BIOMEDICAL INFORMATICS, PHD

School of Interdisciplinary Informatics, College of Information Science & Technology

Vision Statement

The Doctor of Philosophy in biomedical informatics (BMI) degree is designed to prepare the next generation of biomedical informatics researchers who are uniquely positioned to advance research and practice in contemporary information and knowledge management that impact biomedical, clinical and translational research, healthcare services, healthcare practice, public health care, and healthcare delivery in general. Graduates will be able to use their preparation to investigate and apply information and computer technologies to solve problems in the biomedical domain.

The mission of the PhD program is to prepare students with the following abilities:

- Understand the theory and application of biomedical informatics focused around the core areas of computer science, medicine, biology, and healthcare
- Knowledge of the analysis, design, development, and implementation of current and future biomedical informatics systems & technologies
- Competence in conducting and managing high quality, basic and applied research in the BMI domain
- Solid grounding in the fundamentals of academic teaching
- Strong foundation in multidisciplinary and emergent areas in biomedical informatics

Program Contact Information

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Program Website (https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-information-science-and-technology/academics/degrees-programs.php)

Admissions

Application Deadlines (Spring 2021, Summer 2021, and Fall 2021)

- Fall: July 1
- Spring: December 1
- Summer: April 1

Program-Specific Requirements

1. Applicants are required to have a command of oral and written English. Those who do not hold a baccalaureate or other advanced degree from the United States OR a baccalaureate or other advanced degree from a predetermined country on the waiver list, must meet the minimum language proficiency score requirement in order to be considered for admission. Minimum acceptable scores are:
   a. Paper-based TOEFL: 577
   b. Internet-based TOEFL: 90
   c. IELTS: 7.0
   d. PTE: 61

2. Graduate Record Exam (GRE): Scores must be submitted but are only one component of a holistic admission decision. Successful applicants typically have GRE scores of 150 verbal and 160 quantitative or better.

3. Three (3) letters of recommendation from references who are able to give an in-depth evaluation of your strengths and weaknesses with respect to academic work, and who are competent to judge your probability of success in graduate school.

4. Statement of Purpose (not to exceed two pages) which address the following questions:
   a. What do you hope to accomplish with a PhD in biomedical informatics?
   b. Why are you applying to this specific program?
   c. What background or qualifications do you have that you believe are essential to success in this program?
   d. What general area or topics do you hope to study?
   e. What do you expect to be doing five to ten years after completion of the doctoral program?

5. Writing Sample

6. Evidence of graduate potential in the form of academic papers, publications, theses or project reports done in an academic or industrial setting.

7. Resume

Applicants must follow the formal procedures established for admission to the graduate program at the appropriate NU campus. Applicants must have:

- successfully completed a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution: preference will be given to students with a masters or doctoral degree from a related field
- demonstrate superior performance in mathematics, including calculus, discrete mathematics and statistics, and a sequence of courses in the theory and practice of one or more information technology areas
- documented test aptitude, interest and commitment to scholarly activities and research
- proficiency in English, sufficient to engage in advanced studies

Evaluation for admission will be based on a portfolio approach that will include the following:

- class standing during the applicant’s baccalaureate and masters level studies.
- grade point average in the undergraduate degree that is equivalent to 3.5 or higher.
- verbal, quantitative, and analytic scores on the aptitude tests of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE)
- letters of recommendation
- other evidence of graduate potential, such as a portfolio of quality of papers or publications, projects, etc., completed by the applicant either in an academic or industrial setting.
- A personal interview, if warranted and feasible.

International students may be assessed for English proficiency and asked to take courses in English as a second language. All students will be encouraged to take courses to improve their technical writing and professional communication skills.

Applicants with International Transcripts: Any applicant to this program who has completed undergraduate or graduate
coursework at an international higher education institution outside of the United States may submit transcripts and degree certificates (with an English translation) in lieu of a course-by-course transcript evaluation from World Education Services (https://www.wes.org/) (WES), Educational Credential Evaluators (https://www.ece.org/) (ECE), or Educational Perspectives (https://www.edperspective.org/). This graduate program will conduct an in-house credential evaluation of your transcript(s).

- UNO reserves the right to require a course-by-course evaluation from WES, ECE, or Educational Perspectives if the program is unable to complete an evaluation or should there be any questions or concerns about the documentation that is received. You will be notified by the individual program if an external course-by-course evaluation is required.
- *Note: If you are admitted, official transcripts and degree certificates (with an English translation)/official course-by-course transcript evaluation, and any applicable official exam scores are required.

### Degree Requirements

The doctoral BMI program typically requires 90 credit hours beyond a baccalaureate degree. It consists of common required foundation/core courses to include doctoral seminars and colloquia, a major field of study, and a cognate/minor field of study in a related discipline.

The doctoral program is divided into four phases from a student’s perspective: foundation/core coursework, major field of study/research coursework, additional elective coursework in cognate field/minor field of study (as advised by the student’s supervisory committee), and doctoral research and dissertation.

### Information Technology Prerequisites

Applicants should have a background in programming languages, data structures, statistics, math or experimental methods (any engineering, computer science related degree). Students with degrees in other disciplines will usually have to take foundation courses. Occasionally, a student’s work experience may be sufficient to waive one or more foundation courses.

### Science Prerequisites

Applicants should have a background in anatomy, physiology, cell biology or equivalent (any health science degree). Students with degrees in other disciplines will usually have to take foundation courses. Occasionally, a student’s work experience may be sufficient to waive one or more foundation courses.

### Track Options

(18 hours from either Bioinformatics or Health Informatics)

At least 3 courses (9 credits) must be 8000-level BMI courses. The remaining courses can include at least one 8000-level graduate-only course and up to six hours of 8xx6 courses.

### Bioinformatics Track

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BMI 8080</td>
<td>SEMINAR IN BIOMEDICAL INFORMATICS</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMI 8300</td>
<td>PUBLIC HEALTH GENOMICS</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMI 8400</td>
<td>LINEAR ALGEBRA FOR ADVANCED COMPUTING AND AI</td>
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<td>BMI 8850</td>
<td>BIOMEDICINE FOR THE NONMEDICAL PROFESSION</td>
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Health Informatics Track

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<tr>
<td>BMI 8866</td>
<td>BIOINFORMATICS ALGORITHMS</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMI 8896</td>
<td>GENETIC SEQUENCE ANALYSIS</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMI 9900</td>
<td>ADVANCED RESEARCH IN BIOMEDICAL INFORMATICS</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMI 9980</td>
<td>INDEPENDENT RESEARCH IN BIOMEDICAL INFORMATICS</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSCI/MATH 8156</td>
<td>GRAPH THEORY &amp; APPLICATIONS</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSCI 8456</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSCI 8876</td>
<td>DATABASE SEARCH AND PATTERN DISCOVERY IN BIOINFORMATICS</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIST 9900</td>
<td>SPECIAL TOPICS IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISQA 8410</td>
<td>DATA MANAGEMENT</td>
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<td>ISQA 8460</td>
<td>INTERNET OF THINGS (IOT), BIG DATA AND THE CLOUD</td>
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<td>ISQA 8700</td>
<td>DATA MINING: THEORY AND PRACTICE</td>
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<td>ISQA 8750</td>
<td>STORYTELLING WITH DATA</td>
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<td>ISQA 9020</td>
<td>TECHNICAL AND PROCESS ISSUES IN INFORMATION SYSTEMS RESEARCH</td>
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<td>ISQA 9030</td>
<td>BEHAVIORAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES IN INFORMATION SYSTEMS</td>
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<td>ISQA 9120</td>
<td>APPLIED EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN AND ANALYSIS</td>
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<td>ISQA 9130</td>
<td>APPLIED MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS</td>
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Total Credits: 18

Doctoral Program Supervisory Committee

The supervisory committee shall be established before a doctoral student begins the last 45 credit hours of their program of study. This committee will have responsibility for planning and supervision of the student's doctoral program in coordination with the BMI graduate program committee, including the development of the comprehensive exam, defense of the doctoral dissertation proposal, the approval of the completed dissertation, and the final oral examination. Review the BMI Doctoral Handbook for more information on requirements for selecting the supervisory committee members. The student’s dissertation advisor will nominate the individual to serve on the supervisory committee in consultation with the student. The responsibilities, procedures, and actions of the supervisory committee are regulated by the rules and bylaws of the Graduate College as established in the UNO Graduate catalog.

Within three weeks of its appointment, the supervisory committee will meet to designate and subsequently file in the Office of Graduate Studies a complete program of studies conforming to the requirements for the degree. At least half of the total hours for the degree must be completed at the University of Nebraska after the filing of the program of study. Any subsequent change in the program or in the dissertation topic must be approved by the supervisory committee and recommended to the dean for Graduate Studies.

Academic Requirements

Up to 36 credit hours of the coursework in the preparatory and advanced studies of the doctoral program may be accepted if from an accredited institution. Academic requirements for the doctorate degree include:

- Doctoral research seminars in one or more of the thematic areas of the program.
- Advanced courses (subject to dissertation advisor and graduate committee approvals) related to the student’s expected field of study/research area.
- Courses in an associated field of study.
- Courses or colloquia relating to teaching, ethics and research.
- Participation in relevant graduate research seminars each semester.
- Successful passing of qualifying (comprehensive) examination.
- Presentation and defense of a dissertation research proposal on a topic in the approved major field of study/research area.
- Submission of the final dissertation manuscript in appropriate format after a successful dissertation defense.

Requirements for Admission to Candidacy

Students will follow the general candidacy requirements in the UNO Graduate College. Admission to the graduate program does not necessarily imply admission to candidacy for a higher degree.

To be admitted to candidacy for the doctorate degree, a doctoral student must:

- Pass the written qualifying (comprehensive) examination.
- Successfully complete all coursework with satisfactory grades.
- Receive the approval of his/her dissertation proposal before the supervisory committee (oral examination).
After the student has met these requirements, the supervisory committee will recommend to the Office of Graduate Studies his/her admission to candidacy for the doctorate degree, the recommendation will note the dates of completing the comprehensive exam. Such a recommendation must be filed at least seven months prior to the final oral examination for defending his/her dissertation in the presence of his/her supervisory committee. Following admission to candidacy, the student must register during each academic year semester until he/she receives the doctorate degree. Students not in residence may register for a minimum of one semester hour credit in dissertation. Failure to register during each academic year semester will result in termination of candidacy. The term of candidacy is limited to three years.

**Dissertation and Final Examination**

The dissertation should treat a subject in-depth from the candidate’s major field of study/research area and as approved by his/her supervisory committee. The student’s dissertation should show his/her technical mastery of the field and create novel material by advancing or modifying knowledge, creating new material, finding new results, drawing new conclusions, or interpreting old material in a new light.

If the dissertation proposal is approved, the student may conduct the dissertation research under the guidance of the dissertation advisor. The student is advised to consult with his/her supervisory committee until the committee accepts the dissertation. After the dissertation research is completed, the dissertation document and/or product must be presented to all the members of the supervisory committee in time to permit review and approval. Manuscripts must be turned in at least thirty days in advance of the final oral examination over the dissertation. The dissertation will be defended at an open meeting conducted by the student’s supervisory committee.

**Grade Requirements**

In addition to maintaining at least a 3.0 GPA for all course work, all doctoral students must obtain a grade of B or better in any of the required courses. Any student failing the grade requirements will be denied from taking the comprehensive examination and/or dismissed from the program.

**Exit Requirements**

**Completing Graduation Requirements**

After successfully defending his or her dissertation, the student should obtain signatures from all members of their supervisory committee on the Report on Completion of Degree form and submit the form along with a copy of their title and abstract page to the Office of Graduate Studies.

**Teaching Requirements**

All doctoral students are required to teach at least one course while studying in the program.

**Residency Requirements**

All full-time doctoral students must complete 27 hours within 18 months in order to meet the residency requirement of the University. Part-time students must complete 18 hours during the same period. The residency requirement ensures that progress toward the degree occurs within a reasonably compact time frame, enabling the doctoral student to integrate his or her course work with the dissertation.

**Progress Report**

At the end of each semester, every doctoral student (full-time or part-time) must complete the Progress Report form and submit it to the chair of the doctoral program committee.

**Satisfactory Progress**

A minimum of three years of full-time graduate study is normally required to complete a doctoral program. The maximum time allowed is eight years from the filing of the student’s plan of study in the Office of Graduate Studies. Students not making satisfactory progress will be counseled out of the program.

**Leave of Absence**

Under extraordinary circumstances, e.g., medical problems, a student may request a leave of absence from the program for a period of no more than one year. The request must be submitted to and approved by the student’s supervisory committee and/or doctoral program committee. The request should include necessary modifications to the plan of study as a result of the leave. The leave of absence stops the clock for the total time required for the program and the time required to meet the residency requirement. If a student withdraws in mid-semester and is approved for a leave of absence, the clock starts at the beginning of the following semester. A student does not have to have met the residency requirement in order to apply for a leave of absence. If a student does not return to the program within the one year approved for the leave of absence, then the student must submit an application to re-apply to the program. Re-admission to the program is not guaranteed at that point. Please refer to the Graduate Catalog for the complete policy on a leave of absence.