BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING, PHD THROUGH THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Biomedical Engineering has emerged as one of the most exciting interdisciplinary research fields in modern science. Biomedical engineers apply modern approaches from the experimental life sciences in conjunction with theoretical and computational methods from the disciplines of engineering, mathematics, and computer science to the solution of biomedical problems of fundamental importance. The Biomedical Engineering Graduate Program of Johns Hopkins University is designed to train engineers to work at the cutting edge of this exciting discipline.

The cornerstone of the program is our belief in the importance of in-depth training of students in life sciences, modern engineering, mathematics, computer science, and in the conduct of original research leading to the doctoral dissertation. In-depth training in life sciences is achieved in one of two ways. Typically, incoming Ph.D. students enroll in the first year basic sciences curriculum of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. That is, they learn human biology with the medical students. This is a unique and intensive curriculum covering a broad range of topics including molecules and cells, human anatomy, immunology, physiology, and neuroscience. Students choosing this option typically devote their entire first academic year to these courses. This curriculum is an excellent way to build a broad and solid foundation in the life sciences. Alternatively, students may elect alternative life sciences curricula. These curricula have been carefully designed to provide training in areas of the life sciences that are appropriate to each of the program’s research areas. This option is of particular value to students who enter the program having a strong background in the life sciences. In-depth training in engineering, mathematics, and computer science is achieved through elective courses that are taken in the second year.

All students are admitted with full financial support. This covers tuition and provides a modest stipend for the duration of their Ph.D. Because the students are fully funded, they can choose to perform their dissertation in essentially any laboratory in the University (subject to the approval of the Program directors). A special program with the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institute of Health (NIH) allows students to also choose from research laboratories at the NIH.

Students typically do research rotations during the summer before start of the first academic semester, during the first year (typically as they are taking medical school courses), and during the following summer year. They are expected to choose a research laboratory before the start of the second academic year.

Emphasis is placed on original research leading to the doctoral dissertation. The research is usually experimental in nature, and students are expected to learn biological experimentation techniques. Nevertheless, experiment or theory can be emphasized in the research as desired by the student.

Financial Aid

Fellowships for tuition and support stipends (regardless of citizenship or national origin) are available from the general funds of the university. U.S. citizens and Permanent Residents are eligible for support from training grants from the NIH. Students are encouraged to apply for individual fellowships from the National Science Foundation and for NRSA awards from the NIH. Only online applications for admission are accepted and must be received by December 1.

Admission

The School of Medicine program accepts applications for the Ph.D. program until December 1 of each year. We typically recruit students in five areas: Computational Biology, Imaging, Tissue Engineering, Neural engineering, and Molecular, Neural, and Cardiac physiology (MNCP). The program is unique in that it offers the BME student the strengths of one of the best medical schools in the world. If you wish to combine engineering with cutting edge research in medicine, this may be the program for you.

In their first year, our students have the option of taking many of the same courses as the medical students, including human anatomy, molecules and cells, and genes to society. In their second year, our students take advanced engineering courses. Therefore, students that apply to our program need to not only have a strong background in engineering and mathematics, but also sufficient background in chemistry (including organic chemistry) and biology (at least two introductory courses).

The admission process is by committee. The applicant should specify which area they are interested in and write about the kind of research they are considering. The faculty in each area vote and rank the applicants. The final pool of applicants is ranked and voted on by the entire faculty.

About one third of our incoming students are international students. A short list of these students is formed by committee and the top candidates are interviewed by phone. Like all admitted students, international students receive full financial aid as well as a monthly stipend. They too have the freedom to choose from any lab.

Applications should be complete when submitted. In order to be considered a complete application we must have:

• A completed online application form.
• Official transcripts from each college or university attended—Sealed, official transcripts or certified records of all university (undergraduate and graduate) study must be submitted. If you have attended more than one institution, transcripts from each must be included with your application.
• Official Graduate Record Examination—GRE/MCAT scores will be acceptable and can be arranged through the Office of Graduate Affairs (http://www.bme.jhu.edu/academics/phd/phd_application.htm#gradaffairs) (address provided below). The GRE code for applying to graduate programs at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine is 5316.
  • The BME Ph.D. program does not rely heavily on the GRE exam in making admissions or financial aid decisions. Research experience, course grades, and recommendations carry more weight. However, because the GRE score is part of the application and does affect admissions decisions in some cases, foreign applicants who took the GRE in its electronic form, in a country where the electronic test is no longer offered, are advised to retake the exam in its paper form. Applications will be considered regardless of which form of the exam was taken.
• Three letters of recommendation—These letters should come from faculty members who are acquainted with you and your academic work. These letters should be sealed and comment on your aptitude and promise for independent research.
Program Requirements

The first two years are ordinarily devoted to advanced courses in engineering science and in biomedical science. Engineering, mathematics, and other physical science courses to be taken are arranged between students and their advisors. Each student is assigned a faculty mentor during the first year. This relationship is designed to help students acclimate to the program. Eighteen credit hours of course work in engineering, mathematics, or physical sciences are required. In addition, students must complete eighteen credit hours of course work in the life sciences. Of these 36 credit hours, at least six must be at the graduate level. At least three credit hours in a course with strong engineering or mathematical theory content at the 600-level must be taken.

Summers are spent working in a biomedical laboratory to gain experience and to seek out a suitable thesis research area. By the beginning of the third year, students should start original research leading to the dissertation. Students must fulfill a modest teaching requirement during one year of their program. The remaining time is spent in thesis research. The program typically takes five to six years to complete.

The student must pass a preliminary oral examination which will be a Graduate Board examination. This is taken no later than the end of the second year. The student must then conduct original research, describe it in a dissertation, and pass a final oral examination that is a defense of the dissertation. There is a minimum residency requirement of two consecutive academic years.

Integrated M.D./Ph.D. Program

Candidates for the Ph.D. in biomedical engineering who wish to apply jointly for the M.D. degree must apply directly through the School of Medicine. Although the combined programs would normally require at least seven years to execute sequentially, the combined program can ordinarily be completed in six years, with appropriate planning. Good preparation in biology and chemistry as well as mathematics, engineering, and the physical sciences is essential. Life science graduate requirements are met by the first-year program of the School of Medicine. This program is more arduous than the Ph.D. program alone, but it may have marked advantages for students interested in clinical research and applications in hospital systems and in the delivery of health care. The catalogue for the School of Medicine should be consulted for admissions requirements and procedures.

Information about applying to the combined M.D.-Ph.D. program can be found at mdpd.johnshopkins.edu (https://mdpd.johnshopkins.edu/). Applications submitted for consideration of the combined degree will be reviewed by the Medical School admissions committee. If the Medical School admissions committee accepts the application, it is then passed along to the Biomedical Engineering Ph.D. Program admissions committee for review. A student applying to the combined program who wishes to be considered for the straight Ph.D. program must submit a written request to have his or her application forwarded to the Biomedical Engineering Ph.D. Program office for admission consideration if his or her application is not accepted by the Medical School admissions committee.