



Bioinformatics MSc

VU University Amsterdam - Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen - M Bioinformatics - 2015-2016

Research in Bioinformatics in its broadest definition concerns the analysis of informational processes within living systems with the help of computers. To do this successfully, Bioinformatics actively uses and integrates contributions from areas such as Mathematics, Computer Science, Chemistry, Medicine and Biology. Bioinformatics has recently become one of the keywords in the life sciences as well as in Biotechnological and Pharmaceutical industries. Although in essence the field exists for over two decades and bioinformatics techniques developed over the years have come of age, the field has gained major prominence relatively recently, owing mostly to the world-wide human genome projects and subsequent structural and functional genomics initiatives. While the complete human genome sequence has been obtained at relatively little cost of around two billion Euros, the current investments in for example proteomics industries amount to orders of magnitude more. Also other genomic technologies, aimed at gaining insight in human physiological functioning such as microarray (gene chip) technology, have attracted multi-billion Euro investments both in industry and academia. Currently, many new small/medium enterprises (SMEs) and large international biotechnological and pharmaceutical companies are actively recruiting bioinformaticians, but experience hardship in doing so due to the lack of individuals with proper training. Similar problems are encountered at national academic centres in The Netherlands, particularly in microarray centres. As the interpretation of the data coming from all the above large-scale projects is crucially depending on the application and creation of new bioinformatics techniques, it is clear that a broad based and integrative master's curriculum in bioinformatics at the Vrije Universiteit is timely.

The international Bioinformatics Master study takes 2 years and is organised by the Integrative Bioinformatics Institute VU (IBIVU) at the Vrije Universiteit since 2003. The IBIVU is a multidisciplinary centre within the Vrije Universiteit in which three faculties (Faculty of Sciences; Faculty of Earth and Life Sciences; and the Faculty of Psychology) and the VU Medical Centre take part. To prepare for the Bioinformatics master course, various Bachelor programmes at the Vrije Universiteit offer integral courses in Bioinformatics, such as Medical Natural Sciences and Biomolecular Sciences. These Bachelor programmes (taking 3 years) are dedicated to providing the student with a broad and thorough basis in each of their areas of study, which is indispensable for starting the Bioinformatics Master programme. The Bioinformatics Master's provides the student with an opportunity to deepen his/her knowledge of the various aspects of Bioinformatics, while the student has ample possibility to specialise in one or a few areas of choice. It is expected that the breadth and flexibility of the masters programme resulting from the multi-disciplinary setup of the Integrative Bioinformatics Institute as well as the emphasis on creating bioinformatics tools from the strong embedding in the Informatics department (e.g. AI, Computer Systems) will be attractive for students.

The Bioinformatics Master studies are currently organised by the Faculty of Sciences and the Faculty of Earth and Life Sciences. The latest information can always be found at: <http://www.ibi.vu.nl/>.

Depending on the individual furnishing of his/her Master programme, the student can attend lectures in other faculties and centres, for example Biology or the Centre for Neurogenomics and Cognitive Research (CNCR). Graduation projects can vary from practical to rather fundamental, depending on the preferences and capacities of the students. Students can also go to companies, research institutes or universities either in The Netherlands or abroad.

Study advice is open to all. Advisor prof. dr. Jaap Heringa can be contacted at all times. Furthermore, the website <http://www.ibi.vu.nl/> contains information regarding the international Bioinformatics Master programme.

Formal procedures during your master

The full Master's programme in Bioinformatics takes two years and is worth 120 credit points (within the European Community Course Credit Transfer System). The global lay-out of the programme is approximately ten months (60 credits) of practical training and ten months (60 credits) of courses and other theory supported subjects.

Note: Every programme, including the choice of optional courses, has to be discussed and agreed upon with the master coordinator or a personal mentor and approved by the Examination Board.

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Compulsory optional Courses Systems Biology Major

Courses:

Name	Period	Credits	Code
Advanced modelling in Systems Biology	Period 6	6.0	X_418155
Statistics with R	Period 5	6.0	X_418156
Synthetic Biology and Biomedicine	Period 4	6.0	X_418125

Optional Courses

Three courses (18 credits) in the programme are free choice. Courses from the list below are always approved. Many other optional courses are acceptable, but will have to be discussed and agreed upon with the master coordinator or a personal mentor and approved by the Examination Board.

Courses:

Name	Period	Credits	Code
Data Mining Techniques	Period 5	6.0	X_400108
Fundamentals of Bioinformatics and Systems Biology	Period 1	6.0	X_405114
Machine Learning	Period 4	6.0	X_400154
Signal Transduction in Health and Disease	Period 2	6.0	X_432535

Compulsory Courses

The master includes four compulsory courses (total of 24 credits) that are compulsory for all students. In addition, three courses (18 credits) should be chosen from one of the two profiles: Bioinformatics or Systems Biology. Please refer to 'Compulsory optional courses' for more detail.

Courses:

Name	Period	Credits	Code
Biosystems Data Analysis	Period 3	6.0	X_437001
First internship (Major)	Ac. Year (September)	42.0	X_405027
Fundamentals of Bioinformatics	Period 1	6.0	X_405052
Introduction to Systems Biology	Period 1	6.0	X_428565
Second Internship (Minor)	Ac. Year (September)	18.0	X_405032

Seminar Series and Writing a Research Proposal	Ac. Year (September)	6.0	X_400594
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Compulsory Courses Bioinformatics Major

Courses:

Name	Period	Credits	Code
Algorithms in Sequence Analysis	Period 2	6.0	X_405050
Bioinformatics for Translational Medicine	Period 5	6.0	X_405092
Structural Bioinformatics	Period 4	6.0	X_405019

Compulsory Courses Systems Biology Major

Courses:

Name	Period	Credits	Code
Basic Models of Biological Networks	Period 4	6.0	X_418154
Systems Biology in Practice	Period 2	6.0	X_418157

Advanced modelling in Systems Biology

Course code	X_418155 ()
Period	Period 6
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen
Coordinator	prof. dr. F.J. Bruggeman
Examinator	prof. dr. F.J. Bruggeman
Teaching staff	prof. dr. F.J. Bruggeman
Teaching method(s)	Lecture, Computer lab, Seminar
Level	500

Course objective

To extend modelling techniques learnt in Basic models of biological networks and to get acquainted with more advanced aspects of modelling biological systems

Course content

In this course we will assume knowledge of Basic models of biological networks. We will go deeper into important issues in modelling biological systems. Issues that will be discussed are model validation (parameter estimation, experimental design), dynamic behaviour (instability, multistability), robustness and sensitivity analysis, more

advanced Metabolic Control Analysis and stochastic modelling. After this course, students should be able to make a model, evaluate its dynamic behaviour and explore the structure and parameters of the model. This should provide enough background for students to apply modelling in their own research.

Form of tuition

Lectures, self-study, computer practical work, computer modelling tutorials

Type of assessment

Results of computer assignments, written exams

Course reading

A course syllabus with recent reviews and papers presented by the lecturers and guest researchers (max. 15 euros)

Algorithms in Sequence Analysis

Course code	X_405050 (405050)
Period	Period 2
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen
Coordinator	prof. dr. J. Heringa
Examinator	prof. dr. J. Heringa
Teaching staff	prof. dr. J. Heringa
Teaching method(s)	Lecture, Seminar
Level	400

Course objective

Have you ever wondered how we can track a gene across 3 billion years of evolution? Sequence alignment can be used to compare genes from humans and bacteria, using a dynamic programming algorithm. In this course we focus on algorithms for biological sequences that can be applied to real scientific problems in biology.

Students will obtain in-depth knowledge about the theory of sequence analysis methods. They will also develop understanding and skills to apply the algorithms to protein and DNA sequences. We would like to stress that no biological knowledge is required to enter this course.

Goals

- At the end of the course, the student will be aware of the major issues, methodology and available algorithms in sequence analysis.
- At the end of the course, the student will have hands-on experience in tackling biological problems using sequence analysis algorithms and applying the general statistical framework of Hidden Markov Models.
- At the end of the course, the student will be able to implement several of the most important algorithms in sequence analysis.

Course content

Theory:

- Dynamic programming, database searching, pairwise and multiple alignment, probabilistic methods including hidden markov models, pattern matching, entropy measures, evolutionary models, and phylogeny.

Practical:

- Programming own alignment algorithm based on dynamic programming
- Reverse translation and dynamic programming
- Homology searching and pattern recognition using biological and disease examples
- Multiple alignment of biological sequences
- Entropy-based functional residues prediction
- Programming own implementation of Hidden Markov Models and using it to predict protein domain structure

Form of tuition

13 Lectures: 2 two-hour lectures per week

11 Computer practicals and associated assignments: 2 two-hour hands-on sessions per week

Type of assessment

The final grade for this course will consist of 50% practical work (see above) and 50% theoretical assessment.

The theoretical assessment will be an oral and/or written exam (depending on number of students).

Course reading

Course material on bb.vu.nl

Books: Durbin, R., Eddy, S.R., Krogh, A., Mitchison, G.. Biological Sequence Analysis. Cambridge University Press, 1998, 350 pp., ISBN 0521629713.

Recommended reading: Marketa Zvelebil and Jeremy O. Baum Understanding Bioinformatics Garland Science 2008 ISBN-10: 0-8153-4024-9

Entry requirements

Bachelor in any science discipline (including medicine).

Basic programming skills and an interest in biological problems.

Target group

mAI, mBio, mCS

Remarks

Signing up via bb.vu.nl is mandatory.

The course is taught in English.

Basic Models of Biological Networks

Course code	X_418154 ()
Period	Period 4
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen
Coordinator	prof. dr. F.J. Bruggeman
Examinator	prof. dr. F.J. Bruggeman
Teaching staff	dr. J.P. Bruggeman, prof. dr. F.J. Bruggeman
Teaching method(s)	Lecture, Seminar, Computer lab

Level	400
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Course objective

The aim of the course is to learn the basis of modelling of biological systems. Computer models of metabolic networks, signal transduction pathways and transcriptional regulation are becoming indispensable in modern (medical) biology. After this course, students have an understanding of the principles of modelling, have learned to work with modelling tools and have applied these tools to biological examples. This should provide enough background for students to communicate with modellers or read modelling papers.

Course content

In this course we will teach how to set up computer models of biological systems, and how such models can be programmed in common software tools. We will provide some basic theoretical concepts required for understanding how to make models and how to interpret the results. Topics will include: properties of cell components (such as enzyme kinetics), mass and energy balances, stoichiometry and constraint-based modelling, kinetic modelling, Metabolic Control Analysis, modelling software. Topics will be illustrated by computer practicals of biological examples.

Form of tuition

Lectures, self-study, computer practical work, computer modelling tutorials

Type of assessment

Results of computer assignments, written exams.

Course reading

A course syllabus with recent reviews and papers presented by the lecturers and guest researchers (max. 15 euros).

Bioinformatics for Translational Medicine

Course code	X_405092 ()
Period	Period 5
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen
Coordinator	dr. S. Abeln
Examinator	dr. S. Abeln
Teaching staff	prof. dr. J. Heringa
Teaching method(s)	Lecture, Practical
Level	400

Course objective

Observations from biological high-throughput experiments will allow us to improve diagnosis and give a personalised treatment plan for patients. However, integrating data from several sources and using this data for predictions is non-trivial.

This is a theoretical and practical Bioinformatics course on

computational methods for Translational Medicine; we will focus on Bioinformatics algorithms that are used to predict the clinical outcome for patients and analysis methods to obtain deeper understanding of complex diseases, by combining data from various high-throughput experiments such as proteomics, microarrays and next-generation sequencing as well as existing biological databases.

goals

- At the end of the course, students will be aware of Bioinformatics methods that are applicable to the area of Translational Medicine.
- Students should be able to combine these methods to come to a creative solution to get new insights from large scale biological experiments.
- At the end of the course, students will have hands-on experience in handling large biological datasets, and will understand the complexity of the biological data both from high-throughput experiments and existing biological databases.
- The student will become familiar with a few in depth research topics that lie within the expertise area of several (Bioinformatics) researchers at the VU, UvA, AMC, NKI and VUMC.

Course content

Theory

- Computational analysis of molecular profiling techniques, such as: proteomics, RNA sequencing, exome sequencing, arrayCGH.
- Computational methods include: normalisation, feature selection, classification, read mapping, clustering.
- All data analysis is relevant in a clinical setting, for diagnosis, treatment decisions or biomarker discovery.

Practical:

- Classification Assessment of Tumor Subtypes (CATS): This is a large assignment for which you have to build a classifier that can discriminate different tumor subtypes based on arrayCGH profiles. You need to hand in predictions (class contest), write a paper and give a presentation. Note that this is a group project.

Three small data analysis practicals are also given on:

- Exome sequencing
- RNA sequencing
- Proteomics

Form of tuition

- 13 Lectures (2 two-hour lectures per week)
- 12 computer practicals (2 two-hour sessions per week)

Type of assessment

The final grade for this course will consist of 65% practical work (see above) and 35% theoretical assessment.

Practical assessment (65%):

- CATS assignment (35%)
- 3 data analysis assignments (30%)

Theoretical assessment: (35%)

- Oral or written exam (depending on number of course students).
- As part of the exam a research paper on a Bioinformatics method needs to be analysed in detail and you need to write a small research proposal based on the paper.

Course reading

- course material on bb.vu.nl
- Marketa Zvelebil and Jeremy O. Baum Understanding Bioinformatics Garland Science 2008 ISBN-10: 0-8153-4024-9

Recommended background knowledge

An interest in Biological problems.

Target group

mAI, mBio, mCS

Remarks

Signing up via bb.vu.nl is mandatory.
The course is taught in English.

- Compulsory course for students in MSc of Bioinformatics.
- Optional course for students with Bachelor Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Computer Science, Biology, or Biomedical Sciences.

Biosystems Data Analysis

Course code	X_437001 (437001)
Period	Period 3
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen
Level	400

Course content

<http://studiegids.uva.nl/xmlpages/page/2015-2016/zoek-vak/vak/19661>

Remarks

This course is offered at the UvA. For more information contact: FNWI Education Service Centre, Science Park 904, servicedesk-esc-science@uva.nl, +31 (0)20 525 7100.
Enrolment via <https://m.sis.uva.nl/vakaanmelden> is required.

Data Mining Techniques

Course code	X_400108 (400108)
Period	Period 5
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen
Coordinator	dr. M. Hoogendoorn
Examinator	dr. M. Hoogendoorn
Teaching staff	dr. M. Hoogendoorn
Teaching method(s)	Lecture

Level	500
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Course objective

The aim of the course is that students acquire data mining knowledge and skills that they can apply in a business environment. How the aims are to be achieved: Students will acquire knowledge and skills mainly through the following: an overview of the most common data mining algorithms and techniques (in lectures), a survey of typical and interesting data mining applications, and practical assignments to gain "hands on" experience. The application of skills in a business environment will be simulated through various assignments of the course.

Course content

The course will provide a survey of basic data mining techniques and their applications for solving real life problems. After a general introduction to Data Mining we will discuss some "classical" algorithms like Naive Bayes, Decision Trees, Association Rules, etc., and some recently discovered methods such as boosting, Support Vector Machines, and co-learning. A number of successful applications of data mining will also be discussed: marketing, fraud detection, text and Web mining, possibly bioinformatics. In addition to lectures, there will be an extensive practical part, where students will experiment with various data mining algorithms and data sets. The grade for the course will be based on these practical assignments (i.e., there will be no final examination).

Form of tuition

Lectures (h) and compulsory practical work (pra). Lectures are planned to be interactive: there will be small questions, one-minute discussions, etc.

Type of assessment

Practical assignments (i.e. there is no exam). There will be two assignments done in groups of three. There is a possibility to get a grade without doing these assignments: to do a real research project instead (which will most likely to involve more work, but it can also be more rewarding). For the regular assignments the first assignment counts for 40% and the second for 60%. The grade of both assignments needs to be sufficient to pass the course.

Course reading

Ian H. Witten, Eibe Frank, Mark A. Hall, Data Mining: Practical Machine Learning Tools and Techniques (Third Edition). Morgan Kaufmann, January 2011
ISBN 978-0-12-374856-0

Recommended background knowledge

Kansrekening and Statistiek or Algemene Statistiek (knowledge of statistics and probabilities) or equivalent. Recommended: Machine Learning.

Target group

mBA, mCS, mAI, mBio

First internship (Major)

Course code	X_405027 (405027)
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Period	Ac. Year (September)
Credits	42.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen
Coordinator	prof. dr. J. Heringa
Level	400

Course objective

The first internship (Major) can consist of 30 till 42 credits in steps of 3 credits. The Major and Minor internships together will account for a total of 60 credits.

During the major internship, students will carry out a large in-depth project, thereby learning to work in a consistent and goal-oriented way, whilst enhancing their communication and scientific reporting skills in English, both written and orally.

The Integrative Bioinformatics Centre's (IBIVU) broad, multidisciplinary structure allows you to work on a wide variety of subjects at the VU. External internships, nationally or internationally, in academic institutions, academic hospitals, or R&D departments in industry are also possible. There is no mandatory order of the internships, students can either start with a Major or a Minor internship.

Course content

Depending on the student's profile, i.e. bioinformatics or systems biology, projects can be chosen in fundamental bioinformatics or systems biology research. Projects may also be more applied, but are required to have a dominant bioinformatics or systems biology component.

Form of tuition

The student will have a daily supervisor, with whom interaction takes place according to a master-apprentice model, and a formally responsible supervisor and second supervisor from the VU.

Type of assessment

The internship will be assessed on three components: (i) project progress, (ii) written report, and (iii) final presentation, which will count for 1/2, 1/3 and 1/6, respectively. After one to three months, depending on the duration of the internship, the student will present an initial seminar, explaining the structure of the project and the major research question(s).

Course reading

Course reading will be advised by the host institution.

Recommended background knowledge

It is mandatory that students in the bioinformatics and systems biology master's programme have completed their conversion classes in programming (bioinformatics profile) or mathematics (systems biology profile) before embarking on their major or minor internship.

Target group

MSc Bioinformatics and Systems Biology

Remarks

The internship should be approved by the study mentor prior to commencement, and an internship contract, stipulating the expected number of hours of supervision per week, should be signed by the host institution and the VU.

Note: Every programme, including the choice of optional courses, has to be discussed and agreed upon with the master coordinator or personal mentor and approved by the Examination Board.

Fundamentals of Bioinformatics

Course code	X_405052 (405052)
Period	Period 1
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen
Coordinator	dr. ir. K.A. Feenstra
Examinator	dr. ir. K.A. Feenstra
Teaching staff	dr. ir. K.A. Feenstra
Teaching method(s)	Lecture, , Computer lab
Level	400

Course objective

Interested in Bioinformatics? Or you want to find out how biology can make an exciting application domain? Or you want to learn how what more you could do with your data, and with less effort? Enter here to start!

Fundamentals of Bioinformatics (FoB) is the starting course of the Bioinformatics master. It aims to give a broad overview of important topics relevant to the field, with a focus on current open problems. Students will be made aware of these open problems during practical sessions that aim to let the student 'stumble upon' these problems by him/her self. Based on their background, students will be assigned to separate classes where they will be working to fill gaps in their background knowledge in programming and/or biology.

Goals:

- To make the students aware of gaps in their own background knowledge.
- The student will be aware of the major issues, methodology and available algorithms in bioinformatics.
- To work together in a group of diverse backgrounds.
- To gain hands-on experience in scripting and handling basic mathematical equations as a means of solving bioinformatics problems.
- To develop a basic understanding of major concepts in genomics and molecular cell biology that are relevant to current topics in bioinformatics.

Course content

Theory:

- Evolution, Genomes, Sequences, Blast/PSI-Blast, Semantic Web, Multi-omics, Next-generation Sequencing

Practical:

- Exercises during/in between lectures

- Project in groups to solve a major bioinformatics problem. The groups will be composed to include each of the three major background areas: bioinformatics, biology and computer science. Success of the group project will depend on the level of cooperation!

Form of tuition

- 12 Lectures (two hour lecture in the morning, two days per week)
- 12 Computer practicals (two hour sessions following the morning lectures, two days per week), partially supervised.
- Project work

Type of assessment

- [30%] Programming or Biology classes
- [30%] Project and group work
- [40%] Oral or written exam (depending on number of course students) to assess:
Exercises
Project results (individual)
Lecture topics

Course reading

- course material (slides, scientific papers) on bb.vu.nl
- Marketa Zvelebil and Jeremy O. Baum Understanding Bioinformatics Garland Science 2008 ISBN-10: 0-8153-4024-9

Recommended background knowledge

Bachelor in any science discipline (including medicine), or strong programming background.
An interest in programming and biological problems.

Target group

mAI, mBio, mCS, mMNS

Fundamentals of Bioinformatics and Systems Biology

Course code	X_405114 ()
Period	Period 1
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen
Coordinator	dr. ir. K.A. Feenstra
Examinator	dr. ir. K.A. Feenstra
Level	400

Course objective

This master course covers the practical parts and project work of Fundamentals of Bioinformatics (405052) and of Introduction to Systems Biology, which does not overlap with the bachelor courses Principles of Bioinformatics (401094) and Principles of Systems Biology. The course is not intended as a stand-alone course and cannot not be chosen by students, but may only be taken on assignment by the mentors of the Master Bioinformatics and Systems Biology.

Course content

practical/project work from Fundamentals of Bioinformatics (405052) and of Introduction to Systems Biology.

Form of tuition

see practical/project work in Fundamentals of Bioinformatics (405052) and of Introduction to Systems Biology.

Type of assessment

see project, group work and presentation in Fundamentals of Bioinformatics (405052) and of Introduction to Systems Biology.

Course reading

- course material (slides, scientific papers) on bb.vu.nl
- Marketa Zvelebil and Jeremy O. Baum Understanding Bioinformatics Garland Science 2008 ISBN-10: 0-8153-4024-9

Recommended background knowledge

A bachelor including the courses Principles of Bioinformatics (X_401094) and Principles of Systems Biology (AM_1037FEW), or equivalent, as assessed by the mentor.

Target group

Students in the Master Bioinformatics and Systems Biology, only on assignment by mentor.

Registration procedure

Students should not register directly for this course.

Introduction to Systems Biology

Course code	X_428565 ()
Period	Period 1
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen
Coordinator	dr. D. Molenaar
Examinator	dr. D. Molenaar
Teaching staff	prof. dr. B. Teusink, dr. D. Molenaar, prof. dr. F.J. Bruggeman
Teaching method(s)	Lecture, Study Group, Seminar
Level	400

Course objective

Introduction to Systems Biology is the starting course of the Bioinformatics and Systems Biology master (together with Fundamentals of Bioinformatics). It aims to give a broad overview of important topics relevant to the field of Systems Biology, with a focus on current open problems. Students will be made aware of these open problems during practical sessions that aim to let the student 'stumble upon' these problems. Based on their background, students will be assigned to deficiency classes where they will be working to fill gaps in their background knowledge in mathematics, programming and/or biology.

Goals:

- To make the students aware of gaps in their own background knowledge.
- To make the student acquainted with the major issues, concepts and

methodology in systems biology (to be studied in more detail in the master)

- To develop a basic understanding of major biological concepts in genomics and cell biology that are relevant to current topics in systems biology
- To work together in a group of diverse backgrounds
- To gain hands-on experience in basic modeling as a means of solving systems biology problems

Course content

Theory:

- Design principles of biological networks, basic modeling approaches, evolution

Practical:

- Exercises during/in between lectures in which methods of systems biology will be applied to several topics.

Form of tuition

- Lectures (two hour lecture in the morning, two days per week)
- Computer practicals
- Modeling practicals
- Deficiency classes in biology, mathematics and/or programming

Type of assessment

30% Mathematics, Programming or Biology deficiency classes

60% Final exam of the Systems Biology subjects

Course reading

A course syllabus will be provided

Recommended background knowledge

Highschool mathematics

Target group

Students with background in Biology, Bioinformatics, Mathematics, Physics

Machine Learning

Course code	X_400154 (400154)
Period	Period 4
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen
Coordinator	dr. E.W. Haasdijk
Examinator	dr. E.W. Haasdijk
Teaching staff	dr. E.W. Haasdijk
Teaching method(s)	Lecture, Seminar
Level	300

Course objective

The goal of this course is to present the dominant concepts of machine learning methods including some theoretical background. We'll cover established machine learning techniques such as Decision Trees, Neural Networks, Bayesian Learning, Instance-based Learning and Evolutionary

Algorithms as well as some statistical techniques to assess and validate machine learning results.

Course content

Machine Learning is the study of how to build computer systems that learn from experience. It is a very active subfield of Artificial Intelligence that intersects with statistics, cognitive science, information theory, and probability theory, among others. Recently, Machine Learning has gained great importance for the design of search engines, robots, and sensor systems, and for the processing of large scientific data sets. Further applications include handwriting or speech recognition, image classification, medical diagnosis, stock market analysis, bioinformatics, etc.

Form of tuition

The course will be taught in two parts; the first part consists of lectures with written examination. The second part of the course will have a more do-it-yourself character (e.g., practical assignment and/or literature research) and result in a report and/or presentation. The course will be taught in English.

Course reading

NNB

Target group

3BA, 3BA-D, 3CS, 3LI, 3IMM, mBio

Second Internship (Minor)

Course code	X_405032 (405032)
Period	Ac. Year (September)
Credits	18.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen
Coordinator	prof. dr. J. Heringa
Examinator	prof. dr. J. Heringa
Level	400

Course objective

The second internship (Minor) can consist of 18 till 30 credits in steps of 3 credits. The Major and Minor internships together will account for a total of 60 credits.

During the major internship, students will carry out a large in-depth project, thereby learning to work in a consistent and goal-oriented way, whilst enhancing their communication and scientific reporting skills in English, both written and orally. The minor internship should be different from the major internship, and should be hosted by a different department, section or group, if taking place at the same institution hosting the major internship.

The Integrative Bioinformatics Centre's (IBIVU) broad, multidisciplinary structure allows you to work on a wide variety of subjects at the VU. External internships, nationally or internationally, in academic

institutions, academic hospitals, or R&D departments in industry are also possible.

Course content

Depending on the student's profile, i.e. bioinformatics or systems biology, projects can be chosen in fundamental bioinformatics or systems biology research. Projects may also be more applied, but are required to have a prominent bioinformatics or systems biology component.

Form of tuition

The student will have a daily supervisor, with whom interaction takes place according to a master-apprentice model, and a formally responsible supervisor from the VU.

Type of assessment

The internship will be assessed on three components: (i) project progress, (ii) written report, and (iii) final presentation, which will count for 1/2, 1/3 and 1/6, respectively. After one to three months in the project, depending on the duration of the internship, the student will present an initial seminar, explaining the structure of the project and the major research question(s).

Course reading

Course reading will be advised by the host institution.

Recommended background knowledge

It is mandatory that students in the bioinformatics and systems biology master's programme have completed their conversion classes in programming (bioinformatics profile) or mathematics (systems biology profile) before embarking on their major or minor internship.

Target group

MSc Bioinformatics and Systems Biology

Remarks

The internship should be approved by the study mentor prior to commencement, and an internship contract, stipulating the expected number of hours of supervision per week, should be signed by the host institution and the VU.

Note: Every programme, including the choice of optional courses, has to be discussed and agreed upon with the master coordinator or personal mentor and approved by the Examination Board.

Seminar Series and Writing a Research Proposal

Course code	X_400594 (400594)
Period	Ac. Year (September)
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen
Coordinator	dr. ir. K.A. Feenstra
Examinator	dr. ir. K.A. Feenstra
Teaching method(s)	Lecture
Level	500

Course objective

You have a brilliant research idea, and would need about a million euro's to try it out – how do you communicate the idea in your mind to others, and make them enthusiastic enough that they will trust you with their money? You will write a real proposal on a current open bioinformatics problem of your own choosing, and defend it in front of an expert and experienced review committee.

Seminar Series and Writing a Research Proposal is intended to make students acquainted with the academic practice of writing and defending research proposals.

Goals:

- * The student will be aware of the major issues and methodology in a selected bioinformatics topic area.
- * The student will have hands-on experience in writing a Bioinformatics research proposal.
- * The student will have some exposure to a semi-realistic proposal procedure.

Course content

Theory:

- * A short induction into research proposals (calls, budgets, Gantt)

Practical:

- * Attendance of a minimum of three scientific seminars on bioinformatics topics, and short report
- * Design of a one million euro research proposal on a selected bioinformatics topic
- * Defense of the proposal in front of an ad-hoc committee of bioinformatics experts
- * Revision of the proposal based on the feedback received after the defense

Form of tuition

on individual basis, possibly with an introductory lecture depending on the number of students

Type of assessment

[50%] Proposal (report)

[50%] Oral proposal defence (10 minutes presentation, 20 minutes questions) in front of a mock committee.

Course reading

- * manual and further material on

http://wiki.cs.vu.nl/mp/index.php/Bioinformatics_and_Systems_Biology_Research_Proposal

- * relevant background literature

Recommended background knowledge

All compulsory courses in the MSc Bioinformatics and Systems Biology programme, including those of the chosen profile.

A good grasp of major bioinformatics research themes, open questions and methods is recommended; in practice this means this course is best taken after the major internship.

Target group

Students in the MSc Bioinformatics and Systems Biology only (mBio).

Remarks

To start the course please make an appointment with the coordinator.

Signal Transduction in Health and Disease

Course code	X_432535 (432535)
Period	Period 2
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen
Coordinator	prof. dr. M.J. Smit
Examinator	prof. dr. M.J. Smit
Teaching method(s)	Lecture
Level	600

Course objective

At the end of this theoretical course, the students are aware of the latest insights of cellular signal transduction in both healthy and pathological conditions.

Course content

This course will link human genetic variation (somatic and inherited mutations) to the development of disease and will focus on pathological signaling, mutant signaling proteins in disease and possible treatment of resulting disease (small compounds, biologicals, gene therapy). Modern pharmacological concepts, including constitutive receptor activity, receptor regulation, allosteric modulation and dimerization will be addressed in light of signal transduction in health and disease. A special focus will be on signal transduction resulting in pathologies such as Alzheimer, Parkinson's disease, inflammatory diseases and cancer.

Form of tuition

Lectures, self-study.

Students will do a case study in groups on a receptor/protein family linked to disease. Molecular mechanisms underlying pathology will be addressed and presented.

Type of assessment

Assignment and presentation, written exam.

Course reading

'Cell signaling', Authors: Wendell Lim, Bruce Mayer, Tony Pawson

ISBN: 9780815342441

Format: Paperback

Publication Date: June 15, 2014

Papers available on Blackboard

Recommended background knowledge

Bachelor Biology, Medical Biology, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Medical Natural Sciences, Biomolecular Science portal course or equivalent

Target group

mBMS-BC, mDDS-BCCA, mDDS-CMCT, mDDS-DD&S, mDDS-DDSA, mDDS-DDTF, mDDS-C-var, mDDS-E-var, mDDS-M-var, mMNS-MCD, mMNS-MPy

Statistics with R

Course code	X_418156 ()
Period	Period 5
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen
Coordinator	dr. D. Molenaar
Examinator	dr. D. Molenaar
Teaching staff	dr. D. Molenaar
Teaching method(s)	Lecture
Level	400

Course objective

The goal of the course is to obtain practical skills in the programming environment R for statistical analyses. The course will provide hands-on experience in the treatment and investigation of (biological) datasets. Familiarize the students with the intricacies of the modern techniques for data generation and analysis. As a bonus, students will become acquainted with some concepts of higher order programming.

Course content

Systems biologists often have to handle, analyze, and present analysis results of large sets of biological data, originating from genomics, transcriptomics, proteomics, and metabolomics experiments. In many cases, these tasks cannot be performed using standard "press the button" commercial statistical packages. A popular solution to this problem is the use of the open source statistical programming environment R (<http://www.r-project.org/>). R is intensively used and developed in the community of experimental biologists, and most newly published data analysis techniques are first available as R-packages. This course focuses on obtaining the practical skills to perform data handling and analysis tasks from small to large data sets, and to graphically display and interpret the results. Statistical analyses will center on uni- and multivariate analysis (e.g. ANOVA, correlation, regression, clustering, and ordination). Examples of the generation and interpretation of large data sets will be presented from the various fields of biology, ranging from cell biology to ecology. The items treated during the lectures will be studied in computer practical sessions using R.

Form of tuition

Lectures, tutorials, computer practical work, self-study

Type of assessment

Computer assignments

Course reading

A course syllabus with theory and computer exercises will be made available

Recommended background knowledge

Some knowledge of basic statistics

Target group

Master students with a background in Biology, Biomedical Sciences, Bioinformatics, Physics or Mathematics with an interest in the analysis of large datasets.

Structural Bioinformatics

Course code	X_405019 (405019)
Period	Period 4
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen
Coordinator	dr. ir. K.A. Feenstra
Examinator	dr. ir. K.A. Feenstra
Teaching staff	dr. ir. K.A. Feenstra, dr. S. Abeln
Teaching method(s)	Lecture, Practical
Level	400

Course objective

Why Structural Bioinformatics?

Generally speaking, the function of a protein is determined by its three dimensional structure, and therefore structural information is crucial for understanding the working of proteins. However, experiments, prediction and simulation of protein structures remain difficult. This course will provide you an overview of existing computational techniques, to validate, simulate, predict and analyse protein structures. More importantly, it will provide practical knowledge about how and when to use such techniques.

Goals:

- Being able to evaluate protein structures with knowledge of their experimental source and validation techniques
- Being able to compare different protein structures, and evaluate similarity
- Learning how and when to use structure prediction methods
- Being able to create scripts that connect different Structural Bioinformatics methods.
- Being able to compare different simulation techniques for biological macro-molecules, and be able to analyse the simulated data computationally.
- Reading and understanding scientific papers in the field of Structural Bioinformatics.

Course content

Theory:

- Protein and DNA structure sources
- Experimental methods
- Structure validation
- Protein fold prediction (from homology modelling to ab initio prediction)
- Structural classification and structural alignment

- Protein folding and energetics
- Molecular Dynamics simulation, & Monte Carlo simulation
- Function from structure

Practical:

- Obtaining geometric features from PDB files
- Homology modelling with Modeller
- Protein interaction as a 'computational experiment' (simulation).

Form of tuition

13 Lectures (2 two-hour lectures per week)

12 computer practicals (2 two-hour sessions per week)

Feedback (theoretical and practical) will be given during the computer practical sessions.

Type of assessment

The final grade for this course will consist of 50% practical work and 50% theoretical assessment.

Practical Assignments: (50%)

- (1) Obtaining geometric features from PDB files
- (2) Homology modelling with Modeller (including structural alignment)
- (3) Protein interaction as a 'computational experiment' (simulation).

Theoretical: (50%)

- Oral or written exam (depending on number of course students).
- As part of the exam a research paper on a Structural Bioinformatics topic needs to be analysed in detail.
- You will be prepared for you exam through exercises and paper discussion during the lectures

Course reading

- course material on bb.vu.nl
- Marketa Zvelebil and Jeremy O. Baum Understanding Bioinformatics Garland Science 2008 ISBN-10: 0-8153-4024-9

Recommended background knowledge

Bachelor in any science discipline (including medicine).

Basic scripting skills (e.g. Python or Pearl) and an interest in biological problems. Note that at the start of the course a small scripting practical will be given, this means that in practice students without scripting experience can follow the course if they are motivated to learn during the course.

Target group

mAI, mBio, mCS, mPDCS, mMNS, mBMOL, mNS, mBIO

Remarks

- Compulsory course for students in Bioinformatics Profile of MSc Bioinformatics & Systems Biology (mBIO).
- Optional course for mAI, mCS, mPDCS, mMNS, mBMOL, mNS, mBIO

Synthetic Biology and Biomedicine

Course code	X_418125 ()
Period	Period 4
Credits	6.0

Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen

Course content

<http://studiegids.uva.nl/xmlpages/page/2015-2016/zoek-vak/vak/21272>

Remarks

This course is offered at the UvA. For more information contact: FNWI Education Service Centre, Science Park 904, servicedesk-esc-science@uva.nl, +31 (0)20 525 7100.

Enrolment via <https://m.sis.uva.nl/vakaanmelden> is required.

Systems Biology in Practice

Course code	X_418157 ()
Period	Period 2
Credits	6.0
Language of tuition	English
Faculty	Faculteit der Exacte Wetenschappen
Level	400

Course content

<http://studiegids.uva.nl/xmlpages/page/2015-2016/zoek-vak/vak/20673>

Remarks

This course is offered at the UvA. For more information contact: FNWI Education Service Centre, Science Park 904, servicedesk-esc-science@uva.nl, +31 (0)20 525 7100.

Enrolment via <https://m.sis.uva.nl/vakaanmelden> is required.