UC Irvine Charlie Dunlop School of Biological Sciences

# 4+1 Graduate Student Handbook

Academic Year: 2026-2027

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This handbook contains information specific to students enrolled in the 4+1 B.S./M.S. program in the Charlie Dunlop School of Biological Sciences. This serves as a supplement to the BioSci Graduate Handbook and any department graduate handbook, and is not intended to replace them.

Policies regarding enrollment, academic standing, leaves of absence, financial support, student conduct, and campus resources are addressed in the BioSci Graduate Student Handbook and are not repeated here. Students are responsible for reading and following all applicable handbooks.

Students should refer to the BioSci Graduate Student Handbook: https://grad.bio.uci.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/59/2025/10/BioSci-Grad-Handbook_AY-2025-2026.pdf and the UCI Graduate Division Policies and Procedures: https://grad.uci.edu/uc-irvine-graduate-policies-and-procedures/.

In cases of conflict between any handbook and official University publications or current policy, official University publications or current policy take precedence.

# Program Overview

The 4+1 program allows currently enrolled UCI undergraduate students in the Charlie Dunlop School of Biological Sciences to begin taking graduate-level courses in the last quarter of their senior undergraduate year and complete a Master of Science degree in one additional year, for a total of five years of study.

The program is available across the five departments in the School:

- Developmental and Cell Biology (DCB)
- Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (EEB)
- Molecular Biology and Biochemistry (MBB)
- Neurobiology and Behavior (NBB)
- Systems Biology (SB)

Students are sponsored by a faculty member in one of the participating departments, and that department serves as their home department for the M.S. degree. The M.S. degree awarded is the Master of Science in Biological Sciences (Plan II, Comprehensive Examination). Students complete the degree via a capstone paper and presentation.

# Contacts

Graduate Studies & Support (GS&S) administers the 4+1 program across all participating departments.

Office Location: Biological Sciences III, First Floor
Office Email: biosci-grad@uci.edu
Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Website: https://www.bio.uci.edu/students/graduates/

For the current list of Graduate Advisors for each participating department, students should consult the BioSci Graduate Student Handbook: https://grad.bio.uci.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/59/2025/10/BioSci-Grad-Handbook_AY-2025-2026.pdf

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Department Representatives:

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**Molecular Biology & Biochemistry**
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**Neurobiology and Behavior**
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Department Representatives serve on the 4+1 committee that oversees program admissions and requirements. They serve as a point of contact for program related questions, especially those that are specific to the PI's department.

# Eligibility & Admission

### Who May Apply

The 4+1 program is open to currently enrolled UCI undergraduate students in the Charlie Dunlop School of Biological Sciences who wish to begin graduate-level coursework during their final undergraduate year and complete a Master of Science degree. Students must be sponsored by a faculty member in a participating department.

### Eligibility Requirements

**Please note: Admission to the 4+1 program is not guaranteed.** Meeting the eligibility requirements below does not ensure admission into the program. Students must satisfy all of the following criteria to be considered for admission:

- Currently enrolled as a UCI undergraduate student in the School of Biological Sciences
- Minimum cumulative undergraduate GPA of 3.0
- Have completed at least three quarters of undergraduate research (Bio Sci 199) with the same sponsoring faculty member (PI), who will serve as the student's graduate research mentor, with this experience running continuously through the time of graduation

### Application Materials

Students must submit their application online at https://apply.grad.uci.edu/apply/. The following materials are required:

- Three letters of recommendation, including one from the sponsoring faculty member
- Statement of Purpose Essay
- Scanned unofficial transcripts for all institutions attended

### Application Deadline

December 1st of the final undergraduate year

# M.S. Degree Requirements

The 4+1 M.S. in Biological Sciences requires a minimum of 36 units and is completed via Plan II (Comprehensive Examination), consisting of a capstone paper and oral presentation to a faculty committee.

Unit Breakdown:

- At least 16 units of didactic graduate-level coursework (four 4-unit 200-level courses)
- At least 12 units of independent research (200A, 200B, 200C with PI)
- At least 8 units of elective coursework from graduate seminars and journal clubs (200-level, e.g., Mol Bio 201, 202)

Note: Enrolling in two 2-unit workshops or journal clubs is not equivalent to one 4-unit didactic elective.

Course requirements specific to the student's home department, including required seminar enrollment, approved elective list, and research enrollment procedures, are detailed in the student's department graduate handbook. Students should work with their PI and contact their home department's Graduate Advisor to develop a specific plan of study.

**Sample Schedule**

| Courses | Spring UG | Fall MS | Winter MS | Spring MS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Required Didactic coursework 16 units | 4-unit 200-level | 4-unit 200-level | 4-unit 200-level | 4-unit 200-level |
| Elective coursework 8 units | | | 2X (2-unit 200-level) | 2X (2-unit 200-level) |
| Research coursework 12 unit minimum | Research (199) | 200A 8 units | 200B 4 units | 200C 4 units |
| Comprehensive exam | | | Submit AtC paperwork | Final presentation |
| Credit toward MS degree | 4 units | 12 units | 12 units | 12 units |

There are no summer requirements for this degree. Students may take courses (including research) in the summerif they choose to do so; however, they will be required to pay tuition in the summer and still be required to complete a full academic year (fall, winter, and spring) as an

M.S. student. With the approval of the advisory committee, students may extend their time in the program by up to one additional year to fulfill remaining degree requirements as necessary.

## Dual Enrollment

During Year 4, students are enrolled simultaneously in undergraduate and graduate-level coursework. Students in this phase remain classified as undergraduate students for all fee, financial aid, and enrollment purposes until the B.S. degree is officially conferred by the Registrar.

Courses used to satisfy undergraduate degree requirements cannot be applied to the graduate degree. A maximum of 4 units of upper-division undergraduate coursework may be counted toward the M.S. degree, with approval of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and the departmental Graduate Advisor.

### Enrolling in Graduate Courses

Enrollment in graduate-level courses as an undergraduate or newly admitted M.S. student requires coordination through the Graduate Studies & Support office—not the undergraduate student affairs office.

Students do not have special enrollment privileges. Ph.D. students have enrollment priority for most graduate elective courses. Students should plan their course schedule early and in consultation with their PI and Graduate Advisor to ensure they can enroll in the courses required for their program.

Contact the Graduate Coordinator for assistance with graduate course enrollment.

### Financial Aid During Dual Enrollment

Students are strongly encouraged to contact the UCI Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships before beginning the program to understand any potential impact on their aid package. Upon full transition to graduate student status at the start of Year 5, students are responsible for graduate-level tuition and fees. **The 4+1 program does not guarantee financial support.** For available funding sources, refer to the Financial Support section of the BioSci Graduate Student Handbook.

### Transition to Graduate Status

Upon conferral of the B.S. degree, students transition to full graduate student status and are issued a new student ID. Students must ensure that all undergraduate degree requirements have been certified by the Registrar before the B.S. can be conferred, and that the department has processed all necessary paperwork for the transition, including transfer of course credit to the M.S. degree, through Graduate Division's general petition process. Students should work with the

Graduate Coordinator to initiate this process as soon as possible after their first enrollment or course completion.

Once in full graduate status, all policies in the BioSci Graduate Student Handbook apply, including those governing enrollment, academic standing, academic conditional status, leaves of absence, and student employment.

# Academic Policies & Procedures

### Academic Progress

All required courses must be passed with a grade of B or better, or S (satisfactory). Students must register for research for a letter grade; grades of P or S will not be accepted for research units.

If a student receives a B- in any required course, they may receive a conditional academic status warning letter. If a student receives lower than a B- in any course, or a second B-, the student will be placed on conditional academic status (ACS). When on ACS, students may not serve as a Teaching Assistant. If the student fails to remediate the circumstances of this provisional status, the Graduate Division and the Associate Dean will initiate a request to disqualify them from the program.

For full Academic Conditional Status and Disqualification policies, refer to the BioSci Graduate Student Handbook.

### Advancement to Candidacy

Advancement to candidacy for the M.S. degree is based on satisfactory progress in coursework and research; there is no separate qualifying examination. The M.S. Advancement to Candidacy (AtC) Form must be submitted at least one quarter before the student plans to graduate — typically during Winter quarter of Year 5. To initiate the process, students must complete the **"4+1 Academic Degree Planning & Progress Form,"** obtain their advisor's signature, and submit the form to the Graduate Coordinator. Students will work with the Graduate Coordinator to set up the electronic AtC DocuSign form. Please note that all required paperwork must be submitted to the Graduate Division by 5:00 p.m. on the filing deadline.

### Capstone / Final Research Presentation

To complete the M.S. degree, all 4+1 students must complete both a capstone research paper and an oral research presentation to a faculty committee during their final quarter.

## Committee

Students are required to form a committee of at least 3 faculty members from their home department, including their PI. Students are strongly advised to form and meet with the committee by the end of the Winter quarter of Year 5 to discuss progress and expectations. The committee evaluates both the student's oral presentation and written research paper during Spring quarter of Year 5.

## Oral Presentation

The capstone presentation is approximately 25 minutes, with 5 minutes for questions. Students should confirm the presentation format with their PI and committee. Students are strongly advised to schedule their presentation no later than Week 9 of Spring quarter of Year 5.

## Written Research Paper

The paper is modeled on the Excellence in Research format. The student's PI may provide an alternative format (for example, a manuscript prepared for journal submission). Students should confirm the format with their PI and committee. Students are strongly advised to submit their research paper to their committee at least two weeks before their scheduled oral presentation.

## Final Degree Paperwork

Students must submit the completed **"4+1 Final Presentation -- Committee Approval Form,"** signed by all committee members, to the Graduate Coordinator promptly after successfully completing their presentation. Students should work with the Graduate Coordinator to set up the electronic Final Degree Paperwork via DocuSign. All final degree paperwork must be submitted to the Graduate Division by 5:00 p.m. on the filing deadline.