



COMMON APPLICANT QUESTIONS

Thank you for your interest in the USF Molecular Biosciences Graduate program. Our graduate program is highly interdisciplinary and offers exceptional training across several disciplines to prepare applicants for a wide range of scientific careers in industry, academia, and government. Nearly all our research faculty are funded by the National Institutes of Health and perform state of the art biomedical research. We offer highly competitive assistantships with tuition waivers all within the beautiful setting of Tampa.

Below are some of the most common questions typically asked by initial applicants considering the Molecular Bioscience Graduate Program at USF:

1. [Can the graduate application fee be waived?](#)

Unfortunately, no. All applicants are required to submit an application fee of \$30.00 USD for graduate admission to the University of South Florida. Students may apply for multiple majors, with only one application fee being required per 12-month period from the date of initial application. If you attended USF as a former degree seeking student or non-degree student then you will also be required to submit the application fee.

However, if you participated in one of the following programs then use the Application Fee Waiver form to be considered for the waiver. If any of these do not apply then you are not eligible for an application fee waiver.

- ***APS Bridge Program (American Physical Society Bridge Program)***
- ***RISE Program (Research Internship in Science Education)***
- ***MARC USTAR Program, (Maximizing Access to Research Careers Undergraduate Student Training in Academic Research)***
- ***Leadership Alliance Consortium***
- ***FAMU Graduate Feeder Scholars Program (Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University)***
- ***McNair Scholarship Program (Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program)***
- ***FLGSAMP Program (Florida-Georgia Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation)***
- ***Education USA Opportunity Funds Program***
- ***National Gem Consortium***

2. [Is the GRE required? And is my application competitive?](#)

No, the GRE is optional. However, for international applicants it is recommended. Applicants with minimal research experience would highly benefit from submitting competitive GRE scores.

All applications are considered holistically and not determined in most cases by one specific attribute such as GPA or GRE scores. The only way to be fully considered is to apply by the priority deadline.

Please keep in mind that it is very important you have identified and communicated with a prospective faculty member to serve as your mentor or PI.

3. How should letters of recommendation be submitted?

You can submit them via EMAIL by way of the online application portal and NOT directly mailed in a sealed envelope. The email requests for a letter of recommendation can be initiated via online admission portal or uploaded. Please do not send letters directly to the department of Molecular Biosciences.

4. As an international applicant, what are the minimum requirements needed to demonstrate English proficiency for admission such as with the IELTS and TOEFL?

Applicants from countries where English is not the official language, and who have not earned at least a bachelor's degree in the U.S., must also demonstrate proficiency in the English language. *The minimum test scores required to demonstrate proficiency are:*

IELTS - 6.5

PTE-A - 53

TOEFL (iBT - 79; PBT - 550)

GRE Verbal - 153

Duolingo – 110

5. As an international applicant, what are the English proficiency minimum requirements for an assistantship?

A minimum score of 26 on the spoken portion of the Test of English as a Foreign Language, Internet-based Test (TOEFL iBT) or 160 on the spoken portion of the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). The Office of Graduate Studies will consider these scores valid for up to 5 years after administration, so long as the student has dated supporting/official documentation.

However, USF does provide an ITA Language Assessment of their oral proficiency which is accepted as meeting the state-mandated requirements. To be eligible to teach as a Graduate Instructional Assistant (9550 job code) in their first semester of teaching, students must either show the required TOEFL or TOEIC scores or be registered for the internal ITA Language Assessment. To be eligible to be registered for the assessment, students must have the appropriate TOEFL iBT, TOEIC, IELTS, or Duolingo English Test score:

TOEFL iBT Speaking subscore of 20 - 25

TOEIC Speaking subscore of 110 -150

IELTS Speaking subscore of 6.5 or higher (Effective Fall 2023, an IELTS Speaking subscore of 7 or higher is required)

Duolingo English Test score of 130 or higher

6. Should I already have a mentor or PI identified?

Although not totally required, it is highly recommended that applicants strongly familiarize themselves with the faculty and their research interests. In addition, applicants should identify several faculty members as potential mentors and list them in their statement of purpose along with a description of why they have chosen those particular faculty.

7. *What is the current stipend amount for assistantships?*

For 2023-2024, the yearly stipend amount is \$20,591.84 for Thesis MS, and \$29,375.20 for Ph.D. This is provided with teaching or research assistantship. Please keep in mind that these stipends amount can change annually.

8. *Is health insurance provided?*

Yes, all graduate assistants in the program are eligible for health insurance that is primarily paid for by USF. The 2020-2021 individual annual premium is \$2,915.00. USF will pay up to \$2,756.00 of the annual premium for eligible GAs with at least a .25 FTE. Students will be responsible for the difference in annual premium of \$159.00. Further information on health insurance can be found here:

<https://www.usf.edu/hr/benefits/insurance/graduate-assistants.aspx>

9. *Am I responsible for paying my tuition costs?*

Most of our graduate students are on a teaching assistantship with a stipend and tuition waiver but are responsible for certain fees that are approximately \$1500 per year. Tuition waivers are limited to 10 semesters for Ph.D. students and 5 semesters for M.S. Thesis students.

10. *Is teaching required as part of my assistantship? And how do I apply?*

Typically, yes. Most of our students have a teaching assistantship but there are opportunities for a research assistantship based on PI available funds. In recent years, many students have received research assistantships. In addition, USF does offer a multitude of other scholarships for graduate students that can be found at:

<https://www.usf.edu/admissions/graduate/admission-information/cost-of-attendance/scholarships.aspx>

In terms of applying for a TA, as part of the application process you are automatically considered.