

Frequently asked questions

What happens if I miss a grade?

We understand that your exam performance might not always go to plan and so we aim to be as flexible as we can be in making you an offer to study with us. Although our typical offer requirements are AAB we also consider students with ABB to be highly competitive applicants for our courses. Our advice is to get in touch with the School if you would like to discuss your offer in more detail via bns.ugadmin@ncl.ac.uk.

What are class sizes like?

In 1st year your lectures will take place in large groups of up to 400 students, but you will also have seminar sessions in smaller groups of ~30. Practical classes (50-100 students per session) will be led by one member of academic staff, assisted by one postgraduate demonstrator for every 20 students. By 3rd year your class size will vary according to your choice of degree programme, but for most of our degrees this will be in the region of 20-60 students.

How will I be assessed?

We use a range of assessment methods which have been carefully designed to reflect and reinforce the Aims and Learning Outcomes of the individual modules in each of our degree programmes. This will include practical work, scientific ("lab") reports, oral presentations, essays and examinations. Our exams include questions in a variety of forms (essays, short answer, numerical questions, data manipulation, data analysis, problem-solving and idea generation) and assess factual knowledge and theoretical understanding.

Are you able to take a placement year, and if so is support available?

We are happy for students to take a placement year between their second and third year of study. If you would like to do this, our Placement Leads (dedicated academic staff within the School) can help you find and apply for a placement. Students on year placements are usually paid by the company they are working for and treated like regular employees. You will also pay a reduced tuition fee during your placement year. Study abroad placement years are also available.

Will I be able to combine part-time work with my studies?

A large number of our students have part-time jobs, but it is important to balance any commitments to an employer with your University studies so that your studies do not suffer and you do not subject yourself to unnecessary stress. The teaching day runs from 9am-6pm Monday to Friday apart from Wednesdays which are 9am-1pm, so you must ensure you are available to attend University during these times and any part-time work you take on should be on weekends, evenings or Wednesday afternoons. Whilst we appreciate many students need to work part-time for financial reasons, it is important not to commit to too many hours and we suggest 15 hours per week as a maximum (less than this as you progress through the course) alongside careful planning. More information about work can be found on our Careers website:

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/careers/jobs/parttime/>



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What personal support is available?

When you start university you will be assigned a personal tutor who will be responsible for guiding and advising you. Your tutor can help with matters relating to your course and can also advise about sources of support if you have personal difficulties. It is important that you develop a good relationship with your tutor, so we allow you to change your tutor on request if necessary, or to ask for a tutor of your gender. To ensure you receive excellent support our tutors are assigned no more than 4 new students each year, so each tutor has a maximum of 12 tutees. There are also senior tutors and phase advisors, as well as peer mentors (current 2nd or 3rd year students) who offer additional layers of academic and pastoral support. The University in general has a very well-developed support network, including a student advice centre, counselling service, and disability support. Bespoke Student Support Plans (SSPs) can be put in place for students requiring additional adjustments to support their study. Further information is available on the website at:

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/wellbeing/>

What is the social aspect like?

Newcastle is a vibrant city famed for its friendliness and social life, and the University is no exception. There is a vast range of extracurricular activities, societies, and sports teams to take part in, many of which offer free or cheap trials in order to encourage students to get involved and make friends. The School itself has a dedicated BioSci Society for students which regularly hosts social events catered for all tastes, some of which are even attended by our staff! We are proud of our campus 'buzz' and like to promote a healthy social life to support that.

Is there a reading list to prepare me for the start of the course?

We do not send out a reading list in advance as we feel you should enjoy your summer and come to University feeling refreshed and ready to study. However, we are happy to advise students who wish to do additional reading before they start. Please contact our administration team on bns.ugadmin@ncl.ac.uk for more information.

What is the timetable like?

Our timetable varies to some extent from week to week and across the three years of the degree programme. In 1st year, students can expect an average of 9 lectures, 1 seminar and 1 practical class per week – but additional skills and/or extracurricular sessions are often available too.

What if I don't have A-Level Biology/Chemistry/Maths?

Our entry requirements are AAB including Biology or Chemistry, plus at least one from Mathematics or Further Mathematics, Physics, Psychology, Biology, or Chemistry – so we do not expect all students to have studied Biology, Chemistry or Maths at A-Level, and this is reflected in our first year syllabus such that students without specific subjects will not be disadvantaged. Our common first year syllabus also means students are able to switch degree programmes at the end of their first year.