Biomedical engineers solve problems in the life sciences and clinical medicine by applying engineering and mathematical techniques. This approach has been fruitful where a descriptive approach is no longer adequate for studying complex systems involved in the body’s transport, regulation, and information processing. Equally important has been the development of devices used inside or outside the body to replace or supplement physiological functions and to enhance the quality of diagnosis and care.

The interplay among the physical sciences, engineering, biology, and the medical sciences takes many forms. The traditional study of complex systems—whether for power transmission, communications, or the operation and control of industrial processes—provided engineers with a number of concepts and techniques that proved valuable in analysis and design. These principles expressed in mathematical form are applicable to a wide range of phenomena, including those in biological processes. Information theory, statistics, and computer technology have opened new areas for exploration of sensory and central nervous activity as well as patient handling and diagnosis. Theories for feedback controls, transport processes, materials science, and mechanics have provided new insight into homeostatic physiological processes. Analysis of heat transfer, fluid flow, and chemical-process control in living organisms requires competence in both engineering and the life sciences. Current studies further understanding of many physiological processes, which in turn leads to improvements in clinical practice, diagnosis, and patient care.

Northwestern was among the first schools to recognize the value of a biomedical engineering background. Today the Department of Biomedical Engineering offers one of the largest and broadest programs in the country at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Most students interested in the field follow its program, but other engineering departments also offer biomedical options.

The biomedical engineering program provides biomedical training that is quantitative, emphasizes problem solving, and treats phenomena from the molecular to the systems levels. The curriculum prepares students for careers in dentistry, medicine, or research or with healthcare corporations. Required courses in mathematics, engineering, and science establish a strong foundation on which the student builds a self-selected area of specialization.

A minimum of 18 course units in engineering design and engineering science, as well as substantial training in design, are required for a biomedical engineering degree.

Those seeking admission to dental or medical school should be familiar with the entrance requirements of schools to which they intend to apply. Many professional schools require courses in physics, organic, and/or physical chemistry and laboratory biology, in addition to courses required by the biomedical engineering program. These requirements may be satisfied by judicious use of electives.

Biomedical Engineering Electives

Students seeking depth in one particular area of biomedical engineering may choose to focus their electives in one of the following three areas:

- Biomechanics and rehabilitation
- Biomaterials and regenerative medicine
- Imaging and biophotonics

Alternately, students may choose a broader approach to the curriculum, selecting electives from two or all three of these areas.

Programs of Study

- Biomedical Engineering Degree (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/engineering-applied-science/biomedical-engineering/biomedical-engineering-degree)

BMD_ENG 101-0 Introduction to Biomedical Engineering (0 Unit)

Information to 1) help students determine if BME is the right major for them and 2) learn how to make the most of their undergraduate experience. The field of biomedical engineering, career and research opportunities, ethics.

BMD_ENG 207-0 BME Lab: Experimental Design (0.5 Unit)

A laboratory course focusing on quantitative physiological measurements and analyses, instrument characterization, statistical design of experiments, and training in preparation and organization of laboratory notes and reports. Prerequisite: AP stats or BMD_ENG 220-0 or IEMS 303-0 or MECH_ENG 359-0.

BMD_ENG 220-0 Introduction to Biomedical Statistics (1 Unit)

Basic statistical concepts presented with emphasis on their relevance to biological and medical investigations.

BMD_ENG 250-0 Thermodynamics (1 Unit)

Physical and chemical principles as applied to biological systems and medical devices. Topics include material balances, thermodynamics, solution chemistry, electrochemistry, surface chemistry, transport, and kinetics. Prerequisites: MATH 228-1; CHEM 132-0, CHEM 152-0, or CHEM 172-0.

BMD_ENG 270-0 Fluid Mechanics (1 Unit)

Fundamentals of fluid mechanics and their applications to biological systems. Prerequisites: GEN_ENG 205-4; MATH 228-2.

BMD_ENG 271-0 Introduction to Biomechanics (1 Unit)

Analysis of stresses and deformations in solids. Problems in biomechanics, with emphasis on assumptions appropriate to modeling biological materials including bone, skin, muscle, and cell membranes. Prerequisite: GEN_ENG 205-2.

BMD_ENG 301-0 Quantitative Systems Physiology (1 Unit)

Functional/structural aspects of mammalian nervous system. Neural biophysics. Laboratory exercises. Prerequisite: PHYSICS 135-2; junior standing recommended.

BMD_ENG 302-0 Quantitative Systems Physiology (1 Unit)

Rigorous overview of cardiovascular and respiratory anatomy, physiology, and pathophysiology. Case studies and a design team project. Prerequisite: MATH 228-1; junior standing recommended.

BMD_ENG 303-0 Quantitative Systems Physiology (1 Unit)

Cellular mechanisms of and quantitative systems' approach to human renal, digestive, endocrine, and metabolic physiology. Prerequisite: junior standing recommended.

BMD_ENG 305-0 Introduction to Biomedical Signals and Electrical Circuits (1 Unit)

Time and frequency domain analysis: convolution representation, Fourier series, Fourier transforms, frequency response, filtering, sampling. Prerequisite: PHYSICS 135-2 or consent of instructor.

BMD_ENG 306-0 Biomedical Systems Analysis (1 Unit)

Introduction to linear systems analysis. Time and frequency domain techniques for analyzing linear systems, emphasizing their applications to biomedical...
systems. MATLAB-based problem sets and lab illustrate topics covered in class. Prerequisites: BMD_ENG 305-0; BMD_ENG 220-0, IEMS 303-0, or MECH_ENG 359-0.

BMD_ENG 307-0 Quantitative Experimentation and Design (1 Unit)
Laboratory and associated lecture concerning quantitative physiology, physiological measurement techniques, instrument design, and statistical design of experiments. Prerequisites: BMD_ENG 305-0; BMD_ENG 306-0; BMD_ENG 220-0, IEMS 303-0 or MECH_ENG 359-0.

BMD_ENG 308-0 Biomedical Signals and Circuits (1.25 Unit)
Time and frequency domain analysis: convolution representation, Fourier series, Fourier transforms, frequency response, filtering, sampling. Prerequisite: PHYSICS 135-2 or consent of instructor.

BMD_ENG 309-0 Biomedical Systems Analysis (1.25 Unit)
Introduction to linear systems analysis. Time and frequency domain techniques for analyzing linear systems, emphasizing their applications to biomedical systems. MATLAB-based problem sets and lab illustrate topics covered in class. Prerequisites: BMD_ENG 207-0 (can also be taken concurrently); BMD_ENG 308-0; BMD_ENG 220-0, IEMS 303-0, or MECH_ENG 359-0; GEN_ENG 205-4.

BMD_ENG 314-0 Models in Biochemistry & Molecular Biology (1 Unit)
Mathematical modeling of biochemical and molecular biological problems, such as allosteric enzymes, bacterial transduction, X-ray diffraction, study of DNA. Prerequisites: BIOL_SCI 215-0; BIOL_SCI 219-0; junior standing recommended.

BMD_ENG 315-0 Application of Genetic Engineering to Immunochemistry (1 Unit)
Recent developments in genetic engineering as applied to the rapidly developing field of immunochemistry for antibodies and related proteins. Prerequisite: BIOL_SCI 215-0; BIOL_SCI 219-0.

BMD_ENG 316-0 Engineering Design of Therapeutic Antibodies (1 Unit)
In-depth study of the development of therapeutic antibodies through protein engineering-the process of selectively modifying the activities of existing proteins and enzymes to improve their function. Prerequisites: BIOL_SCI 215-0; BIOL_SCI 219-0.

BMD_ENG 317-0 Biochemical Sensors (1 Unit)
Theory, design, and applications of chemical sensors used in medical diagnosis and patient monitoring. Electrochemical and optical sensors. Prerequisites: BIOL_SCI 215-0; BIOL_SCI 219-0; CHEM 210-1; PHYSICS 135-2; PHYSICS 135-3.

BMD_ENG 323-0 Visual Engineering Science (1 Unit)

BMD_ENG 325-0 Introduction to Medical Imaging (1 Unit)
Diagnostic X-rays; X-ray film and radiographic image; computed tomography; ultrasound. Prerequisite: PHYSICS 135-3 or equivalent.

BMD_ENG 327-0 Magnetic Resonance Imaging (1 Unit)
Nuclear magnetic resonance; two-dimensional Fourier transform, spin echo and gradient echo imaging; gradient and RF hardware. Prerequisite: PHYSICS 135-3.

BMD_ENG 333-0 Modern Optical Microscopy & Imaging (1 Unit)
Rigorous introduction to principles, current trends, emerging technologies, and biomedical applications of modern optical microscopy. Prerequisites: PHYSICS 135-2; MATH 220-1; MATH 220-2; GEN_ENG 205-4.
Prerequisite: BMD_ENG 270-0 or consent of instructor.

**BMD_ENG 378-0 Transport Fundamentals (1 Unit)**
Fundamental and biomedical applications of diffusive and convective heat and mass transfer. Prerequisites: BMD_ENG 270-0; MATH 228-1; BMD_ENG 377-0 recommended.

**BMD_ENG 380-0 Medical Devices, Disease & Global Health (1 Unit)**
Health systems and technologies to address health problems of the world's underserved populations, with special emphasis on developing countries.

**BMD_ENG 388-SA Health Systems Engineering (1 Unit)**
Introduction to health systems in the context of disease burden with special emphasis in developing countries. We examine healthcare systems, financing, data and analytics. The course focuses primarily on health-related issues confronting South Africa and the associated social and economic impact. 
Prerequisite: consent of instructor.

**BMD_ENG 389-SA Health Technology Management (1 Unit)**
This course provides an introduction to formal concepts and methodologies used in support of health technology planning, assessment and adoption - and related decision making - as part of cost-effective healthcare delivery. Open to participants in the Global Health Technologies Program only.

**BMD_ENG 390-1 Biomedical Engineering Design (1 Unit)**
Open-ended team-designed projects in the medical devices arena. Systems approach requiring design strategy and concepts, including reliability, safety, ethics, economic analysis, marketing, FDA regulations, and patents. Written and oral reports. Prerequisite: BMD_ENG 307-0.

**BMD_ENG 390-2 Biomedical Engineering Design (1 Unit)**
Development of a design project initiated during the previous quarter. Prerequisite: BMD_ENG 390-1.

**BMD_ENG 390-3 Biomedical Engineering Design (1 Unit)**
Continuation of a design project; independent study. May not be repeated for credit.
Prerequisites: BMD_ENG 390-1 or BMD_ENG 390-2; consent of instructor.

**BMD_ENG 391-SA HealthCare Technology Innovation and Design (1 Unit)**
Principles and practice of medical device design for the developing world. Evaluation of user needs in the environment of under-resourced segments of South African healthcare system. Validation and verification of engineering design solutions. Open to participants in the Global Health Technologies Program only.

**BMD_ENG 395-0 Topics in Biomedical Engineering (1 Unit)**
Special Topics in Biomedical Engineering.

**BMD_ENG 396-0 Special Topics (0.5 Unit)**
Special Topics in Biomedical Engineering. Laboratory emphasis.

**BMD_ENG 397-0 Special Topics in Biomedical Engineering (0.5-1 Unit)**
Special Topics in Biomedical Engineering. Laboratory emphasis.

**BMD_ENG 398-0 Special Topics in Biomedical Engineering (0.34 Unit)**
Special Topics in Biomedical Engineering. Laboratory emphasis.

**BMD_ENG 399-0 Projects (1 Unit)**
SEE DEPT FOR SECTION AND PERMISSION NUMBERS.