Frequently Asked Questions about the Integrative Biology Graduate Program

● What does “Integrative Biology” mean?
  ○ We Be IB youtube video
  ○ Integrative Biology focuses on integration across biological levels, with the organism as a center point and moving up (populations, communities, ecosystems) and down (physiology, cell, genome).
  ○ advantage: option/flexibility to expand into different biological realms
    ■ half of our graduate students have faculty from different streams in their advisory committee, illustrating the integrative nature of the department
  ○ it also acknowledges the history of the department, with the integration of the botany and zoology departments in the early 2000s.

● What are the minimum requirements?
  ○ MSc:
    ■ BSc.
    ■ B (75%) minimum average during final 4 semester of undergrad.
      ● alternate admissions: significant record of experience (5 years).
    ■ support of faculty member willing to serve as thesis advisor
  ○ PhD:
    ■ MSc in related field.
    ■ A- (80%) minimum average in postgraduate studies.
    ■ support of faculty member willing to serve as thesis advisor.
    ■ PhD direct entry: without MSc for exceptionally promising students.
    ■ MSc to PhD transfer: after 1 year in MSc.

● Do I need my own funding to start grad school?
  ○ yes: with a scholarship, it will be a lot easier to convince an advisor to support your application.
  ○ no: advisors often have their own funding to attract graduate students.
  ○ so it is important to contact potential advisors.

● How do I contact potential advisors?
  ○ check the individual profiles on the IB website: http://www.uoguelph.ca/ib/people/people.shtml
  ○ make a selection based on common interests.
  ○ write your email as an application letter
    ■ a short summary of your past relevant research and work experience.
    ■ your research interests and how they match up with the potential advisor’s research program. Be specific here, so you can show that you did your homework.
    ■ how you can contribute to that research program.
    ■ attach an updated C.V. and unofficial transcript.
• Are grades important?
  ○ yes: high grades - necessary for external scholarships and sometimes convince faculty members to consider your application.
  ○ no: high grades do not guarantee success in graduate school.

• What is the deadline for applying?
  ○ open enrollment, throughout the year for Fall-Winter-Summer start.
  ○ 4 months in advance (but can be quicker if necessary).

• Where do graduates of this program end up?
  ○ of our MSc graduates: 21% start a PhD, 17% work as research staff in private sector, 15% as research staff in government, 14% as research staff in academia.
  ○ or our PhD graduates: 44% start a postdoc, 17% work as scientist in government, 5% work in research and teaching jobs

• Is it better to do my graduate studies at a different university from my undergrad?
  ○ no: your advisor is more important than the university she is at.
  ○ no: advisors often prefer working with a good undergrad who volunteered in her lab or did a research project with her because she knows the strengths of the new student and the student potentially already has a lot of relevant background in the field of study.
  ○ yes: having three or more degrees from the same university can raise a flag at job interviews.

• Is the degree course- or thesis-based?
  ○ only thesis-based.

• What is the difference between a course- and thesis-based degree?
  ○ course-based:
    ■ training for specific job skills.
    ■ theoretical - practical.
    ■ more prescribed by the program.
    ■ surveys of techniques.
  ○ thesis-based:
    ■ training for career skills
      ● active project management.
      ● problem-solving skills.
    ■ knowledge development via scientific publications.
    ■ mentor-apprentice relationship.
    ■ explore an area of interest in great depth.

• Any tips for the application process?
  ○ read these FAQs.
  ○ consult the IB/CBS/university graduate website.
  ○ ask questions.
  ○ before agreeing on a position, talk or email current and past graduate students in your potential advisor’s lab to get feedback on advising style, work conditions, expectations and support, ...