

Admission Process FAQ

Here are the most commonly asked questions about MCSB! If you do not see your question here, feel free to contact us at: mcsb@umn.edu, 612-625-5179 or 612-624-7470.

When is your application deadline?

Deadline is December 15

Do you take applications after the deadline?

Yes, but late applications may not be considered if the available slots have been filled. In addition, late applications may not have a timely review and would not be considered for graduate school fellowships.

Do you admit for Spring semester?

No, we admit only for Fall semester.

Can I apply for a MS degree?

No, we only offer a Ph.D. degree.

How competitive is the program?

We receive around 250 applications and admit approximately 15-20 students. Approximately 2-4 of these students are international.

Do I need financial aid?

No, students admitted to our program receive an annual stipend that covers living expenses. Currently, this is \$25,000 per year. We also pay your tuition and provide you with health care benefits. Completion of financial aid forms is not necessary, even though the Graduate School Bulletin lists these forms as being available.

Should I contact individual faculty regarding my admission or to evaluate my credentials?

No, only the admissions committee can review your application and offer admission. Individual faculty cannot offer comments to the committee regarding your credentials. If you are curious about whether or not you meet the basic standards for admission, please contact the MCSB office.

What makes a particular application stand out?

Research Experience! The most successful applicants have significant and productive research experience. They are able to effectively describe the rationale and biological context for their research in the personal statement as well as describe what was accomplished. Exceptional research experience (master's degrees, many years of experience, publications, etc.) may offset minor deficiencies in either GPA or GRE scores.

What makes a personal statement stand out?

This statement should be no longer than two single-spaced pages and should outline your research interests and career goals, work and research experience, personal background that is pertinent to this application, leadership roles, and qualities that would contribute to diversity of the program. List any research publications on which you are an author at the end of your personal statement. This list is excluded from the 2-page limit. **Upload your personal statement under statement #1.**

Statement #2: The graduate school application asks for a second statement on the topic of diversity. This statement is NOT required for MCSB admittance but may be required for nomination for particular graduate fellowships.

What is the average GPA score that you will need in order to be admitted?

Competitive applications will have GPAs of 3.3 or better (on a 4.0 scale). In 2010, the average GPA for students offered admission was 3.6. If your GPA falls below 3.3, additional graduate level courses can be taken to demonstrate academic ability.

What classes do I need to take to be eligible for admission?

Recommended academic preparation includes a strong background in basic biology, including biochemistry and genetics, plus one year each of calculus, organic chemistry, and physics.

Do you require the Graduate Record Examination (GRE)?

Yes. Competitive applicants typically have percentile ranks on all 3 sections (Verbal, Quantitative and Analytical) at the 70th percentile or higher. In some cases, a very high Quantitative score may offset lower Verbal and/or Analytical Scores. GRE scores are valid for 5 years. If you took the exam more than 5 years ago, it is recommended that you take it again.

My GRE scores are below your minimum scores, should I still apply?

A competitive application will have scores near the average scores listed above. If your scores are significantly below the program average, it is highly recommended that you retake this exam.

Do I need the GRE Subject Test?

The Subject (Advanced) Test (in biology, chemistry, or biochemistry, cell and molecular biology) of the GRE is not required but highly recommended. A high score on this exam may help offset deficiencies in GPA.

Is the TOEFL exam required for international students?

International students must take the TOEFL or IELTS exam. TOEFL scores of 263 (computer), or 106-108 (internet, with writing subsection 25 and reading subsection 25 or higher) or IELTS score of 7.0 or higher are recommended. TOEFL scores must be under two years old.

What is your institutional code for the GRE and TOEFL exams?

The University of Minnesota code is 6874.

What are the GRE/TOEFL Department Codes?

MCDBG applicant GRE codes are 0203, or 0206, or 0210, or 0299.

BMBB applicant GRE codes are 0202

TOEFL the departmental code is 74 or 34.

How many letters of recommendation do I need?

Three letters are required. Letters of recommendation from persons familiar with your academic and research capabilities are strongly encouraged. Names and complete contact information for the three referees must be entered online. Referees are strongly encouraged to upload their letters online to your application. They will be sent instructions from ApplyYourself. If letter writers are unable to upload letters online, e-mail letters to the MCSB program (mscb@umn.edu).

Do we admit international students?

Yes, International students may be contacted for a phone interview prior to receiving an offer of admission. Our incoming classes have an average of five international students.

How do I apply?

You must apply online to the graduate school and you must upload all materials to your online graduate school application including transcripts.

Do I need to provide original transcripts?

Not at the time of applying. If admitted, you will need to provide an original transcript. When applying, do not send a paper copy to the Graduate School. You must upload your transcripts to your online application.

What do I do if I forgot to upload something and I already submitted my application?

E-mail mscb@umn.edu for help. It is very important that you do NOT mail any paper documents to the Graduate School Admissions Office.

Do I have to pay the Graduate School application fee?

Yes, the graduate school does not offer a fee waiver for any reason. The application fee is \$75 for domestic students and \$95 for international students.

How do I know if my application is being considered for admission?

We review applications starting in December and invite our top candidates to visit us at our expense Jan. 26-29, Feb. 2-5, or Feb. 9-11. Phone interviews are conducted for the top international applicants sometime in February.

How do students find an adviser?

Students conduct three 7-week rotations in faculty research laboratories, with the

first beginning in September and the last finishing in February. MCSB students then select thesis laboratories and enter either the BMBB or MCDB&G program for their Ph.D. degree, depending upon the laboratory that they join.

Helpful Hints

- Upload all materials including transcripts to the online application.
- Do NOT submit until all materials are uploaded.
- Encourage all your referees to submit their letters online.
- Check your e-mail frequently. If you are missing materials or if there are any problems with your application, we will only contact you by e-mail.
- Submit ONLY the abstract of publications. The whole publication will not be reviewed.