received in their country of origin.

- Demonstrate a good academic performance in previous studies as shown by official transcripts, research reports, abstracts or any other documents demonstrating research skills.

- Pay the $100 (CDN non-refundable) application fee.

- Identify at least one professor who is willing to supervise your research and thesis.
  
  - We recommend that you contact potential thesis supervisors as soon as possible.
  
  - To register, you need to have been accepted by a thesis supervisor.

Language Requirements

Applicants must be able to understand and fluently speak the language of instruction in the program to which they are applying. Proof of linguistic proficiency may be required.

Applicants whose first language is neither French nor English must provide proof of proficiency in the language of instruction.

Language tests recognized by the University of Ottawa:

- TOEFL: 600 (paper-based) – 100 (internet-based); or
- An equivalent language test.

Note: Candidates are responsible for any fees associated with the language tests.

Notes

- The admission requirements listed above are minimum requirements and do not guarantee admission to the program.
- Admissions are governed by the general regulations in effect for graduate studies.
- Research activities can be conducted either in English, French or both, depending on the language used by the professor and the members of his or her research group.

Documents Required for Admission

In addition to the documents required for graduate and postdoctoral studies, candidates must submit the following documents:

- A resume
- A letter of intent or motivation
  
  Letter outlining your professional goals and proposed research area.

- Two confidential letters of recommendation from professors who have known the applicant and are familiar with the student's work.
  
  You are strongly encouraged to contact your referee(s) prior to submitting your application in order to confirm their email address and their availability to complete your letter of recommendation.

- Transcripts from all universities attended:
  
  - Official transcripts from all universities attended must be submitted.
  
  This applies to all courses and programs at any university you attended, including regular programs (completed or not), exchanges, letters of permission, online or correspondence courses, courses taken as a special student or visiting student, etc.

  - If the transcript and degree certificate are not in English or French, a certified translation (signed and stamped/sealed) must be submitted.
Note: Documents that are not required for admission will not be consulted, conserved or returned to the student. These documents will be destroyed according to our administrative procedures.

**Fast-Track from Master’s to PhD**

Students enrolled in the master’s program in Biochemistry at the University of Ottawa may be eligible to fast-track directly into the doctoral program without writing a master’s thesis, provided the following conditions are met:

- Maintain an A- average during their graduate studies and in the last two years of undergraduate studies.
- Complete all the core courses required for the M.Sc.
- Demonstrate a satisfactory progress in the research program.
- Provide a written recommendation by the thesis supervisor.
- Provide a written recommendation by the Departmental Graduate Studies Committee.

Note: The transfer must take place within sixteen months of initial enrollment in the master’s. Please note that the minimal admission average requirements for the doctoral program must also be met. Following transfer, all of the requirements of the doctoral program must be met.

**Information about how to apply to this program is available under the Apply Now (http://www.uottawa.ca/graduate-studies/programs-admission/apply/#apply-now) section.**

Students should complete and submit their online application with supporting documentation (if applicable) by the deadline indicated above.

**Program Requirements**

**Doctorate**

Students must meet the following requirements:

**Compulsory Courses:**
- MED 8166 Professionalism and Professional Skills 0 Unit
- 6 optional course units in biochemistry (BCH) at the 8000 level 6 Units

**Seminar:**
- BCH 8366 PhD Seminar 3 Units

**Comprehensive Examination:**
- BCH 9998 Comprehensive-Examination (PhD) 0 Unit

**Thesis:**
- BCH 9999 Ph.D. Thesis 0 Unit

Note(s)

1. The Department may require students to take additional courses, depending on their backgrounds.
2. The optional course units may be selected from other approved graduate courses in related disciplines approved by the Department.
3. This requirement involves the presentation of a seminar and regular attendance at the departmental seminars.
4. Successful presentation and defense of a thesis based on original research carried out under the direct supervision of a faculty member of the Department.
5. Students are responsible for ensuring they have met all of the thesis requirements (http://www.uottawa.ca/graduate-studies/students/theses).

**Minimum Requirements**

The passing grade in all courses is C+.

Students who fail 6 units, the thesis proposal, or the comprehensive exam or whose research progress is deemed unsatisfactory must withdraw from the program.

**Research**

**Research Fields & Facilities**

Located in the heart of Canada’s capital, a few steps away from Parliament Hill, the University of Ottawa is among Canada’s top 10 research universities.

uOttawa focuses research strengths and efforts in four Strategic Areas of Development in Research (SADRs):

- Canada and the World
- Health
- e-Society
- Molecular and Environmental Sciences

With cutting-edge research, our graduate students, researchers and educators strongly influence national and international priorities.

**Research at the Faculty of Medicine**

“The Faculty of Medicine has a long history of conducting both basic and clinical research of the highest quality. Many of our high profile research projects are conducted in partnership with affiliated-teaching hospitals and research institutes. These partnerships lead to biomedical discoveries that have a significant impact on health care. In the process they educate the next generation of Canadian scientists. Our research activity also attracts significant investment, which stimulates the Ottawa economy.”

- Dr. Bernard Jasmin, Vice-Dean, Research

**Facilities, Research Centres and Institutes at the Faculty of Medicine**

- Centre for Neural Dynamics (http://www.neurodynamic.uottawa.ca)
- University of Ottawa Centre for Neuromuscular Disease (http://med.uottawa.ca/neuromuscular)
- Centre for Research in Biopharmaceuticals and Biotechnology (http://www.med.uottawa.ca/crbb/eng)
- Canadian Partnership for Stroke Recovery (http://www.canadianstroke.ca/en)
- Kidney Research Centre (http://www.ohri.ca/centres/KRC/default.asp)
- University of Ottawa Skills and Simulation Centre (http://uossc.ca)
- Medical Devices Innovation Institute
- Ottawa Institute of Systems Biology (http://med.uottawa.ca/oisb)
- University of Ottawa Brain and Mind Research Institute (http://www.uottawa.ca/brain)
For more information, refer to the list of faculty members and their research fields on Uniweb.

IMPORTANT: Candidates and students looking for professors to supervise their thesis or research project can also consult the website of the faculty or department (https://www.uottawa.ca/graduate-studies/students/academic-unit-contact-information) of their program of choice. Uniweb does not list all professors authorized to supervise research projects at the University of Ottawa.

Courses

Not all of the listed courses are given each year. The course is offered in the language in which it is described.

**BCH 5101 Analysis of -Omic Data (3 units)**

Theoretical and practical aspects of various methods currently used to analyze the plethora of omics data. Methods: sequence alignment and database searches; sequence analysis and bioinformatics of gene regulation; DNA microarray and sequencing technologies to identify transcription factor binding sites; analysis of proteomics data; statistical analysis of preprocessed gene expression and protein/metabolite abundance data; epidemiology applications. Critical reading of the literature and strategies for making informed choices of methods for the analysis of students’ own data.

**Course Component:** Lecture

**BCH 5366 MSc Seminar (3 units)**

Attendance and participation in the annual BMI Student Symposium and BMI Poster Day, attendance at BMI seminars relevant to Biochemistry. Students must present at least one poster and one oral presentation during the course of their program. Graded S (Satisfactory) / NS (Not Satisfactory).

**Course Component:** Seminar

**BCH 5501 Analysis des données omiques (3 crédits)**

Les aspects théoriques et pratiques des méthodes actuellement utilisées pour l'analyse des données omiques. Méthodes : alignement des séquences et recherche dans les bases de données; analyse des séquences et bioinformatique de l'expression génique; micro puces d'ADN et technologies de séquençage utilisées pour l'identification des sites de liaison des facteurs de transcription; l'analyse des données protéomiques; l'analyse statistique de l'expression génique prétraitée; et applications aux données protéine/abondance de métabolites, épidémiologie. Lecture critique de la littérature et stratégies pour faire des choix informés quant à la sélection des méthodes pour l'analyse des données.

**Volet : Cours magistral**

**BCH 7999 Recherche pour la thèse de maîtrise / M.Sc. Thesis Research**

À l'intention des étudiants faisant de la recherche en vue de l'obtention de la maîtrise. Les étudiants doivent soumettre au Département un plan détaillé de la recherche qu'ils se proposent de faire. Ils doivent rencontrer leur comité consultatif de thèse au moins une fois par année et soumettre un rapport de progrès au Département. / For students doing research leading to the master's degree. Students must ensure that a detailed outline of their proposed research is on file with the Department. They must meet at least once per year with their thesis advisory committee and submit a progress report to the Department.

**Volet / Course Component:** Recherche / Research

**BCH 8101 Physical and Chemical Methods in Biochemistry (3 units)**

Current applications of physical and chemical methods to the study of macromolecule structure-function relationships.

**Course Component:** Lecture

**BCH 8102 Selected Topics in Protein Structure and Function (3 units)**

An advanced study of recent literature dealing with structure-function relationships in selected proteins.

**Course Component:** Lecture

**BCH 8103 Advanced Topics in Gene Expression and Protein Synthesis (3 units)**

An advanced study of the recent literature dealing with the chemistry, metabolism and function of nucleic acids, the biosynthesis of proteins, biochemical and genetic control mechanisms, genetic engineering and the control of gene expression. Offered every second year in alternation with BCH 8105.

**Course Component:** Lecture

**BCH 8104 Advanced Topics in Cell Regulation (3 units)**

An advanced study of recent literature dealing with signal transduction processes and the regulation of metabolism, cell proliferation and differentiation.

**Course Component:** Lecture

Offered in alternate years.

**BCH 8105 Advanced Topics in Molecular Biology of Human Diseases (3 units)**

Topics will be selected and representative of current developments in the field. The course consists of a repeated series of a 3 hour lecture by an expert in the field one week, followed by student presentations, discussions and critique of assigned papers on that topic the following week. Topics on selected diseases will focus on various aspects of cancer, apoptosis, disease gene identification and gene therapy. In the past these topics have included the molecular aspects of various cancers, spinal muscular atrophy, tissue regeneration, the discovery of disease genes, infectious disease (HIV) and gene therapy. Students will write a grant proposal and participate in mock grant review panels. Depending on enrolment, the course may be limited to HMG students only.

**Course Component:** Lecture

**BCH 8106 Advanced Topics in Nutrition and Regulation of Metabolism (3 units)**

An advanced study of the recent literature dealing with metabolism, nutrition and metabolic control theory, with emphasis on both whole body and cell metabolism in metabolic and nutritional disorders such as obesity and non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM).

**Course Component:** Lecture

**BCH 8107 Advanced Topics in Structure and Function of Plasma Lipoproteins (3 units)**

Recent advances in our knowledge of the plasma lipoproteins with a special emphasis on their role in the etiology of atherosclerosis. The subject will be introduced by an overview of the general structural properties of lipoproteins which will be followed by detailed discussion of the structure, metabolism and genetics of the apolipoproteins, the proteins and enzymes that modify lipoproteins and cell surface lipoprotein receptors. Other topics will include cholesterol homeostasis, plasma cholesterol transport and disorders of lipoprotein metabolism.

**Course Component:** Lecture

**BCH 8108 Advanced Methods of Macro-Molecular Structure Determination (3 units)**

A detailed examination of modern methods used to determine the structures of proteins, nucleic acids, and carbohydrates. May include X-ray crystallography, electron diffraction, nuclear magnetic resonance, and other spectroscopic methods.

**Course Component:** Lecture
BCH 8109 Advanced Topics in Cell Death (3 units)
Molecular mechanisms of cell death. Particular attention to be paid to role of aberrant cell death in human disease. Offered in the Fall of odd numbered years.
Course Component: Lecture

BCH 8110 Advanced Topics in Systems Biology (3 units)
Recent advances in genomics, proteomics, bioinformatics, and neuroinformatics including functional and chemical genomics, RNA analyses, microarrays, mass spectrometry, and neural imaging. Course requirements include student presentations and writing a mock research proposal based on Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) guidelines. Limited enrollment. Offered in alternate years with BCH 8101.
Physical and Chemical Methods in Biochemistry.
Course Component: Lecture

BCH 8111 Chromosome and Chromatin Biology (3 units)
Higher order chromosome structure and chromatin remodeling and their impact on regulation of gene expression, DNA replication, repair and recombination, and chromosome segregation. Histone modifications and nucleosome positioning and their influence on higher order chromosome structure. Importance of chromosome and chromatin in the context of the cell cycle, development, and disease. Critical reading of the literature on chromosome and chromatin biology.
Course Component: Seminar

BCH 8114 Advanced Topics in the Cell Cycle (3 units)
Mechanisms of cell cycle regulation. Model systems critical to deciphering the cell cycle in eukaryotes: budding and fission yeast, Xenopus laevis egg extracts, Aspergillus nidulans, Drosophila melanogaster, sea urchin and mouse oocytes and cultured vertebrate cells. Overview of the prokaryotic cell cycle.
Course Component: Lecture

BCH 8116 Model Organisms and Systems Biology (3 units)
Utilization of model organisms in the development and advancement of the systems biology field. Particular attention will be paid to the use of organisms such as Saccharomyces cerevisiae as a model platform for cell cycle progression/cancer. Other models may also be included. The basics of the technology will be discussed along with the application of technology to complex biological questions, in particular relating to the cell cycle. Course offered in alternate years.
Course Component: Lecture

BCH 8117 Advanced Topics Relating to the Cell Cytoskeleton and Membranes (3 units)
Advanced study of recent literature dealing with the mammalian cellular cytoskeleton and membrane with an emphasis on the regulation of cell motility, adhesion and cell division.
Course Component: Lecture

BCH 8134 Structure and Expression of Eukaryotic and Prokaryotic Genomes (3 units)
Sequencing of eukaryote and prokaryote genomes with emphasis on recent technologies, sequence alignment and databases and assembly of genomes from massively parallel sequencing data. Focus on mapping studies, including linkage disequilibrium-based genome-wide association study (GWAS), to characterize functional variants associated with complex traits. Analysis and structure of microbial metagenomes from environmental and human habitats, including structure-function analysis of microbial communities, microbiota-human disease correlations, and molecular phylogeny. Genome expression, including measures of RNA transcripts and proteins and statistical analysis of data. Combination of various -omics data to understand gene-environment interactions.
Course Component: Lecture

BCH 8165 Special Topics in Biochemistry (3 units)
A survey of recent advances in selected areas of biochemistry.
Course Component: Lecture

BCH 8166 Special Topics in Biochemistry II (3 units)
A survey of recent advances in selected areas of biochemistry.
Course Component: Lecture

BCH 8213S Seminars (2 crédits / 2 units)
Compulsory for second-year graduate students.
Volet / Course Component: Cours magistral / Lecture

BCH 8214S Seminars (2 crédits / 2 units)
Compulsory for third-year graduate students.
Volet / Course Component: Cours magistral / Lecture

BCH 8310 Current Topics in RNA Molecular Biology (3 units)
Properties, mechanisms associated with regulation and the functions of RNAs and Ribonucleoprotein (RNPs) as well as RNA organisms. Current knowledge on RNA expression (synthesis, processing, transport and localization), the structure-function relationship and molecular mechanisms associated with RNAs and RNA genomes, RNA in evolution and in the origin of life, and RNA as therapeutic agents.
Course Component: Lecture
Courses CMM 8310, BCH 8310 cannot be combined for units.

BCH 8366 PhD Seminar (3 units)
Attendance and participation in the annual BMI Student Symposium and BMI Poster Day, attendance at BMI seminars relevant to Biochemistry. Students will present a poster in their first and every alternate year, and an oral presentation the second and every alternate year until they have permission to write their thesis. Graded S (Satisfactory) / NS (Not satisfactory).
Course Component: Seminar

BCH 8511 Biologie des chromosomes et de la chromatine (3 crédits)
Organisation de la structure des chromosomes et le remodelage de la chromatine ainsi que l’impact de ceux-ci sur la régulation de l’expression génique, la réplication, la réparation et la recombinaison de l’ADN ainsi que sur la ségrégation des chromosomes. Les modifications historiques et le positionnement des nucléosomes ainsi que leur influence sur la structure organisée des chromosomes. Importance des chromosomes et de la chromatine dans le contexte du cycle cellulaire, du développement et des maladies. Lecture critique de la littérature portant sur la biologie des chromosomes et de la chromatine.
Volet : Cours magistral

BCH 8534 Structure et expression des génomes procaryotes et eucaryotes (3 crédits)
Le séquençage des génomes eucaryotes et procaryotes, avec un accent particulier sur les technologies récentes, l’alignement des séquences et les bases de données, et l’assemblage des génomes à partir de données générées par séquençage haut débit. Les études de cartographie comparée incluent les études d’associations pangénomiques basées sur le déséquilibre de liaison pour caractériser les variantes fonctionnelles associées aux traits complexes. L’analyse et la structure de métagénomiques microbiens issus d’habitats humains et environnementaux incluant l’analyse structure-fonction des communautés microbiennes, les corrélations entre les maladies humaines et le microbiome ainsi que la phylogénie moléculaire. L’expression génique incluant les mesures de transcriptomes et de protéomes ainsi que l’analyse statistique des données. La combinaison des différentes -données omiques pour comprendre les interactions gène-environnement.
Volet : Cours magistral
BCH 9998 Examen de synthèse (doctorat) / Comprehensive-Examination (PhD)
À l'intention des étudiants inscrits au programme de Ph.D. L’inscription à ce cours est limitée à trois sessions consécutives. / For students enrolled in the doctoral program. Enrollement in this course is limited to three consecutive academic sessions.

Volet / Course Component: Recherche / Research

BCH 9999 Thèse de doctorat / Ph.D. Thesis
À l’intention des étudiants faisant de la recherche en vue de l’obtention du doctorat. Les étudiants doivent soumettre au Département un plan détaillé de la recherche qu’ils se proposent de faire. Ils doivent rencontrer leur comité consultatif de thèse au moins une fois par année et soumettre un rapport de progrès au Département. / For students doing research leading to the doctoral degree. Students must ensure that a detailed outline of their proposed research is on file with the Department. They must meet at least once per year with their thesis advisory committee and submit a progress report to the Department.

Volet / Course Component: Recherche / Research