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Introduction

Introduction to the Departments of Biology and Chemistry

Welcome to the Departments of Biology and Chemistry - we are delighted that you have decided to study with us. We hope you enjoy your time at York and we look forward to making sure you get the very best from your studies here.

You are now a member of two of the top teaching and research Departments in the country; a community of academics and students who work together in teaching and learning about all areas of modern Biology and Chemistry. We pride ourselves on offering an excellent education within a supportive atmosphere.

For nearly all of you, studying at University will be very different from the work you have done at school or college. Higher education offers the opportunity to obtain an in depth education; you will learn analytical rigour and develop your scientific creativity – you will quickly discover that doing a degree demands a lot more of you.

This handbook has been prepared to cover the information you will need for your programme and to assist you as a student. Please read it through and use it as a first point of reference. If you have any questions, your supervisor and/or our administrative offices, provide a friendly and helpful service.

The purpose of this handbook

This handbook is a reference guide to help you and should be kept for reference alongside the University Handbook. It provides a comprehensive introduction to your department and information on all aspects of your degree programme. It outlines what you should expect of your department and what they can expect from you, and clarifies the policies and procedures relevant to your area of study.

The University Handbook provides information on central services and support for students, including accommodation, finance, living in York and further advice on careers and study skills.
Where else can I find information

Yorkshare is York’s Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), a system of managed web pages that provides you with access to learning resources and allows you the means to communicate and collaborate with other students and staff over the Internet. VLEs are an increasingly important part of learning, improving flexibility of study and enhancing the learning process through increased feedback, access to resources and interaction with your peers and teaching staff. You should have received access to the ‘preparing to study site’ and we hope you have spent some time looking through it.

Each module has its own ‘site’ and you will be able to access booklists, lecture information, power point presentations and various electronic learning resources that we hope will help you with your studies. The module sites also contain module synopses (for module aims and learning outcomes and information on lecture topics and staff teaching on the module) and copies of past examination papers with specimen answers.

Another useful source of information is our WEB pages: (http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/currentundergraduatestudents/) you can access all of the general information you need for your programme of study here.

You should also log in to the Student Homepage (https://www.york.ac.uk/students/) for your personalised timetable, information and news. For general information you can search the student pages from this site via the left-hand side navigation.

Other useful sources of information and support are your supervisor, the Biology Undergraduate Office and your returning student mentors.

If things go wrong

We hope that you’ll count your time at University amongst the best experiences of your life. However, it is important that you know where to go to and who to turn to, should you experience any difficulties.

We have a set of web pages dedicated to providing support for you if things go wrong. For further information, visit: www.york.ac.uk/students/help/

Disclaimer

Whilst the University tries to ensure that information contained in this document is accurate when published, the University does not accept liability for any inaccuracies contained within it. Where circumstances occur or change outside the reasonable control of the University, the University reserves the right to change or cancel parts of, or entire, programmes of study or services at any time without liability, before or after students have registered at the University. Circumstances outside the University’s reasonable control include: industrial action, over or under-demand from students, staff illness, lack of funding, severe weather, fire, civil disorder, political unrest, government restrictions and concern regarding risk of transmission of serious illness. The University’s contract with its students does not confer third party benefits under the Contract (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999.
The Biology/Chemistry Departments

You are now a member of an academic department. The department is made up of teaching staff, researchers, support staff and other students like you.

Academic staff
They are there as leaders in their field willing to share their expertise and experience to help you learn, grow and push the boundaries of your capabilities and knowledge. Your supervisor is there to help guide your studies and to monitor your progress over your degree programme. Biology is a broad-based department with research and teaching interests ranging from population ecology to single molecule studies. Around 50 academic staff will contribute to your teaching through lectures, practicals, tutorials and project supervision.

You may occasionally meet research fellows or ‘post-docs’ – post-doctoral staff who are senior researchers; they may offer tutorials or work with you on your project in your final year.

Support staff
They are the mechanics behind making the department run smoothly. They will communicate important information, provide technical assistance and help signpost you to other services and support you might need within the University.

Administrative staff play an essential role in keeping the organisation and communications of the departments moving. You will have regular contact with the staff who manage undergraduate affairs in Biology.

Technicians provide the technical assistance you need for the practical aspects of your programme. You will meet the teaching technicians in the teaching laboratories during your practical classes in years 1 and 2 and research technicians during your final year project work in the research laboratories.

Students
You are now also part of a student community belonging to your department. Course reps are there to help represent your views to the department and to the University – so there is always a way to get your views heard. You will also come into contact with graduate students – these are recent graduates working for higher degrees - you will meet them as demonstrators in your practical classes.
Your supervisor

We allocate you an academic supervisor who is there to offer you support and advice throughout your degree programme. Your supervisor could be a Biology or a Chemistry member of staff.

Your supervisor will meet with you at the beginning and end of each term to discuss your academic progress and check all is well with you and your studies. They will encourage you to develop your academic personal skills (see Personal Development Planning in the section on Personal Development and Employability) and can also act as a reference for any applications you might make in the future. They can advise what to do if things go wrong and refer you to the right people in the University for help with more personal matters.

Your supervisor should usually be the first person you approach with problems - either academic or personal and they should be reasonably available to see supervisees on request; if you are unable to contact your supervisor at any time, please go to the Biology Undergraduate Office.

You are ultimately responsible for attending supervisory meetings and for keeping your supervisor informed of circumstances which impact on your academic performance. If you miss a supervisory meeting without good reason your supervisor should offer you the opportunity for a further meeting, unless the supervisee has confirmed in writing (e.g. by e-mail) that s/he is experiencing no known problems. If you miss two meetings it will be noted on your file.

If you are an overseas student on a Tier 4 visa, you will need to attend at least two individual meetings per term with your supervisor. For further information please see: (https://www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/tier4/).

For further areas of student support, see the University handbook or visit: www.york.ac.uk/students/support/

Changing your supervisor

Sometimes students ask to change supervisor – if you do want to change, please let us know by raising the matter with the Biology Undergraduate Office, the Chair Board of Studies or any member of staff. We don’t ask you to explain why you want to change.

Communicating with the department

It is important that you stay in contact with the Department during your studies and our main means of communication with you is via email. It is your responsibility to check your University email account regularly, we recommend a minimum of every day and it is helpful for us if you always contact us from your University email and make it clear who you are in your email – i.e. sign off using your full name.
Information timetable changes, examinations and arrangements for meetings with supervisors will always be communicated to you via email.

Urgent updates may be communicated to you via text messages (so make sure you always update your mobile number with the University if it changes) and general notices are also posted on the notice boards in the concourse area and teaching labs. If we receive any mail for you, we will ask you to collect it from the Biology Undergraduate Office.

**Departmental facilities**

The Chemistry Department is a community of over 700 people. The interests and activities of these people are diverse and some will be more directly important to you than others. Roughly speaking our activities can be broken down into teaching, research and administration, though these categories overlap considerably.

The Department is contained in several buildings. The Chemistry Site contains four blocks, A block contains teaching rooms, the Whinfield Library, a large computer cluster, and many of the administrative offices (including A109, the Undergraduate Office), B block houses the teaching labs and the undergraduate common room (B125) whereas the Dorothy Hodgkin Building (blocks D and E) contains the offices of members of academic staff and research laboratories. The new building, F block, will, when complete, house the new teaching labs and the Green Chemistry research centre.

An additional block lies close to the Dorothy Hodgkin Building but is linked to Alcuin College. This houses the Chemical Industry Education Centre. The Hub is located across the road from A-block, and contains a computer classroom as well as staff offices and teaching rooms. Some Department of Chemistry staff with interests in the biological aspects of the subject have offices and laboratories in the York Structural Biology Laboratory (YSBL) which is in the Biosciences building shared with the Biology Department.

Virtually all the teaching is done by members of the academic staff. During your time here you will come across most of them in lectures, tutorials, practical classes or workshops. Our teaching commitment is not only to undergraduates; we have some 150 postgraduate students (including many from overseas) who are

Corridors and Rooms in the Biology Department are coded according to the scheme illustrated below. This letter is then followed by a number signifying the floor (‘0’ being Ground Floor, ‘1’ being First Floor etc.) and finally a two-digit room number.
Departmental access beyond the Concourse, Atrium (K block) and Undergraduate Office is controlled by a **swipe card**. On arrival you will be issued with a card that will give you access, during working hours, to the teaching laboratories (A block) and the research wings for academic staff offices.
Departmental Office - Biology undergraduate office

The Undergraduate (Student Administration) Office (C Block) is situated off the main concourse where lecture theatres B002 and B006 are situated. It is also just around the corner from ‘Cookies’ coffee bar. You will visit the Undergraduate Office to submit and collect forms and assessed work and examination papers. The offices are also a good place to take any general queries / questions you may have.

The Undergraduate Office is open from 09.00 – 13.00 and 14.00 - 17.00, Mon-Fri.
On days when assessed is being submitted or examination papers are being returned to students the office remains open across the lunch period.

Biology teaching labs and computer room (A004)

The Biology teaching labs are situated in A block - including A004, the Computing Room are situated on A corridor the main corridor entrance to the Department coming from Vanbrugh College. A004 contains 60 networked computer terminals for use by students. Please note, food and drink cannot be taken into the teaching labs or computer rooms and you will be required to wear a lab coat in all practical classes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A004 Computing Room</th>
<th>24 hour swipe card only access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Laboratories</td>
<td>08.30-18.30 swipe access (Mon-Fri)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concourse</td>
<td>24 hour swipe card access</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An emergency phone is situated in A004 and is available for use in the event of any kind of incident or accident occurring out-of-hours (6.00pm-8.00am). Campus-based Security can be summoned by calling 3333 and reporting your problem. Special arrangements can also be made for any student with a disability who encounters difficulty accessing A004 out-of-hours (6.00pm-8.00am). Please contact the Biology Undergraduate Office for further details.

For information on printing and University computing facilities please refer to the University handbook and the following web link: [https://www.york.ac.uk/it-services/it/](https://www.york.ac.uk/it-services/it/)

Biology lecture theatres

The main Biology lecture theatres B002 and B006 are in the Biology ‘concourse’ which is accessed from A block; you will have many of your lectures in them (particularly later in your studies). A smaller lecture theatre (B103) can be reached by going up the stairs from the concourse and turning left.

‘Cookies’ Coffee Bar (open from 9.15am to 4.00pm, Monday to Friday (in term time) and 9.30am to 2.00pm, Monday to Friday (in vacations)) is also based in the ‘concourse’ area.
Health and safety

Safety training is an important feature of all our work activities and, for undergraduate students is particularly appropriate to practical classes in the teaching labs.

All undergraduate students will be given a safety induction briefing at the start of their studies. A further safety talk is organised before students embark on their final year project. This supplements the more detailed safety instruction and information given by the project supervisors.

For information about the University’s Health, Safety and Security policy, visit: www.york.ac.uk/admin/hsas/

Departmental committees:
http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/currentundergraduatestudents/common-pages/committeesmeetingdates/#tab-1

The work of the Department is overseen by a number of committees, the most relevant Committees are: the Board of Studies, Teaching Committee, the Board of Examiners, Examinations Committee and the Student Staff Liaison Group (SSLG).

The Board of Studies deals with all matters of academic business in the Department and is responsible for overseeing the Department’s programmes of study. The current Chair of the Board is Dr Richard Waites and two student representatives from each year of study attend the meetings; there are five meetings a year.

Teaching Committee is responsible for detailed annual course planning and quality assurance, monitoring and strategic consideration of admissions and graduate employment performance, and any other issues as determined by the Board of Studies. The current Chair is Dr James Moir and it usually meets once a term. Student representatives also attend Teaching Committee meetings.

Between them the Board of Studies and Teaching Committee approve new programmes and modules, revisions to existing programmes and changes to individual students’ programmes. They consider student feedback and monitor student admissions and achievement.

The Board of Examiners deals with matters relating to the examining of students’ work, student progress and the awarding of degrees. The Chair of the Board of Examiners is Dr Richard Waites. Student representatives do not attend Board of Examiners meetings.
Examinations Committee is responsible for formulating examinations policy for approval by the Biology BoS; organising and vetting the setting of examination papers and developing and up-dating marking guidelines. The current Chair is Dr Louise Jones and the Secretary is Dr Michael Schultze. Student representatives do not attend Examinations Committee meetings.

There is also a Biochemistry Mitigating Circumstance Committee which considers student requests for extensions and re-assessment (please see section on mitigating circumstances). The current Chair is Dr Michael Schultze.

University information and policy on mitigating circumstances is available at the following link: [https://www.york.ac.uk/students/support/academic/mitigation/](https://www.york.ac.uk/students/support/academic/mitigation/)

The Student Staff Liaison Group was developed to improve communication between students and staff. It offers feedback on teaching, learning, assessment and research training and enhances teaching, learning, assessment and research training. The Board of Studies student representatives have an important role to play here.

**Course Reps**

Course Reps are elected by students in their departmental year group to represent the views and interests of students on department committees and within the student union. You can go to them with any concerns or suggestions about how the department or aspects of your course are run.

Course representation is a partnership between YUSU and the departments of the University of York. Together, we aim to ensure that students play an essential role in guaranteeing and driving the quality of the academic experience here. [http://www.yusu.org/campaigns-and-representation/course-reps](http://www.yusu.org/campaigns-and-representation/course-reps)

Biochemistry has two student representatives for each year group and the course reps will attend meetings of the Student Staff Liaison Group, Teaching Committee and the Board of Studies in Biology and Teaching Committee in Chemistry.

The purpose of student representation is to encourage student input into the continued improvement and development of our teaching programmes. As the 'end-users', you are in an ideal position to comment on any problems encountered and put forward ideas for positive changes particularly concerning organisation and administration. Your views are valued by us and over the years many changes have been incorporated into the teaching programme because of student feedback.
The Biology Student-Staff Liaison Group

This provides a channel of communication between all students (undergraduate and graduate) and the Biology Department. The group meets twice a term to discuss teaching related matters. The minutes of the meetings are taken forward to the Biology Undergraduate Studies Board, and the respective Board of Studies in Biology. The student representatives are also members of the Biology Undergraduate Studies Board and Teaching Committee.

Evaluation of teaching and assessment in Biology is carried out electronically, at the end of each module and after the assessments all students are asked for comments (anonymously), which are then reviewed by Quality Group and staff who teach on the modules. At the end of each year students reps are also asked to coordinate a feedback session for all the students in their year group to gain their views and suggestions on all aspects of the course. As representative you will then discuss these views with the Chair and Associate Chair of the Board of Studies.

You may raise any issues for discussion at regular meetings of the Student/Staff Liaison Group, Teaching Committee and the Board of Studies.

If you’d like to represent the views of your fellow students and have a say in how your course is run, why not apply to be a course rep? You can stand for this position at the beginning of Autumn term.

Visit: www.yusu.org/campaigns-and-representation/course-reps

For a more detailed description of the role, visit: www.york.ac.uk/about/organisation/governance/members-secretaries/guidelinesforstudentreps/

Equality and Diversity

The University of York values the diversity of its members and is committed to the creation of a positive environment which is fair, welcoming and inclusive and where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

For further information about the University’s equality and diversity policies, visit: http://www.york.ac.uk/admin/eo/
Your Course

Studying

Biochemistry

Course Structure

Biochemistry at York provides students with an understanding of the fundamental processes that govern life. Our Chemistry department provides you with a “first-principles” basis that is built on within the Biology department to provide an understanding of how different classes of biological molecules interact together to capture energy, build complex molecular machines, and send the signals that produce thought. The opportunity to specialise is provided through a flexible course structure.

We believe your course is a high quality, intensive and rewarding programme that gives a contemporary introduction to one of the most significant scientific disciplines of the 21st century. Because the course is taught between the departments of Biology and Chemistry, you are ensured of expert tuition in each aspect of the course from international calibre researchers.

We aim to teach our students to be confident and independent biochemists. To encourage this we provide a high number of contact hours in the first and second years that includes a large proportion of formal teaching in the form of lectures, practicals and small group tutorials.

By the time you reach your final year you will have the skills to learn independently. We improve their practical and critical abilities through the individual research projects they carry out in a working research laboratory over two terms in their final year. In addition to taught courses, York biochemists also attend weekly seminars where cutting-edge research is presented by world-class visiting speakers.

A degree in Biochemistry from York will give you an excellent understanding of the life sciences at the molecular level, with particular emphasis on the chemistry of living systems. Research experience in many diverse topics allows our graduates to progress into either industry or postgraduate study where they can help make significant contributions in areas such as drug discovery, biotechnology and the fight against disease.

There is also the option of spending an extra year on an industrial placement or at a European university or research institute.

Stages

An undergraduate programme of study is divided into a specified number of stages. Each stage is equivalent to a year of full-time study. You must satisfy the requirements for one stage of your programme before being able to progress to the next stage.
Stage 1 (first year)

Your first year in York provides a solid grounding in the Biology and Chemistry required to be a competent Biochemist and is taught across both departments. This includes essential aspects of organic, inorganic and physical chemistry relevant to the understanding of biomolecules and the study of how those molecules function at the molecular and cellular levels. It also includes basic understanding of cell and organismal biology and the genetics that underpins cellular function. The Biochemical skills module provides your first training in the design, execution and presentation of biochemical experiments.

You need to pass stage 1 to progress to stage 2 of your degree programme but stage 1 modules do not count towards your degree mark.

Your stage 1 (first year) programme modules are below and detailed synopses of stage 1 modules are available at the following link:

http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/currentundergraduatestudents/stage1biochemistry/modules2013biochemistrycohort/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Term taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIO00007C Genetics</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Aut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIO00010C Microbiology</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Aut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHE00008C Foundation chemistry I</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Aut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIO00004C Molecular biology and biochemistry</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Aut,Spr,Sum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIO00008C Biochemical skills</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Aut,Spr,Sum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHE00009C Foundation chemistry II</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Spr,Sum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIO00011C Cell and developmental biology</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stage 2 (second year)

In stage 2 you build on stage 1 material to extend your knowledge and deepen your understanding of biochemistry through your choice of modules and tutorials modules in molecular and cellular biology and the structure and function of enzymes you can choose from a number of options including, for example, biomedicine, molecular biotechnology and immunology, to enable preparation for more specialised options in the final year. Tutorials also allow you to work individually and in small group situations on topics that interest you to improve your essay writing and presentational skills. Year 2 also includes a bespoke Biochemical Skills module where you learn about practical methods used to study biochemistry and which includes a popular small group research project.

In the spring term of stage 1 you will select programme modules for stage 2 of your study. You have some choice in your stage 2 programme and the Module Choice Information Handbook provided for you contains information on all modules that will be available throughout stages 2 and 3 of study; the booklet will contain brief outlines of all modules, full outlines will be available on the WEB/VLE.

In stage 2, we hope that you will develop your interests and apply and deepen your knowledge and understanding from the broad introduction provided in stage 1. The
modules you follow in stage 2 will have implications for stage 3 as some stage 3 modules require particular stage 2 modules as prerequisites.

Stage 2 modules counts for 40% of your overall degree mark.

The modules currently available in stage 2 are available at the web link below, but these may change for 2014/15:

http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/currentundergraduatestudents/stage2biochemistry/modul es2012biochemistrycohort/

Optional Year Away

The optional year away runs from the end of your second year to the beginning of your final year and even if you are registered for a three-year degree programme you can change to the four-year programme, but you should do so before the end of the Summer term of stage 1; many placement application deadlines are in September and early October.

Year in industry

This is a unique opportunity to gain first hand research experience in the laboratories of an industrial or research institute employer and to find out what it is like to undertake biological research in an applied setting. You will find out how research is conducted, planned and financed in major institutions and you will become part of an operational research laboratory. If you are interested in (or registered for) this degree you will probably find it useful to look at the detailed information on the main Biology Year-In-Industry web-pages:

http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/currentundergraduatestudents/year-in-industry/

PLEASE NOTE - we cannot guarantee to find a placement for you; in the end it is up to the potential employer whether they hire you or not.

Erasmus Study Placements

You will study at either the University of Aarhus in Denmark, the Universities of Bayreuth or Jena in Germany, the University of Grenoble in France or the Universities of Madrid and Valencia in Spain. Your year abroad is spent between the second and final years of your programme. You will take a range of courses and carry out a project to complement your studies at York.

It is essential to have some knowledge of German, French or Spanish on entry (AS level is the course requirement, except for the exchange to Denmark where teaching is in English). Languages for All courses (2 hours per week), during stage 1 and 2 are compulsory to prepare students for a year in Europe, and we expect students intending to partake in the scheme to achieve a minimum of Level 3 in their chosen language by the end of Term 6. Students with an existing A level in a language are encouraged to continue to Level 4.
The Languages for All website (http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/ltc/lfa/) contains information on registering for courses, availability, times, workload and payment. Students who satisfactorily complete these courses and who are still registered for the Year in Europe degree will be reimbursed the cost of the tuition at the end of their second year of study.

To be eligible for this scheme you will normally be expected to receive a minimum average mark of 50 in the assessments of stage 1.

**Erasmus Laboratory Placements**

As an alternative to a study placement, you can elect for a full-time laboratory placement during your third year, working on a research project in an internationally renowned European laboratory, either in a university or in a research organisation. This scheme is independent of any bilateral exchange agreements, so there will be a wide choice of country and institution available. Since English is the accepted working language in these laboratories, familiarity with the language of the host country is not a prerequisite.

This programme is open to good students who have shown a performance significantly above average (minimum 65 during stage 1).

You will apply to a laboratory of your own choosing, in consultation with your supervisor and the Year-in-Europe co-ordinator, Dr Michael Schultze.

As with the year in Industry we cannot guarantee to find a placement for you. Further information on placements and study abroad is available from the Biology http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/currentundergraduatetestudents/erasmus-scheme/ and Centre for Global Programmes web pages http://www.york.ac.uk/study/study-abroad/.

The optional year away counts for 10% of your degree mark, the combination of the year in York and the year away comprises 40% of the degree, **with the second year (York) counting 30% and the third year (on placement) counting 10%**.

**Exchange programmes outside Europe**

The University has a number of links in North America (U.S.A and Canada), Asia with the University of Hong Kong and the National University of Singapore and Australia with the University of Sydney. These exchanges provide opportunities to spend a year at one of our partner institutions and they do not lengthen the overall period of your studies. The period abroad replaces the Second Year at York for students on three-year degree programmes. Students who are registered for four-year degree programmes in Biology are not eligible for the exchange unless they transfer to a three-year programme.

If you are interested in this scheme look at the Global Exchange Office website.
**Stage 3 (final year)**

In the final year you will take the final steps towards being a fully fledged biochemist by undertaking a substantial 20-week (40 credit) research project, giving you an opportunity to work with one of our many research groups in Biology or Chemistry and gain hands-on research experience. Based on the research and practical skills gained during years 1 and 2, you will choose a unique project, and carry this out independently with supervision by academic staff. Your research work is complemented by a choice of six specialist modules, you will also undertake a 20 credit Research Skills Module.

The purpose of both the project and the skills module is to give you the opportunity to practice many of the transferable and practical skills that you have learnt and which will be of considerable use to you whatever career you follow. Examples of the skills you will develop and use are - project planning, oral presentations, report writing, IT skills (project write-up), statistics, data analysis, problem solving, information gathering, reading and deconstructing scientific papers, critical analysis and essay writing.

Your project is assessed by an 8000 word write up and the research skills module is assessed by two examinations; an open essay paper produced over a number of weeks and a 3 hour comprehension and criticism paper.

If you are interested in the types of projects available to undergraduates, please look at the project pages on our website. Project selection takes place in the summer term at the end of your stage 2 (this will be the end of your placement year for a 4 year student).

Your research work is complemented by a choice of six specialist modules. Stage 3 modules normally reflect the research interests of academic staff and cover a wide range of topics of current interest.

The modules currently planned for your stage 3 are available on-line at: [http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/currentundergraduatesstudents/biochemistry-2010-cohort/modules2011biochemistrycohort/#tab-3](http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/currentundergraduatesstudents/biochemistry-2010-cohort/modules2011biochemistrycohort/#tab-3)

Please note that there will be changes to this list.

**Change of degree programme**

If you should wish to change to another programme within the University, you should discuss the matter with your supervisor as soon as possible. If it is early in your programme it may be possible to complete your new programme after a transfer within your original three years, but if you transfer later, it is usually necessary to start again in stage 1 of your new programme in the following academic year.
Modules

Each stage of your degree programme is made up of modules which you will take. The majority of these will be programme modules, consisting primarily of lectures and practical classes, in which you will work on the major Biological and Chemical subject areas.

Each of the modules you undertake will have a credit value (e.g. 10 credits – 20 credits – etc) and a ‘level’ which indicates the module’s level of difficulty. You will achieve the credit for a module by passing the module assessments. Modules are assessed by a range of methods which will result in a numerical module mark out of 100.

If you fail a module there are two possible ways in which you might be able to still pass your year and progress to the next level; these are compensation and reassessment and are explained in more detail in the Assessment section.

Modules and stages are also subject to credit-weighting; more information on this can be found in the ‘Credit-weighting’ section below.

Compulsory / Optional / Elective modules

Your modules could be comprised of a mixture of compulsory, optional and electives. All your stage 1 modules are compulsory, in stages 2 and 3 you have the opportunity to personalise your degree by selecting a number of ‘optional modules’. The number of optional modules you can take depends on your degree programme. In addition to the Biology and Chemistry modules on offer, across stages 2 and 3, you may choose up to 20 credits of electives (modules from other departments):

www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/manage/programmes/modules/

Choosing modules

You select your stage 2 modules in the spring term of your first year and your stage 3 (final year) modules in the spring term of stage 2 (your second year). Students who participate in one of the year away schemes select final year modules during the placement year. Once you have selected your modules the Department registers your choices and you can check your choices at any time in e:Vision.

Changing modules

Particularly in stage 3, where you have a significant choice of the modules you take, students often ask to change module selections. Please note that you will not be allowed to change modules in any given term after the end of Week 3 of that term, but you may make changes to subsequent terms’ choices. You need to be aware that the timetable is constructed on the basis of student module choice – therefore modules that do not have an overlap of students may become mutually exclusive through timetabling, or may become ‘full’ because of room capacity.
If you wish to change a module you must complete a change of module form available from the Biology Undergraduate Office. Please note that timetable changes and other information from both the administrative offices and academic staff are e-mailed to students officially registered for a module. If you change module without informing the office you will not be on the e-mail list for that module and will not be registered for the assessments attached to the module.

**Credit weighting**

During your programme, your module marks will be weighted in two different ways. Further information on calculating your final degree mark is available under ‘Your final degree classification’ in the ‘Assessment, Progression and Award’ section.

Credit-weighting means, in calculating your average stage mark, each module mark will be given more or less weighting according to the volume of credit (i.e. workload) that is associated with it. The University considers 10 credits to be equal to 100 hours work, comprised of taught classes and private study. You are required to take 360 credits during a three-year programme of study and 480 credits during a four year programme of study; 120 credits of modules across the year.

For further information on credit-weighting, including how you can use it to calculate your marks, consult the Student Guide to the University’s Rules for Progression and Award in Undergraduate programmes:

www.york.ac.uk/media/abouttheuniversity/supportservices/academicregistry/registryservices/Student_guide_to_rules_for_progression_and_awa

**Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) Accreditation**

Biochemistry with a year in industry is accredited by the Society of Biology for the purpose of meeting in part the academic and experience requirement for Membership and Chartered Biologists (C Biol).

**Teaching and Learning**

**Studying at university**

You are now part of a dynamic academic community that will encourage, challenge and support you to reach your full potential.

At university we expect you to take more responsibility for your own learning than before. This means being self motivated and independent when it comes to your studies and your personal development. You will get out of your time at university what you put in.
You will graduate into a world in which you will continually refresh and increase your knowledge. Our aim is to equip you as a life-long learner who can excel in this environment.

We offer the support and the facilities giving you everything you need to become an independent learner who is equipped to succeed in a fulfilling career. In return we expect you to attend your lectures and seminars, research and study your subject areas, complete your assignments and put in the effort, enthusiasm and desire to excel at your studies and master your subject.

**Teaching methods**

Your teaching is delivered by a variety of methods:

**Lectures** provide you with a framework for your whole programme; they are used to deliver knowledge, to interpret and explain difficult concepts and to illustrate their use. In most lecture courses you will find that you need to consolidate your understanding of the content by extra reading between lectures. An important skill to develop is the ability to write a coherent set of notes covering the essential points of each lecture.

For many of you the lecture will be an unfamiliar form of teaching. A good lecture should not be a listing of facts, or dictation of notes, but should give a stimulating and challenging perspective on a subject which encourages you to study further.

You will find that lecturers use a variety of styles to convey information and electronic information sources will also be provided for you to access through Yorkshare – the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) which is a web-based portal for the exchange of academic materials ([http://vle.york.ac.uk](http://vle.york.ac.uk)).

Lectures last for 50 minutes, giving 10 minute breaks between them. This is not possible if the late arrival of students prevents a prompt start to the lectures.

**Practical classes** have several aims. They should make you familiar with practical techniques and they should train you to use these methods precisely, but at the same time assess objectively the errors in your results, and their reliability. Beyond this, particularly later in the programme, you will learn how to plan experiments to solve problems, and this will culminate in your research project in stage 3 of the programme. Demonstrators in the laboratory are there to give advice about your practical technique and to help you to understand the other lessons which can be learned from each experiment.

If information has been provided in advance, it is expected that you will read this carefully, prior to attending the practical session. It is very important to do this for your understanding and enjoyment of the practical work.

You are expected to attend all of your scheduled practical classes and attendance at assessed practical classes (i.e. practical classes during which assessed work is produced) is
compulsory. You cannot submit work and will not be given a mark for an assessed practical you did not attend. Absence from all or part of a practical session (due to illness or other mitigating circumstances) needs to be reported by you (see section on mitigating circumstances for guidelines on this). Practical classes in Chemistry are compulsory and any absence should be communicated to the practical organiser.

Practical work is often performed in groups and the work should be shared between group members. However, all write-ups, including the preparation of graphs and analysis of data must be carried out independently by each member of the group. You are encouraged to co-operate and discuss your work in practical classes, but clearly collusion in assessed work cannot be allowed. The lecturer concerned will clarify the point at which co-operation in your work becomes collusion in the assessment, and any students shown to have knowingly colluded or cheated may face severe penalties.

Pocket calculators can be used during practical sessions, but all other personal electronic equipment (such as laptop computers and mobile phones) should be switched off and remain in your bag/locker.

**Workshops** are structured activities, usually in support of lectures, in which you work in a group under the guidance of a tutor, often supported by demonstrators, who will give you help and advice. The objective of a workshop is to provide you with an opportunity to practise techniques in problem solving, statistics and interpretation of data. Classes emphasise interactive activities, they provide the opportunity to work in groups in which knowledge is shared and judgements and solutions to problems or new situations are made and conclusions are communicated. Classes will also help you to develop decision-making, teamwork, and communication skills.

**Tutorials** provide the opportunity for a group of four or five students to study and discuss a wide variety of topics with a tutor. In stage 1 you will have seven tutorials with your pastoral supervisor across the course of the year. These tutorials are part of the “Biochemical Skills 1” module, but do not link explicitly to lecture-based material. Their intention is to enhance your understanding of some of the topics covered in the first year, but also to improve your skills in areas such as written and oral communication, quantitative problem-solving skills and searching for information from the scientific literature and other databases. In weeks where you do not have a Biology tutorial, you will normally have a Chemistry tutorial.

Your stage 1 Chemistry tutorials will be devoted to discussing and developing ideas through largely problem-oriented exercises in specific lecture programmes as they arise. There is a group of tutors within Chemistry who form a ‘Biochemistry College’. For Chemistry tutorials it is the responsibility of each tutorial group to comply with tutorial notices that are put up on the notice boards. You will normally be tutored in the same group of four or five students to enable a close working relationship to be built up with each other and with
tutors. You should consult with other members of your group and make joint decisions before signing up for the tutorial at least a week before the event.

In the second year, you will have six tutorials in the autumn, seven in the spring term, plus one in the summer term to give feedback on essays produced over the Easter vacation. These are part of the module “Biochemical Skills 2”. In the autumn and spring terms the tutorials will cover research topics selected by the students. These tutorials will involve critical reading of scientific papers, oral presentations, and preparation of an extended essay over the Easter vacation. In the summer term the tutorials will be used to provide detailed feedback on the extended essay completed over the Easter vacation.

You will find that the styles of tutorials are as diverse as the personalities of the tutors, but as a general guideline, you are expected to spend at least six to eight hours per week in preparation for tutorials, and to submit two pieces of written tutorial work during the term (for a set of six tutorials), at least one of which should be an essay.

Since tutorials depend largely on the students for their success, it is most important that you have the enthusiasm to raise questions that interest you, and the courage to explain your difficulties, however stupid they may seem. Not only will you get more from the tutorial this way, you may also help others in the group. Tutors always appreciate a group willing to contribute their own ideas.

You will find the document ‘Written work – what is the purpose of it?’ on our web pages: http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/currentundergraduatestudents/tutorials/. This document is intended to help you define more precisely what is expected in written work, particularly in tutorials and how this will benefit your academic career at York.

**Code of conduct in lectures and practical classes**

We have a code of conduct for both lecture and practical classes that we expect you to pay particular attention to and which is detailed below:

- You should arrive in plenty of time to take your place before a lecture or practical class is due to start. If, for some reason, you are unable to arrive on time you should enter as quietly as possible by the rear entrance.
- Eating and drinking is not allowed in lecture theatres, laboratories, or other teaching rooms. Eating and drinking in computer rooms may result in your access to Biology computers being withdrawn.
- Talking in a lecture is distracting for the lecturer and for other students. Don’t do it.
- Inappropriate use of mobile phones, music players, or similar devices in lectures, workshops, or practical classes is not permitted. It is distracting to others, including the lecturer, and shows that you are not giving your attention to the lecture. This applies, obviously, to sending and receiving emails/text messages as well as to spoken conversations.
- **Switch off your mobile phone before the session starts.**
Any recording is for personal use only and must not be distributed or circulated in any way. All recordings must be destroyed at the end of a module. Recordings should be audio only unless there is good reason for a video recording and this is agreed with the lecturer. Any contravention of these regulations is a disciplinary matter.

Pocket calculators can be used during practical sessions, but all other personal electronic equipment should be switched off and remain in your bag/locker.

If descriptions have been provided in advance, it is expected that you will read these carefully prior to attending the practical session. It is very important to do this for your understanding and enjoyment of the practical work.

You are expected to attend all of your scheduled practical classes: attendance at assessed practicals is compulsory, and you will not be given a mark for an assessed practical you did not attend. Absence from all or part of a practical session (due to illness or other extenuating circumstances) needs to be reported by the student through the Biology Undergraduate Office using the formal procedure for assessed sessions.

Practical work is often performed in groups and the work should be shared between group members. However, all write-ups, including the preparation of graphs and analysis of data must be carried out independently by each member of the group.

Attendance

Tutorials are a compulsory component of the programme. Feedback from former students highlights tutorials as one of the most valuable parts of your programme and they work best when all students engage actively. If you are unwell and unable to attend a tutorial, please email your tutor and the Undergraduate Office to let them know and self-certify your illness in evision.

Lecture attendance is very strongly advised; you will be less well prepared for your examinations if you do not attend. Apart from specific lecture material a lot of general module information is disseminated in lectures.

Practical classes are an essential component of a Biology degree. Some practical classes are ‘assessed’ i.e. they generate practical work that is submitted for assessment and counts towards your progression or degree. You will be notified which of the practical sessions are ‘assessed’ at the beginning of the module, these are compulsory and an attendance register will be taken. Absence from all or part of a practical session (due to illness or other extenuating circumstances) needs to be reported by the student through the University Mitigating Circumstance procedure, forms for this are available from the Biology Undergraduate Office or on-line (see section on mitigating circumstances). You should also inform the practical organiser that you will be missing the session. Chemistry also expects students to self-certificate if they miss a chemistry practical through illness.
**Assessments/Examinations** are compulsory. Absence from an assessment, due to illness or other extenuating circumstance, needs to be reported through the University Mitigating Circumstance procedure, forms for this are available from the Biology Undergraduate Office or on-line.

**Absence**

If you need to be absent during term-time you must consult your Supervisor who can permit an absence of no more than three days. An absence of over three days, but no longer than four weeks, can be approved by the Chair of the Board of Studies. Any longer absence during a term which will be counted towards completion of your degree programme requires the approval of Special Cases Committee. See the information on taking a Leave of Absence in the ‘Change Your Plan’ section of ‘Your Course’.

If you stop turning up to scheduled teaching sessions without saying you are withdrawing and do not respond to our efforts to make contact with you within a specified time-scale, the Board of Studies will assume that you have withdrawn from your studies. For further information on the decision process, visit: [www.york.ac.uk/staff/supporting-students/issues/academic/taught/withdrawing/](http://www.york.ac.uk/staff/supporting-students/issues/academic/taught/withdrawing/)

If you are unable to attend due to illness please see section below on Self certification. If you are having problems with completing your studies please see the section on Assessment - Mitigating Circumstances.

**What if I am ill and cannot attend scheduled teaching sessions**

If you are unwell for up to seven consecutive days during term-time you should register your illness, either through your e:Vision account or by completing an ‘illness self-certificate’ form and forwarding it to the Student Support Hub.

For further information, including self-certification forms, visit: [www.york.ac.uk/students/support/health/](http://www.york.ac.uk/students/support/health/) or see the University handbook

If your illness interferes with your studies see the section on Mitigating Circumstance under Assessment.
Academic integrity – compulsory exercise to complete in term one

Academic integrity represents a set of values and behaviours which members of the academic community abide by. To be a trusted member of this academic community you must understand and demonstrate academic integrity in your studies and the work you produce. Such values include honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Please note: You are required to successfully complete the University Online Academic Integrity Tutorial within your first year, preferably within your first term to progress smoothly onto your next term. The tutorial can be found on the VLE; more information is available on www.york.ac.uk/integrity. This module will take you through key principles around referencing, and how to avoid things like plagiarism and collusion. The Biology Department does not insist that you follow one specific referencing method, using either the Harvard or Vancouver method is fine. Using correct methods of referencing will be covered in your tutorials and first year skills sessions.

If you do not uphold the values and conventions of academic integrity and conform, you may be subject to the University’s academic misconduct procedures.

Academic misconduct

Academic misconduct means breaking the rules of academic integrity and this is why we regard any form of academic misconduct is viewed as a very serious offence.

For a list of what the University considers as academic misconduct, visit: www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/registry-services/academic-misconduct/

Ethics

There is an Ethics Committee in Biology whose remit is to ensure that our research and teaching activities conform to the highest ethical standards; undergraduate students can be members of this committee. Further information on the activities of the committee and a link to the Universal Ethical Code for Scientists is available at: http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/ethics/.

Ethics may also be covered in tutorials, skills teaching and project work.
Study skills and support

Managing your workload through private study

Teaching at York is done by academic experts who will introduce you to academic subject areas, key concepts and outline your learning objectives. You are responsible for researching, studying and managing your own learning.

Independent learning means you are expected to do the work involved to prepare for lectures, seminars and tutorials and to produce assignments and exams based on your studies.

You will need to plan your time carefully and be aware of timescales and deadlines for assessments, projects and exams.

We know that adjusting to new ways of working and having to produce work at this level in accordance with the many academic rules and regulations can be daunting. However, your tutors and your supervisors are there to assist and we have the support in place through the Student Skills Hub to help you gain any additional skills you might need with your maths, academic writing and referencing, IT or languages. See the section below on Student Skills Hub.

In planning your work you should bear in mind that each 1 credit = 10 hours work, partially made up of contact time in lectures and practicals but also including a large amount of private study and many students find that they get more out of their subject by putting in more than the minimum amount of effort, those who don’t often struggle with the assessments. Within your pattern of work each week, you would expect in Year 1 to spend 10 hours attending lectures, 8 hours on practicals, 1 hour attending your tutorial with perhaps 5 hours spent in reading and preparing written work for it, and, on average, 2 - 3 hours preparing for practicals/workshops. This still leaves a significant amount of time to follow-up on each lecture and for private reading.

You should plan a pattern of work which suits you, though we would recommend that it includes the number of hours to be spent preparing tutorial work, going through lecture notes, reading a text book to enhance understanding, etc. It is important for such a weekly plan to be realistic, and that you do not leave all your work until the last minute. Remember that a “normal working week” is not restricted to the hours 09.00 till 17.00 on five days: you may need to commit some evenings and weekends to study. Whatever you decide is best for you, try to stick to your programme, both during term time and vacations. If you are struggling with your study skills you should discuss this with your supervisor.
In order to help you in preparing for your stage 1 assessments, specimen papers and copies of past years’ examination papers are available on the web and various exercises are available on the VLE module sites. Working through past examination questions is a worthwhile and helpful exercise, this will help you to focus your revision.

We hope that during your time here you will develop skills which can be widely applied in life. The talk or essay you prepare for a tutorial will help to develop general skills of verbal and written communication. Your laboratory practicals help similarly to develop numeracy and dexterity; and in some practicals you will work and be assessed in groups to help you develop team-working skills. All these can help you in your future career.

University vacations are not holidays (although they contain some holiday time) and they provide quiet periods when you can catch up with your private study, reviewing the previous term’s work, expanding your understanding in areas that interest you, and preparing for the assessment tests that sometimes fall at the start of term.

**Reading lists**
These are available in all the module VLE sites and recommended reading may be suggested in lectures.

**Library**

[www.york.ac.uk/library](http://www.york.ac.uk/library)

For an introduction to using the University Library and its resources, visit: [www.york.ac.uk/library/informationfor/newusers](http://www.york.ac.uk/library/informationfor/newusers)

This includes, amongst other things, information on using the library catalogue, your library account, online induction resources and opening hours.

The University Library is open 24 hours a day, 362 days a year. For general help, contact the Library Help Desk in the JB Morrell Library.

Email: lib-enquiry@york.ac.uk

Tel: +44 (0)1904 323873

Your Academic Liaison Librarian is Martin Wilkinson. He can help you search effectively for resources, understand how to use and evaluate these and how to reference your work correctly. He can be contacted at martin.wilkinson@york.ac.uk.

Further details on your Academic Liaison Librarian and your subject guide can be found at: [http://subjectguides.york.ac.uk/biology](http://subjectguides.york.ac.uk/biology)
Online resources – IT services, VLE and others

Yorkshare is York’s Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), a system of managed web pages that provides you with access to learning resources and allows you the means to communicate and collaborate with other students and staff over the Internet. VLEs are becoming an increasingly important part of learning, improving flexibility of study for home and distance learners and enhancing the learning process through increased feedback, access to resources and interaction with your peers and teaching staff. You should have received the ‘Getting Started with Yorkshare’ document in September and we hope you have spent some time looking through the site.

Each Biology module has its own ‘site’ and you will be able to access booklists, lecture information, power point presentations and various electronic learning resources that we hope will help you with your studies. The module sites also contain module synopses (for module aims and learning outcomes and information on lecture topics and staff teaching on the module) and copies of past examination papers with specimen answers.

There is also a Biology ‘preparing to study site’ available in the VLE.

The student homepage provides you with personalised content, including your timetable, library record, news and links to your department and college web sites.

e:Vision provides you with electronic access to data held about you in the student record system and allows you to maintain your own address and contact details. If you change address or telephone number you can use e:Vision to notify the University of the changes. You have an obligation to ensure that your personal data is up-to-date and accurate and you should notify the appropriate person within the University where data held on the system is not correct.

You are also able to check on the modules you are taking, access your module marks and personal examination timetables.

Students have an obligation to keep their security details (e.g. password) for accessing this data confidential and not to disclose them to anyone else. Accessing another user’s account is expressly prohibited in the terms of the University’s Ordinances & Regulations (see regulation 11):

http://www.york.ac.uk/about/organisation/governance/governance-documents/ordinances-and-regulations/regulation-11/

Where inaccurate information is provided deliberately to the University either via the system or in some other manner this will be reported to the Academic Registrar and may constitute a disciplinary offence.
For information on the facilities and services IT Services provides, consult your University handbook or visit: www.york.ac.uk/it-services/

Departmental study support

Departmental study support is integrated into your teaching and learning programmes specifically through tutorials, workshops and other skills sessions. If you feel the need for further support you should discuss this with your supervisor and look at the section below on the student skills hub.

Student Skills Hub

The Student Skills Hub offers a variety of ways to help you gain the necessary skills to study and deliver work at undergraduate level and beyond. There are many opportunities to develop a wide range of skills in York, across many disciplines. Many of these are free of charge and will look great as part of your personal development to future employers. These include:

- Academic study skills
- Information skills
- Maths and numeracy skills
- IT skills
- Language skills
- Transferable skills

For further information, visit: www.york.ac.uk/student-skills-hub

Languages for All (LFA)

If you want to brush up your language skills or take up a new language, Languages for All runs classes every term to help you do just that.

During your time as an undergraduate at York, you’ll have the exciting opportunity to learn a foreign language for free. For further details including how to register, visit: www.york.ac.uk/lfa

Centre for English Language Teaching (CELT)

The Centre for English Language Teaching provides a variety of term time classes and summer courses for intermediate and advanced level English language support.

Visit: www.york.ac.uk/celt
**Accessibility and Disability Support**

Please let the department know as soon as possible if you have a disability and may require support. You can discuss this with your supervisor and copies of any documentation you have, i.e. Assessments of Needs etc should be given to the Biology Undergraduate Office and Disability Services. Dr Sangeeta Chawla is the Biology Disability Officer. If you wish to discuss the arrangements that will be put in place to help you manage your studies please contact her on sangeeta.chawla@york.ac.uk, her phone number is 01904 328575 (ext 8575 if an internal call) and her office is D 103.

Disability Services can provide support, advice and guidance for those with a diagnosed disability, including: dyslexia and specific learning difficulties; aspergers syndrome; visual and hearing impairment and physical/medical impairments amongst others. All students with disabilities are encouraged to contact them to discuss meeting your individual needs.

For further information, visit: [www.york.ac.uk/students/support/disability/](http://www.york.ac.uk/students/support/disability/)

You may also require individual arrangements for formal examinations. See the information provided on formal examinations in the Assessment section for further information.

**Prizes, Bursaries and Scholarships**

**First Year**
Prize of £200 for the best academic performance in the first year

**Second Year**
Prize of £200 for the best academic performance to the end of the second year

The Society for General Microbiology awards a £100 prize to the second year student with the highest overall mark for modules in Microbiology, Immunology and Biotechnology.

**Final Year**
The Oxford University Press Prize for the most improved student (£100)

The prize for the best final year project (£200)

Biology Head of Department’s prize for the best all-round contribution to the life of the Department (£200)

For further information on bursaries and scholarships offered by the University, see the University handbook.
Activities and Societies

There are many opportunities at York to get involved with societies and extra-curricular activities both related and unrelated to your course. There is an active Biosciences Society run by Biology and Biochemistry students, the students enjoy a variety of social and sporting activities, as well as arranging scientific events such as a seminar program.

For a full list of societies and activities provided by YUSU, visit: www.yusu.org/activities

Departmental talks

Two or three times in the Autumn, Spring term and early Summer terms, York Biology Lectures will be given by eminent biologists visiting the University. These are aimed at a non-specialist audience and you are strongly encouraged to attend. These lectures are highlighted on your timetable.

There are a number of lunchtime seminar groups which meet regularly once a week during term time; each covers a particular area of research interest. These are primarily intended for final year undergraduates, research students, post-doctoral staff and lecturers, but first and second year undergraduates may also find them of interest and are welcome to come to any of the seminars. The seminar programmes are posted around the Department and are also available on the Department of Biology web pages: http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/news-events/seminars/.
Assessment, Progression and Award

Guide to Assessment

The University’s guide to Assessment Standards, Marking and Feedback contains the University’s formal procedures relating to the conduct of assessment. It provides clear and detailed information on each aspect of student assessment and is a useful resource if you want to know more about how your work is assessed.

For further information, visit: www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/registry-services/guide/

Assessment methods

You will encounter two types of assessment during your time at University: formative and summative.

Formative assessment is there to help you develop. While it may not contribute to your final degree mark, it will help you learn more effectively – you will be provided with feedback on this type of assessment which will help you improve your performance.

Summative assessment takes into account the extent of your success in meeting the assessment criteria and how well you have fulfilled the learning outcomes of a particular module or programme. This type of assessment will contribute to your final degree mark or towards progression decisions.

Assessment format

You will be asked to completed a diverse range of assessments in the modules you follow. The form of assessment may vary from short answer or multiple-choice tests under closed conditions (closed examinations), to essays, small projects or written accounts of your practical work (assessed practical work). Problem based questions, oral presentations or posters may also form part of your assessment. Some modules have a combination of open and closed assessments, some modules have closed assessments only and some will be based on posters, projects or practical write-ups. In stage 1 closed assessments will be comprised of ‘short answer questions’ of varying length and level of difficulty. In Stage 2 there will be a mixture of short answers, methodology questions, problem questions and a short essay. In Stage 3 there will methodology questions, problem questions and essays.

At the beginning of each module you will be informed of the type of assessments to expect. Where more than one type of assessment is involved, the marks from the various components will be combined (weighted appropriately) to provide an overall mark for the module. The VLE module site will hold information on assessments formats, deadlines and submission information for that module. A general open assessment timetable is also available on the Biology examination and assessment web pages.
Sample assessment papers for all modules (accompanied by specimen answers) are available on the Biology WEB pages at:
http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/currentundergraduatestudents/common-pages/past-papers/.

These are useful as a guide to the type of questions that will be asked in your closed assessment and as practice papers to use for revision purposes.

**Submission of work**

This is managed in a variety of ways:

- Closed examination papers are collected at the end of the assessment;

- Practical work completed in your own time will normally be handed into the Biology Undergraduate Office by a specific date and time or submitted at the end of the practical or submitted to the VLE. For work submitted to the VLE the submission deadline time will be 12 midnight on the given date. Under no circumstances should you leave work with any other office in Biology apart from the Biology Undergraduate Office.

- All work submitted for assessment (except for your stage 3 research project) must be identified by an examination candidate number. Do not put your name on your work.

*Only work submitted according to the given instructions will be marked.*

**Extensions for assessed work**

Any extensions to deadlines for assessed work must be applied for through the mitigating circumstance procedure.

**Style Guide**

Style guides and marking criteria for all assessed work are available on our web pages at the link below:

http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/currentundergraduatestudents/common-pages/markingcriteria/

**Penalties**

Knowing how to manage your time, write succinctly and provide a complete and comprehensive piece of work to a strict deadline are skills you will develop at university. In the interests of fairness, transparency and to be equitable we have strict rules around deadlines and the quality or quantity of work submitted and have clear penalties for any student where these rules are not followed.
All work submitted late, without valid mitigating circumstances, will have ten percent of the available marks deducted for each day (or part of each day) that the work is late, up to a total of five days, including weekends and bank holidays, eg if work is awarded a mark of 30 out of 50, and the work is up to one day late, the final mark is 25.

After five days, the work is marked at zero. Note, however, that the penalty cannot result in a mark less than zero.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Submitted</th>
<th>Penalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>10% deducted from available mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>20% deducted from available mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>30% deducted from available mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 days</td>
<td>40% deducted from available mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>Work marked at zero</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For some pieces of open assessment there may also be penalties for a high / low word count. If this applies the information will be provided to you with the information on the work to be submitted.

**Failure to submit**

If you fail to submit an assessment within 5 days of the deadline or fail to attend an examination, and there are no mitigating circumstances, a mark of zero will be awarded. You may be given the opportunity for reassessment – see the section on reassessment. However, if the examination or assessment missed is already a re-sit or re-assessment to redeem an initial failure, no further re-assessment opportunities will be available without proof of mitigating circumstances.

If you are struggling to meet deadlines, submit a piece of work or will miss an exam due to personal circumstances you will need to inform the University as soon as possible and apply for mitigating circumstances – See section on Mitigating Circumstances.

**Formal Examination requirements**

For information on the University’s formal examination requirements, consult your University handbook or visit: [www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/assessment-and-examination/](http://www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/assessment-and-examination/)

Individual examination arrangements may be approved for students who are unable to sit formal University examination conditions as a result of a disability or other condition. It is important to note that such arrangements must be in place at least six weeks prior to the exam in question, so it is essential that students requiring individual arrangements contact Disability Services as soon as possible in order to ensure that adjustments can be made.

Visit: [www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/assessment-and-examination/disability/making/](http://www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/assessment-and-examination/disability/making/)
External Examiners

The purpose of the University’s external examining system is:

- to ensure that its assessment policies and procedures are fair and fairly operated, and that the principles of clarity, equity, consistency and openness are observed;
- to ensure that assessment methods are appropriate;
- to ensure that the structure and content of programmes of study are appropriate;
- to ensure comparability of standards with other similar institutions.

The Department of Biology has four External Examiners who cover the breadth or all our programmes:

Professor Julie Gray (Sheffield), Genetics
Professor Andrew Jarman (Edinburgh), Molecular cell biology
Dr Libby John (Lincoln), Ecology
Professor Frank Sargent (Dundee), Biochemistry

It is inappropriate to make direct contact with external examiners, in particular regarding your performance in assessments. If you have any issues or concerns you can register these through appeal (see below) or complaint (see above under Your Department). All students are invited to share their opinions of teaching and assessment with the External Examiners when they visit York in the summer term, through informal meetings.

Feedback on assessment

‘Feedback’ at a University level can be understood as any part of the learning process which is designed to guide your progress through your degree programme. We aim to help you reflect on your own learning and help you feel more clear about your progress through clarifying what is expected of you in both formative and summative assessments.

A comprehensive guide to feedback and to forms of feedback is available in the Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback.

It is very important that you know how well you are doing on your course, so understanding how you are assessed and giving you useful feedback on your work is essential. The main assessment and feedback routes are:

Module marks tell you how you did in each module, and the overall distribution enables you to judge your performance relative to the class. All stage 1 and 2 work is returned to you. We believe that feedback on performance in the stage 1 and 2 assessments is important to your learning process, and we have the agreement of the University to return this work to you after marking. All returned work will have a mark appended and you will be informed of the overall mark you achieved for the module. An explanation of the marking scale used for assessment is at the end of this section.
You must retain your assessed work in an orderly portfolio that is always available for recall so that it can be further scrutinised by internal or external examiners if required. You are expected to comply promptly with any requests for material to be returned. In some instances, failure to return scripts to the Department when required to do so could result in the loss of marks. *Please note that a selection of work from across the range of achievement is photocopied by the Department before it is returned, and that these photocopies are retained for quality assurance purposes.* Your module marks will also be available to your supervisor who will be able to discuss them with you.

Stage 3 examination papers are not returned to you; however you will be allowed access to your autumn term final year scripts in order to benefit from the markers comments.

Specimen answers to examination papers, posted on the web, mean you can see clearly what was expected of you. For each module the markers will give general feedback on how well the questions were answered and point out any standard common errors that students may have made. See WEB link below:

http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/currentundergraduatestudents/common-pages/past-papers/

**Tutorial reports** on how you did in your term’s tutorials. These are written by your tutor at the end of each set of tutorials and sent to your Supervisor who will provide you with a copy.

**What marks on a script mean**

Where marks are entered on individual scripts indication will be given as to which is the final overall mark, using the 0-100 scale.

**How is my work marked**

Work will be marked by the question setters and may be marked against specimen answers (i.e. questions in stage 1 and 2 assessments are marked by question setters); double marked (i.e. by two members of staff, this applies to final year closed and open essays) and blind double marked (i.e. independently by two members of staff, this applies to final year research projects). External examiners are also given the opportunity to review student scripts. Where more than one marker is involved in the marking process, they have to come to agreement on the mark to be awarded. If they cannot agree on the final mark a third marker is asked to review the script.

Marking guidelines / criteria for all levels of open and closed assessments are available on the Biology examination and assessment web pages:

http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/currentundergraduatestudents/common-pages/markingcriteria/
How can I tell if I’m making progress

The Student Guide to Rules for Progression and Award in Undergraduate Programmes clarifies what we mean by ‘academic progress’. They explain what you need to do to progress through your degree programme and how you can calculate your current classification marks along the way.

www.york.ac.uk/media/abouttheuniversity/supportservices/academicregistry/registryservices/Student_guide_to_rules_for_progression_and_awards_in_ug_programmes.pdf

What happens if I fail a module

There are two possible ways in which you may be able to still pass your year and progress to the next level.

Compensation

For modules in levels 1, 2 and 3, the pass mark for module assessments is 40. However, if your mark for a module is in the 30 – 39 range, you may still be able to get the credits for the module if your performance in other modules is good enough to compensate. In other words, ‘marginal’ failure in some modules may be compensated by achievement in others.

Reassessment

If you get a module mark below 30 (or 40 for Masters-level modules) this cannot be compensated and you will have to be reassessed. However, there is a limit to the number of credits failed below 30 (or 40 for Masters level) in which you can be reassessed. If you get a mark between 30 and 39 (or 40 and 49 for Masters-level modules) and you are not eligible for compensation, you may also need to be reassessed in those modules.

Please note that not all module components can be reassessed. For example if you did not attend an assessed practical class it may not be possible for you to resubmit that component.

For further information on compensation and reassessment, see the Student Guide to the University’s Rules for Progression and Award in Undergraduate Programmes.

http://www.york.ac.uk/media/abouttheuniversity/supportservices/academicregistry/registryservices/Student_guide_to_rules_for_progression_and_awards_in_ug_programmes.pdf
Resits, repeats and readmission

- If you have failed or missed an examination or piece of open assessment because of medical or compassionate circumstances the department may request permission for you to take the examination again ‘as if for the first time’, which means discounting the failed or missed attempt.

- If you want to repeat part of your degree programme then you will need to show that you have personal circumstances which mean that you did not benefit from the teaching the first time.

- If you have to leave your programme because you have failed the year then you will not be permitted to restart the same programme at the University of York.

For further information, visit: [www.york.ac.uk/students/support/academic/taught/resits/](http://www.york.ac.uk/students/support/academic/taught/resits/)

You will need to submit evidence of mitigating circumstances to qualify for resits and repeats. See ‘Mitigating Circumstances’ below.

Procedures for unsatisfactory performance

The failure (a mark of 39% or less) of any module assessment triggers a warning letter reminding you of the rules for progression into the next stage of your programme.

You will be required to see your supervisor to discuss your progress and to identify the reasons for the failure so that they can be addressed. If you have any mitigating circumstances you should make sure you follow the correct procedure for notifying the Board of this.

If poor attendance at lectures and practicals is identified as an issue the Chair of the Board of Studies may decide to place you on report (see below).

Tutorials are compulsory, students who fail to attend tutorials without good reason or who, in the judgment of the Board of Studies, fail to apply sufficient effort to the completion of tutorial assignments may also be put on report. Missing two tutorial sessions without giving your tutor an acceptable reason will trigger an informal warning (usually an email). Missing three tutorial sessions without giving your tutor an acceptable reason will trigger a formal warning (usually an email, letter and a request for you to discuss this with your supervisor). Further missed tutorial sessions will result in you being placed on report.

The Board of Studies reserves the right to vary the above in the light of extenuating circumstances.
Report procedure

It will quickly become obvious to the Board of Studies if you are struggling with your studies. We will be made aware of poor attendance from your tutors, practical class organisers, your submission (or lack of) of assessed work during the term and from module assessment results. The Chair of the Board of Studies may decide that being 'on report' will help you improve your performance.

If you are put on report you will be required to record your attendance at all your lectures, practicals and tutorials, on a weekly basis. Your attendance at each class must be signed for by the member of staff giving the lecture etc, immediately after the class has finished, not retrospectively at a later date. At the end of each week (by 5.00pm on the Friday), the signed form must be handed in to the Biology Undergraduate Office who will check that you have attended all your taught classes.

In the past we have found some students have benefited from this system - it has helped if they have struggled with self-organisation, and if lack of application / motivation and poor attendance has been a problem some students have found the discipline of being 'on report' has helped with this.

Failure to meet the conditions of the Report Procedure (after due written warning) will constitute grounds for a recommendation to Special Cases Committee that their programme be terminated.

Programme extensions and termination

A programme extension can be recommended where a student cannot complete the programme within a normal timescale because of mitigating circumstances. If you find yourself in this situation, talk to your supervisor.

If you are academically unsatisfactory the Board of Studies can recommend that your programme is ended before its normal end date. This may be due to reasons such as poor attendance (without good reason) or through having failed so much of the programme that it is no longer possible to graduate.

Further information can be found at www.york.ac.uk/students/support/academic/taught/programme/

Also, see ‘Mitigating Circumstances’ for any other circumstances which may affect you undertaking any assessments.
Mitigating Circumstances

If circumstances in your life significantly affect you undertaking any assessments (including examinations) then you can submit what we call 'mitigating circumstances' to the department. The mitigating circumstances policy is available at: www.york.ac.uk/staff/supporting-students/issues/academic/taught/mitigation/

For a list of the circumstances that are normally accepted and not accepted, visit: https://www.york.ac.uk/media/studenthome/supportwelfareandhealth/academicprogress/documents/3%20%20Acceptability%20of%20circs.pdf

If your claim is successful, and the committee accept that your assessment was significantly affected by your circumstances you will usually be given an opportunity to take the assessment again as if for the first time. If it is an open assessment then you may be given an extension. Grades will never be altered without a further attempt at the assessment, and work will not be ‘re-marked’, though you may be allowed to re-submit it following revisions.

Please note: it is very important that submit your case for Mitigating Circumstances as soon as possible, preferably BEFORE the assessment which you believe may have been affected.

Visit: www.york.ac.uk/students/support/academic/mitigation/

Making an Appeal

You can appeal against a procedural error in arriving at an academic decision or on the basis of mitigating circumstances that the examiners didn’t know about (see above) or a procedural irregularity in the assessment.

However, you cannot appeal against an academic judgement of your work (this is the marker’s opinion under the Academic Appeals procedure).

For further details on both terms and how to appeal, visit: www.york.ac.uk/students/help/appeals/

Assistance with appeals and representation at hearings is also available through the Students’ Union Advice and Support Centre. All communication is confidential and free. For further information, visit: www.yusu.org/advice-and-support
Your final degree classification

The University applies the following mark scale to undergraduate work:

First-class Honours: 70-100
Upper second-class Honours: 60-69
Lower second-class Honours: 50-59
Third-class Honours: 40-49
Fail: 0-39

A different mark scale is used for masters-level modules, including any taken as part of an undergraduate programme. The pass mark for masters-level modules is 50. If you are on an Integrated Masters programme, you will have to undertake some masters-level modules in the later stages of your programme. Some modules at this level may also be available as options in some Bachelors programmes. You should be aware of the higher level and pass mark for such modules when deciding whether to take them as options.

For information on calculating your degree classification, see the Student Guide to the University’s Rules for Progression and Award in Undergraduate Programmes. [link]

Criteria for the award of a First class degree with distinction:

Overall integer mark of ≥ 80%

An integer mark of ≥ 70% in the following 5 components of the course:

Stage 2 credit weighted average
Stage 3 taught modules – combined average x 6 taught modules
Stage 3 Research skills module
Stage 3 project
Placement mark where relevant

Personal Development and Employability

Careers

Developing your employability is about extending skills, making contacts, broadening ideas, and understanding how to gain and use your experiences to enhance your future prospects. It is a good idea to start exploring career options in your first year.

Around 70% of our graduates go on to study for a higher degree or pursue a scientific career.

Employment opportunities are diverse, ranging from biological and biomedical research and development, to careers in science communication, the health service, forensic science, environmental health and wildlife conservation. Our graduates are not confined to science-
related careers, and a significant number enter jobs within finance, public and private sector management, social and health service work, the media and law.

To get more of an idea of some of the career routes some of our graduates have taken, visit our Alumni pages:

http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/careers/ug-careers/alumni/

Dani Ungar (dani.ungar@york.ac.uk) and Hilary Jones (hilary.jones@york.ac.uk) offer Departmental Careers Advice in Biology.

Hilary holds regular lunchtime careers drop-in sessions near Cookies coffee bar in the concourse and organises a number of careers events throughout the year, culminating in a Careers Fair at the end of the summer term.

Further information is available on our careers web pages:

http://www.york.ac.uk/biology/intranet/careers/

or you can contact Hilary directly if you’d like a one-to-one chat about your careers ideas, either by email or phone on 01904 328750

The University’s Employability tutorial enables you to assess your skills, research career options and access guidance on how to gain experience and develop new skills to prepare for your future.

It can be accessed via the VLE: http://vle.york.ac.uk

For further information on Careers and employability, visit: www.york.ac.uk/careers or see the University handbook.

**Personal Development Planning (PDP)**

As you work through the Employability Tutorial, you will complete your Employability Plan. You should discuss this with your supervisor on an annual basis; they will arrange a time for this. This is a great opportunity for you to reflect on your personal, academic and professional development and plan for the future.

Your supervisor should:

- encourage you to think through and articulate personal ambitions and possible career paths
- encourage you to think about the skills and attributes you will need to develop and demonstrate in order to achieve your personal, academic and professional aims
- encourage you to seek relevant advice and guidance on these matters from other academic staff, the Careers Service, the College System and YUSU and signpost development that is available within and beyond the curriculum.