



Durham
University

Natural Sciences

Pre-Application Open Day, June 2025

Dr Peter Swift, Deputy Director of Natural Sciences

Why Natural Sciences?

Natural Sciences: Overview

- Talk focuses on the key features of the structure of the Natural Sciences degree programme.
- Natural Sciences has been in existence for over 160 years:
 - Called by this for over 40 years, formerly the General Degree.
- Embedded within Science Faculty:
 - “More” flexible than other programmes!



Natural Science Community



Colleges



Department

Why consider Natural Sciences?

Someone who wants to study science.....

....in more than one discipline

- Degree characterised by:
 - Flexibility;
 - Choice;
 - Depth.

What can I do in Natural Sciences?

One of:

- Biology;
- Chemistry;
- Computer Science;
- Earth Sciences;
- Mathematics;
- Physics;
- Psychology.

One or two others of:

- Anthropology;
- Biology;
- Business;
- Chemistry;
- Computer Science;
- Earth Sciences;
- Economics;
- Education;
- Geography;
- Mathematics;
- Philosophy;
- Physics;
- Psychology;
- Sport.

The Durham Course

Natural Science Degree Features (1)

- Both BSc and MSci Natural Sciences degree programmes allow students to combine subjects to follow:
 - one of a large number of Joint Honours degrees;
 - design your own broad based (two or three subjects to a high level) Natural Sciences degree.
- All students have the opportunity of taking a *Year Abroad*.
- All students have the opportunity of taking a year long *Industrial Placement*.
- Some combinations have option of transferring into a Single Honours programme at the end of Year 1.

Natural Science Degree Features (2)

- Can delay choosing your final subjects until you get to Durham.
Except possibly Chemistry
- Possible to change the shape of your degree at the end of the first year.
- Students study a selection of the same modules as single honours students:
 - No compulsory modules;
 - Only one module just for Natural Sciences students.
- In the final year, credits are taken that are student driven and involve independent thought.

Natural Sciences Degree (1)

- Inter- and multi-disciplinary degree with at least one science subject:
 - Specific Joint Honours Degrees;
 - Self-designed degrees to match student choice – within reason!
 - Mathematics and Physics;
 - Biology and Chemistry;
 - Geography and Earth Sciences;
 - Computer Science and Chemistry.

.....

Natural Sciences Degree (2)

- **MSci in Natural Sciences**

- Only available in: Earth Sciences, Chemistry, Computer Science, Maths, Physics and Biology (but only with Chemistry and Physics).

- **BSc in Natural Sciences**

- Available in all the contributing subjects, with at least 50% of study from the Faculty of Science.
- Subjects studied successfully are mentioned on the degree certificate.

Expected Natural Science Programmes in two subjects 2026 Entry

	Anthropology	Biology	Business	Chemistry	Computer Science	Earth Sciences	Economics	Geography	Maths	Philosophy	Physics	Psychology
Anthropology		*										
Biology	*			*, #		*		*	*		*, #	*
Business					*							
Chemistry		*, #				*			*, #		*, #	
Computer Science			*						*, #		*	
Earth Sciences		*		*				*				
Economics									*			
Geography		*				*						
Maths		*		*, #	*, #		*			*	*, #	*
Philosophy									*		*	
Physics		*, #		*, #	*				*, #	*		
Psychology		*							*			

Joint
Honours

Named
Route

* - BSc
- MSci

Combined
Honours

Excellent

Very Good

Good

Poor

Likelihood combination will work

Msci/BSc Joint-Honours Degrees

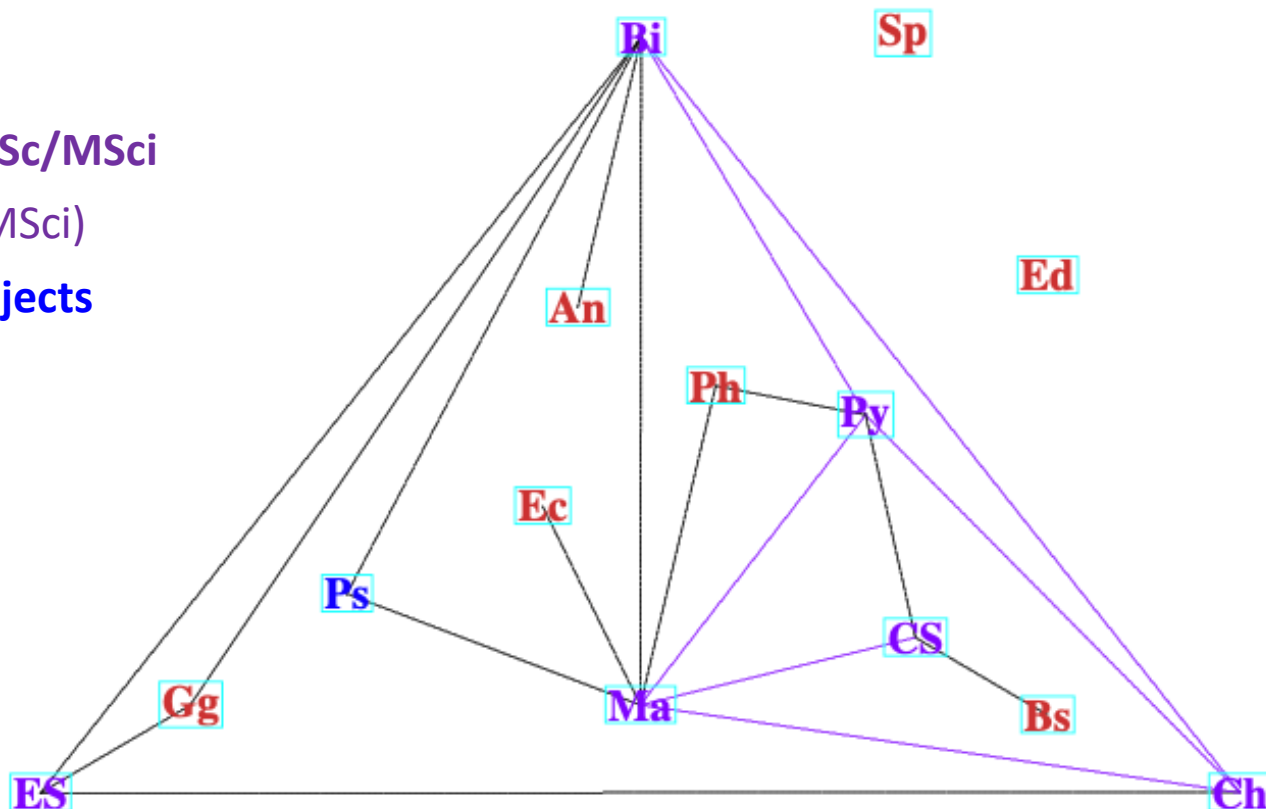
Subject code

Subjects part of BSc/MSci

(Purple link is JH MSci)

Other science subjects

Non-Science



- An- Anthropology
- Bi – Biology
- Bs – Business
- Ch – Chemistry
- CS - Computer Science
- ES - Earth Sciences
- Ec – Economics
- Ed – Education (no JH)
- Gg – Geography
- Ma – Mathematics
- Ph – Philosophy
- Py - Physics
- Ps- Psychology
- Sp – Sport (no JH)

Natural Sciences: Flexibility

Year	Number of subjects studied	Maximum number of credits studied in a single subject
1	At least two, no more than four	80
2	At least two no more than three Can start new subject Earth Science, Business, Geography, Education, Philosophy, Anthropology (requires Biosciences) Computer Science (requires programming)	80
3	At least two, no more than three	100
4	At least one, no more than three	120

Natural Sciences: Choice

Group 1 Subjects	Minimum Year 1 Credits for some progression to Year 2	Additional credits to enable SH transfer
Biology	40	20
Chemistry	40 + 20	0 (extra work)
Computer Science	20 + 20	20 (extra work)
Earth Sciences	0	60
Mathematics	40	20 (extra work)
Physics	40 + 40	20
Psychology	40	20

Taking 50% of a pure discipline enables a transfer at the end of Year 1

“Red” means you need extra Mathematics

Natural Sciences: depth

- Study Goals:
 - Same key modules as Single Honours students in a subject;
 - Study more than one subject to high level.
- All students MUST undertake final-year capstone-module
 - XXXXX Into Schools;
 - Dissertation;
 - Project;
 - Science Enterprise.

Natural Sciences: caution!

- Choices of modules are restricted by:
 - the University timetable;
 - capacity;
 - being tied to degree programmes which are not Natural Sciences.
- Choices need to leave a programme of study open.
- Mathematics with progression to other Maths beyond Level 2 needs AS-level in Further Maths.

Natural Sciences with Year Abroad

- Possibility of a year abroad on the BSc/MSci in a Turing scheme.
- Placements carried out:
 - Between Years 2 and 3;
 - During Year 3 (limited cases).
- Students must be in good academic standing at end of Year 2 with an average of at least 55%.



Natural Sciences with Placement

- The placements must be a minimum of 40 weeks duration, with an emphasis on a job description or project related to the broad area of at least one core subject.
- Students are supported but responsible for finding and securing their own placement



Placement Years

<https://www.durham.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/how-to-apply/study-options/placements/>



Wider University

Support Structures

- Academic Advisor, throughout 3 or 4 years:
 - In any department studying at least 40 credits.
- Tutors/Project supervisors
- Student Voice Committees:
 - Natural Sciences
 - In departments
- College Support Teams.
- Department and Faculty Support Officers.

Colleges

- Member of one during your time at Durham
- Most students live in College during their first year
- All Colleges have students studying for all degrees
- Colleges have sports teams, music and drama, committees etc.
- Make College preferred choices after get academic offer.
- Go and experience a variety of Colleges during the day!

Natural Science Careers

Careers

- Skills:
 - Subject-specific skills;
 - Capacity to make creative connections.
- Of students that left in 2021-22:
 - ~ 82% are in skilled employment/study 15 months after graduating
- Of those in employment:
 - Median salary £35K
 - 97 % in skilled employment
- Recent career paths:
 - Consulting, accounting, banking and investment, software engineering, data scientist, international development, government....

Testimonials - 1

- **Sarah C**

- MSci in Biology and Chemistry
- Now studying a PhD at Oxford.

“I have (honestly!) found that having done both Biology and Chemistry during my undergraduate degree, whilst having much less practical biology experience, the theoretical knowledge that I gained in both Biology and Chemistry has been invaluable for doing a PhD in Chemical Biology.

I have also been able to do all of both the Biology and Chemistry myself, which is definitely a bonus.”

Testimonials - 2

- **Mia D**

- BSc in Biology, Computer Science and Geography;
- Had interests in Pharmaceuticals and Banking.

“I specifically chose Durham mainly for the Natural Sciences degree as it isn't offered at many places. I liked that it had enough flexibility to study what I was interested without having many of the requirements (language credit, English credit etc) at most American Universities. I was also attracted to the college system that Durham has as well as the well regarded sports program here. I currently play DU football and water polo.”

Prospects - 1

- **Professor Michelle Simmons**

- BSc in Natural Sciences (Physics and Chemistry of Materials).
- Recognised internationally as a pioneer in atomic electronics and quantum computing who graduated with a degree in *Physics and Chemistry of Materials*.

"I loved my time at Durham. It really changed my life. And yes, it was that double degree.

It was a course that opened many doors for me."



Prospects - 2

- **Professor Sir Ian Chapman**
 - MSci in Maths and Physics within Natural Sciences Programme.
 - Current chief executive of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA).
 - From Summer 2025 will become Chief Executive Officer of UK Research and Innovation, the UK research funding agency.

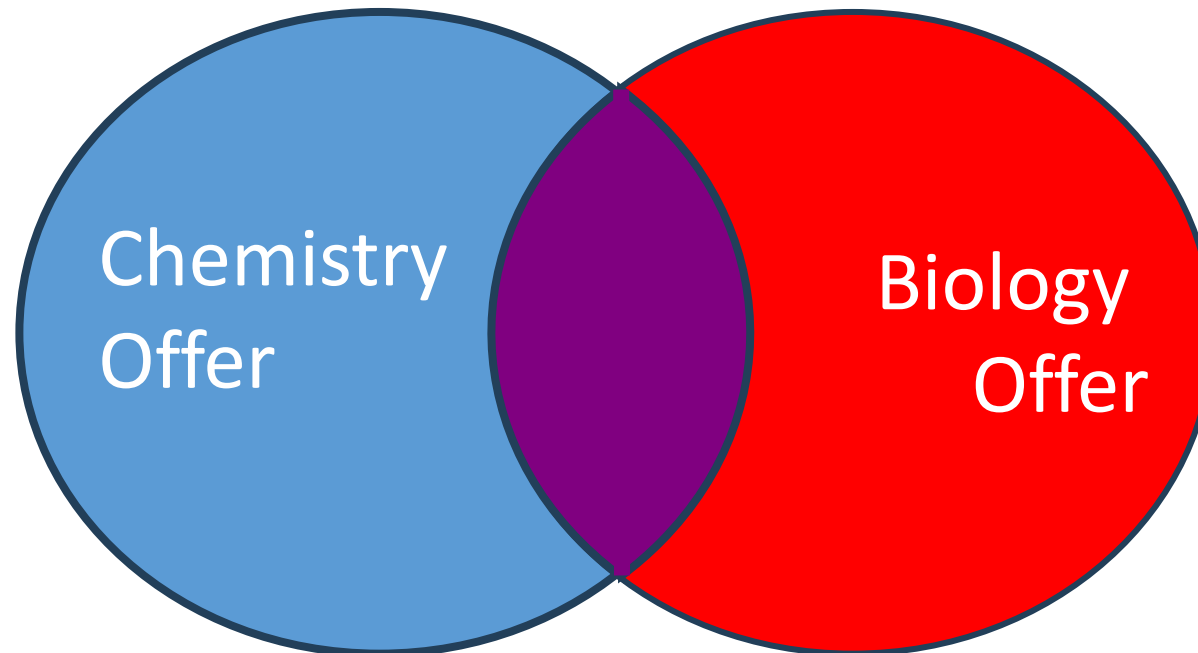


Admissions

Durham Offer Application

A*AA

plus subject requirements



Making an Application

- Offer is based on the UCAS application
- Accreditation/Recognition on certain tightly defined routes in Chemistry, Earth Sciences, Psychology and Physics
- Possibility of *Substitute Personal Statement*
- 1188 applications for 277 places.



Admissions

- Admissions are centralised.
- What our selectors consider:
 - Prior and predicted grades;
 - Personal Statement;
 - Teachers/Academic Reference;
 - Contextual evidence of merit & potential;
 - Motivation for the degree programme;
 - Study & other skills.

University Website Natural Science Page

<https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/natural-sciences/>



Questions?

Videos about Natural Sciences

https://www.maths.dur.ac.uk/php/natural.sciencesmodule_guide.php?student_type=ucas/

