

**operon**

A functional unit consisting of a promoter, an operator and a number of structural *genes*, found mainly in prokaryotes. The structural genes commonly code for several functionally related *enzymes*, and although they are transcribed as one (polycistronic) *mRNA* each is independently translated. In the typical operon, the operator region acts as a controlling element in switching on or off the synthesis of mRNA.

1992, 64, 162