

# BIOLOGICAL ENGINEERING

## Course 20

### Department Contact

BE Academic Office, Undergraduate Programs: [be-sb@mit.edu](mailto:be-sb@mit.edu)

### Description

Biological engineering increases understanding of how biological systems function as both physical and chemical mechanisms; how they respond when perturbed by factors such as medical therapeutics, environmental agents, and genetic variation; and how to manipulate and construct them toward beneficial use. Biological engineering builds on molecular biology and genomic biology to identify and manipulate the mechanistic components of living systems and to accelerate the rate of analysis.

### Inside [Course 20](#)

20 Biological Engineering

Undergraduates: 170

### Introductory Classes

- 20.002 **Introduction to Concepts in Biological Engineering**  
Introduction to scientific advances in the field of biological engineering. Topics covered include drug discovery and delivery, applications of genetic engineering, creation and uses of biomaterials, and development of biological technology to mitigate human disease and environmental problems. Discusses each selected topic from different angles, highlighting research conducted from the nano- to macro-level to highlight the breadth of biological engineering applications. Students have the opportunity to select a topic of interest and explore that topic in more depth. Subject can count toward the 6-unit discovery-focused credit limit for first-year students. Preference given to first-year students.
- 20.010 **Introduction to Experimentation in BE**  
Teaches students to ask research questions and use the steps in the experimental method to test hypotheses. Introduces best practices in basic data analysis and interpretation. Additional topics include exploring experimental failures, unexpected results, and troubleshooting. Goal is to prepare students for undergraduate research opportunities and laboratory-based coursework. This is a discussion-based subject and is dependent on group participation. Preference to first- and second-year students.
- 20.020 **Introduction to Biological Engineering Design Using Synthetic Biology**  
Project-based introduction to the engineering of synthetic biological systems. Throughout the term, students develop projects that are responsive to real-world

# BIOLOGICAL ENGINEERING

## Course 20

problems of their choosing, and whose solutions depend on biological technologies. Lectures, discussions, and studio exercises introduce components and control of prokaryotic and eukaryotic behavior; DNA synthesis, standards, and abstraction in biological engineering; and issues of human practice, including biological safety, security, ethics and ownership, sharing, and innovation. Students may have the option to continue projects for participation in the iGEM competition. Preference to first-year students.

### Course 20-Friendly UROP Areas/Labs

- Koch Institute for Integrated Cancer Research
- Health Sciences and Technology (HST)
- Broad Institute
- MIT Synthetic Biology Center

\*\* Visit <https://be.mit.edu/research/centers> for more information.

### Get Involved with Course 20

Biological Engineering  
Undergraduate Student Board

HST Student Community

Biotechnology Group

Pre-Medical Society

GlobeMed

The BioMakers Group

Hacking Medicine

Undergraduate Biochemistry Association

### Skills

- Prepare project plans for equipment or facility improvements (project management).
- Adapt or design computer hardware or software for medical science uses.
- Lead studies to examine or recommend changes in process sequences or protocols.
- Research new materials to be used for products, such as implanted artificial organs.

### Possible Future Jobs

- **Research and development engineer:** Develop new products and improve existing products for groundbreaking medical device equipment.
- **Regulatory affairs specialist:** Coordinate and document internal regulatory processes, such as internal audits, inspections, license renewals, or registrations. Prepare submissions and obtain approval for products and therapies to markets worldwide.

# BIOLOGICAL ENGINEERING

## Course 20

- **Bioprocessing/food engineer:** Integrate biology and engineering to design sustainable systems that produce high quality food, renewable energy, and biomaterials for consumers while protecting the environment.

### Career Industry Examples

Environmental engineering	Materials handling	Pharmaceuticals
Government	Medicine	Research
Management	Medical technology	Zoology

### Sample Employers

AthenaHealth	CRISPR Therapeutics	Motif FoodWorks
Biogen	Diagnostic Biochips	NIH
Broad Institute	Illumina	Vertex