

Welcome to the Molecular & Cell Biology (MCB) web site and congratulations on your acceptance to UC Berkeley.

Check out these frequently asked questions to learn more about MCB and to help separate fact from fiction! [Also, we polled some of our peer advisors about their choice to come to Cal, their freshman experience, and more.](#)

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Q: What are the lower-division MCB requirements?

A: All students will take the following courses. However, any student considering MCB:Biological Chemistry (BMB: Track 2) should plan to take Chem 1B and the upper-division organic chemistry sequence (Chem 112A/B). Any deviations from this course list must be approved by the MCB major advisor prior to completing the sequence.

Course Number	Course Name	Semesters Offered	Units
Math 10A	Methods of Mathematics: Calculus, Statistics, and Combinatorics	Fall	4
Math 10B	Methods of Mathematics: Calculus, Statistics, and Combinatorics	Spring	4

Chemistry 1A/1AL	General Chemistry with Lab	Fall, Spring, Summer	3 + 1
Chemistry 3A/3AL	Chemical Structure and Reactivity	Fall, Spring, Summer	3 + 2
Chemistry 3B/3BL	Chemical Structure and Reactivity	Fall, Spring, Summer	3 + 2
Biology 1A/1AL	General Biology with Lab	Fall, Spring, Summer	3 + 2
Biology 1B	General Biology with Lab	Fall, Spring, Summer	4
Physics 8A	Introductory Physics	Fall, Spring, Summer	4
Physics 8B	Introductory Physics	Fall, Spring, Summer	4

Note: Students interested in Biological Chemistry must also take Chemistry 1B and will replace Chem 3A/3AL and Chem 3B/3BL with Chemistry 112A and 112B.

Note: Math 10A/10B is the preferred sequence for the MCB and IB majors. More information about the series can be found here: [Math 10A/10B](#).

Q: I've heard that you can't graduate in 4 years if you want to major in MCB. Is that true?

A: No, that's a myth. [Check this page for some typical 4-year plans](#).

Q: What should I take in the fall as a new freshman?

A: There are many variables that must be considered, but as a general rule, most incoming students will take Chemistry 1A/1AL and Math 10A for the major. In addition, many first semester students will take a reading & composition course and/or a breadth course. Ideally, students should register for Chem 1A/1AL and Math 10A during phase 1, but it is up to you to determine your priorities. CalSO will help guide your scheduling choices for your first semester at Cal.

Q: Is the Math 16 series acceptable to meet the math requirement for MCB? **A:** No, the Math 16 series is not accepted by the MCB major.

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Students are strongly encouraged to complete the Math 10 series.

However, students interested in taking advanced math courses because of double major or minor requirements should consult a major advisor. These students should consider taking Math 1A/1B/53/54.

Q: What if I'm not sure whether or not I want to major in MCB?

A: We recommend that you take Chem 1A/1AL, Math 10A or Math 1A during your first semester at Cal. Most other biological science majors on campus will accept this sequence. If you would like to know about other biology majors, check out the [Biology @ Berkeley](#)

[website](#)

Q: If I am pre-med, is MCB the right major for me?

A: Maybe. Students are admitted to medical school with a variety of majors, such as Spanish, history, German, political science, etc. We suggest majoring in MCB if you have a true interest in science and, in particular, genetics, immunology, biochemistry, neurobiology, or cell biology. If your interests lie in another major, you can always take the classes needed for admission to medical school while majoring in the department that is most interesting to you. Regardless of your major, you would need to take one year of college-level calculus, biology, chemistry, organic chemistry & physics. More information can be found on the Career Center's

[medical school preparation website](#)

Q: What about other AP scores? Can I waive out of other prerequisite courses for the MCB major?

A: AP scores can waive you from some of the MCB prerequisites (see chart below). However, we strongly suggest that you take all lower-division courses here at Cal so that you have a solid background in science and math before you begin your upper-division course work. We particularly recommend taking Biology 1A/1AL regardless of AP credit. The classes at Cal have in-depth labs that correspond with the lecture portion of a particular subject. Health professional and graduate schools require that you have, for example, two semesters of general biology with labs, taken at the college-level. They will not accept AP credit.

AP Scores of 4 or 5 in the following subjects allow you to substitute prerequisite course work

AP Chemistry	Chem 1A/1AL
AP Biology	Bio 1A/1AL, Bio 1B

Q: I still have questions about which classes to take. Can I call, email or come to the MCB undergraduate office even though I'm not declared yet?

A: ABSOLUTELY! During the fall and spring semesters, we have peer advisors during all open hours except 9-10 a.m. In addition, there are undergraduate staff advisors in the Undergraduate Affairs Office (UAO), M-Th 9-12, 1-4 and F 9-12, 1-3. Please drop by and see us. You can also email mcbuao@berkeley.edu. We check this email daily so we'll be sure to get back to you within one working day. If you would like to speak with someone immediately, please call 510.643.8895.

Q: How can I get in touch with other students to get their opinion about certain classes?

A: When school is in session, we have peer advisors in our office every day of the week. They are here specifically to talk to you, the prospective major, the undeclared student, the student with questions. More information can be found on the [peer advising webpage](#).

Q: I'm not able to attend Cal Day but I still want to keep up-to-date about MCB-related events. What can I do? **A:** If you're planning to attend Cal in the fall or spring, we suggest signing up for the MCB Infoline email (see side bar on this page). During the academic year, we send out a weekly email highlighting upcoming deadlines, events, and campus opportunities that are relevant to MCB students. In addition, we will email all first year students (who indicated MCB on their application) in the early fall inviting them in to talk with our peer advisors. The peer

advisors are a great resource for getting to know the campus, schedule planning, learning how to be successful in MCB-related courses, and so much more.

Q: How do I learn about the current research being conducted in MCB? **A:** As many of you know, Cal is world renowned for its academic research and offers many opportunities for students to be involved. MCB-type research is occurring all over campus. As incoming students, we encourage you to take your first (and even second semester) to learn about the university, adjust to the coursework, and discover the many opportunities to get involved. Once you're settled and you're academically successful, then start exploring the many types of research and projects occurring at Cal and the surrounding area. More information about research can be found on the

[MCB research web page](#)

or check out the

[Office of Undergraduate Research website](#)

Q: I was admitted to the Fall Program for Freshman (FPF). Can I still graduate in four years? **A:** Absolutely. While you think you'll be behind because of FPF, you will be on track as other intended MCB majors, though your schedule may be slightly different. Every year, we have FPF students declare the major and graduate in four years (without summers). For FPF students, we usually recommend one summer session to help gain some flexibility in your schedule, but it's not necessary to still graduate in four years. Check out this schedule to see a [4-year plan for spring admit students](#)

Q: Why do I receive a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree even though I'm studying MCB? **A:** The word "Arts" in Bachelor of Arts does not mean arts in the modern sense. You are receiving a "liberal arts" degree in the classical sense: the term refers to those subjects that were considered essential for a free citizen to study in ancient Rome--and those subjects included mathematics and astronomy! Like Harvard undergraduates, who also earn a BA degree, you attend a liberal arts college. A liberal arts education will ensure that you graduate with both a depth of knowledge in your major and a breadth of knowledge across the disciplines, making you well prepared for a range of future graduate school and career options.

Specifically, the MCB major is housed within the College of Letters & Science and is designed to balance depth in the science and knowledge of subjects beyond your major, such as anthropology, legal studies, economics, etc. Many students use this opportunity to declare a [minor](#)

, participate in the

[Course Threads program](#)

, and/or demonstrate success in a multitude of areas.

Q: What can I do with a degree in Molecular and Cell Biology? **A:** Students earning the BA in MCB have been successful in medical/health-related programs, graduate school, and work in a multitude of areas. Check out the

[MCB career page](#)

for more information.

*Updated 4/14/2013