

# Honors

Guidelines coordinated by the Honors Committee  
KU Undergraduate Biology  
University of Kansas  
(revised: April 2008)

[Honors Intent Form](#)

[Honors Guidelines](#)

## General Information

The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at the University of Kansas recognizes excellence by awarding Departmental Honors to qualified students at graduation. The following guidelines apply to all students seeking to graduate with Honors in Biology, earning any of the following degrees: B.A. Biology, B.A. or B.S. Biochemistry, B.S. Cell Biology, B.S. Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, B.S. Genetics, B.A. Human Biology (Biology concentration), B.A. or B.S. Microbiology, and B.S. Organismal Biology. *These guidelines do not apply to students wishing to graduate with Departmental Honors in Human Biology concentrations in Anthropology, Applied Behavioral Science, Psychology, and Speech-Language-Hearing Science; students in these concentrations should contact the appropriate department and follow their guidelines for departmental honors.*

## “Departmental” versus “University” Honors

The University of Kansas offers its students "Departmental Honors" and "University Honors." This document describes the procedures and requirements for Departmental Honors. To learn about University Honors, consult the University Honors Program at Nunemaker Center and/or visit the Honors Program website: [www.honors.ku.edu](http://www.honors.ku.edu).

## Requirements for Graduation with Honors in Biology

In the following list of requirements for graduation with Honors in Biology, note that there are differences in the requirements for some of the degrees offered by the KU Undergraduate Biology Program. These differences are italicized. The requirements for graduating with Honors in Biology include:

1. Successful completion of all coursework required for the appropriate degree in biology (see list of degrees above).
2. Graduation with a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.25 overall and 3.5 in the major. These GPA minima are based on grades from courses taken at KU *and* those transferred from other schools. For this requirement, courses in the major are those designated “BIOL” for all degrees.

3. **a.** Completion of BIOL 419 (Topics in: Advanced Biology Seminar) with a grade of “B” or better. *This requirement does not apply to Honors students earning any of the Microbiology degrees (see requirement 3b below).*
  - b.** *B.A. or B.S. Microbiology students only* -- completion of one semester of BIOL 599 (Senior Seminar in Microbiology) with a grade of “B” or better.
4. Completion of BIOL 699 (Divisional Honors Research Colloquium) with a grade of “B” or better. *For Honors students earning a Biochemistry degree, BIOL 599 (Senior Seminar in Biochemistry) may be substituted for BIOL 699.*
5. Completion of an independent research project under the supervision of a faculty member in a department appropriate for the degree being sought. The goal of the research should be the attainment of results that warrant publication. Work on this project usually entails enrollment in one or more semesters of a course designated for this purpose (see below). Grades earned in these courses must be “B” or better.
6. Submission of a sole-authored “Honors Thesis” detailing the research and results obtained, written in the standard format of scientific journals, to the Honors Committee.
7. Presentation of the results of the research at the Honors Research Symposium, which is held prior to Commencement each spring semester (or at the end of the Fall semester for students graduating then). The presentation is oral and should be of a quality acceptable at national scientific meetings.

### **Advanced Biology Seminar (BIOL 419)**

This 2-credit course is intended to expand the Honors student’s breadth of knowledge of various avenues of research in the biological sciences. It typically meets once a week for two hours. Each week a different faculty member presents a general overview of his/her research specialty, followed by an in-depth examination of recent studies. Because it is intended for (but not limited to) Honors students, the faculty coordinators of the course encourage a challenging and interactive atmosphere. Advanced Biology Seminar (BIOL 419) is offered at least once a year.

### **Divisional Honors Research Colloquium (BIOL 699)**

This 1-credit course provides each Honors student the opportunity to explore the scientific basis of his/her specific research project in greater detail. Each student is required to present a summary of his/her research orally to the other Honors candidates. Because it must be taken when the Honors research is well underway, so the student has some results to share with the class, this course is typically taken in the student’s final semester of study at KU.

### **The Honors Research**

The research must constitute an independent project completed under the supervision of a faculty member in an appropriate department. This research may encompass laboratory,

field, and/or literature studies, and should reflect a novel contribution to the field of study.

Research in any field is necessarily time-consuming, so ample time must be allowed for preparation and execution of the work. Preparation includes extensive consultation with the faculty mentor, reading the pertinent literature, and learning the appropriate research methods and techniques. Although it is possible to complete some projects in less than a year, most Honors research projects require more than a year to complete. Thus, students are strongly urged to begin pursuit of Honors before their senior year. This also avoids any problems in enrolling in the courses required for graduation with Honors.

Students interested in pursuing graduation with Honors in Biology have several avenues available to find an appropriate mentor: 1) refer to the website of the KU Undergraduate Biology Program (<http://www.kuub.ku.edu>) or the websites of individual biology faculty and departments (via the KUUB website); 2) consult with the Chair of the Honors Committee; or 3) contact a professor directly.

The nature of the independent research project is determined in consultation with the student's faculty mentor. Although the Honors research must be an independent project, it may be a component of a larger project in the mentor's lab. **If it is part of a larger project, the Honors student's research should address a specific and unique question, and the bulk of the data for the Honors project must be collected by the student.**

It is customary, although not required, that the student receive course credit for the Honors research conducted. The course for research is BIOL 424 (Independent Study). The number of credits and number of semesters enrolled must be determined in consultation with the faculty mentor. Although a student may enroll for as many credits of a research course as desired, a maximum of three can be applied toward degree requirements in biology, and only two of those can count as lab credits.

## **Honors Thesis and Oral Presentation**

Once the research is completed (as determined by the faculty mentor), the Honors student must write an Honors Thesis detailing the research project. The thesis is to be written in standard scientific format and include the following sections: title page, abstract, introduction, materials and methods, results, discussion, literature cited. The specific details of the thesis format should be that of a journal in the appropriate biological sub-discipline. The thesis should be written entirely by the student and reflect sole authorship on the title page. Especially for honors research carried out within the context of a larger collaborative project, any results presented in the thesis that are not based on data generated directly by the author should be clearly acknowledged as such.

The Thesis must be reviewed and approved in writing by the faculty mentor prior to submission to the Honors Committee. One paper copy and one electronic version (single PDF file) of the Honors Thesis are to be submitted to the Honors Committee on or before

the announced deadline in the Spring prior to the Honors Research Symposium. A recent ARTS form and a letter from the faculty mentor must be submitted to the Committee by the same deadline. The mentor letter should detail the skills, creativity, independence, and reliability of the Honors student, as well as an analysis of the scientific value of the results obtained and whether publication will be pursued. The faculty letter must explicitly confirm that the student thesis reflects truly independent research. If the honors project is part of a larger collaborative effort, the faculty mentor must clearly explain the student's independent role in the larger effort.

Prior to Commencement, the Honors student will present a summary of his/her research findings at the Honors Research Symposium. This presentation will be oral, no more than 15 minutes long (which *includes* several minutes for questions), and professionally done, of sufficient quality to be presented at a national scientific meeting. The Symposium is open to the public and is announced in advance to members of the KU biology departments. Friends and family members are encouraged to attend.

### **Evaluation of the Honors Student**

The Honors Thesis and the oral presentation should reflect the student's command of a pertinent body of facts and concepts and of appropriate scientific methods and techniques; it should reflect the student's ability to analyze and interpret data appropriately, and to present the results and conclusions clearly and succinctly.

At the end of the Honors Research Symposium, the Honors Committee will meet to determine if the student has met all the requirements for graduation with Honors as listed above, and if the student's research efforts, knowledge of the specific research area, and ability to communicate the findings of that research in both written and oral form merit the awarding of Honors. The decision of the Committee will be conveyed to the Honors student immediately. Students successfully earning Honors in Biology will receive a certificate and Honors cord at the Biology Graduation Recognition Ceremony held the Saturday before Commencement.

### **Award for Outstanding Honors Thesis and Presentation**

It is customary for the Honors Committee to select the Honors student having written the most outstanding Honors Thesis and the student having given the most outstanding presentation at the Honors Research Symposium. Cash awards and certificates will accompany these selections and will be presented at the Biology Graduation Recognition Ceremony each Spring.

### **Honors for Students Graduating in the Fall Semester**

Students planning to graduate with Honors in Biology at the end of the Fall semester should contact the Chair of the Honors Committee early in their final semester. The Chair

will establish the deadline for the Honors Thesis, as well as arrange the date and details of the Honors Symposium at the end of the Fall semester. Students graduating at this time will be notified well in advance of these dates. Given the small number of students who normally graduate with Honors in the Fall semester, the Awards for Outstanding Honors Thesis and Presentation are reserved for the larger group of Honors students graduating in the Spring semester. All other procedures and requirements described in this document for students expecting to graduate with Honors at the end of the Spring semester apply to students graduating in the Fall semester.

Students who know in advance that they will be graduating during the Fall semester are encouraged to discuss their plans as early as possible with the Chair of the Honors Committee. It is possible, for example, that BIOL 699 might not be offered in the Fall semester in which graduation is anticipated.

### **Honors Committee**

The members of the Honors Committee represent a diverse array of research interests in the Division of Biological Sciences. Each of the two Departments in the Division are represented by two faculty members, chosen to represent the diversity of research interests in their department. The current members of the committee are:

Dr. Daphne Fautin (Chair), Professor, Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, 3002 Haworth Hall, 864-3062;

Dr. Kristi Neufeld, Assistant Professor, Molecular Biosciences, 7049 Haworth, 864-5079;

Dr. William Dentler, Professor, Molecular Biosciences, 4011 Haworth Hall, 864-3490;

Dr. Rudolf Jander, Professor, Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, 5026 Haworth Hall, 864-3457;

### **Registering for Graduation with Honors**

All students who wish to graduate with Honors in Biology must register with the Honors Committee by submitting the “Departmental Honors Intent Form” attached to these guidelines. The form is also available in the main biology office from Jan Elder, Administrative Assistant for KU Undergraduate Biology (2045 Haworth), or from Dr. Daphne Fautin, Chair of the Honors Committee (3002 Haworth). The completed Honors Intent Form—signed by the student and supervising faculty member—should be submitted to Jan Elder.

### **If You Have Questions**

If you have any questions about graduation with Honors --

in Biology, contact Daphne Fautin, 3002 Haworth Hall (864-3062, email [fautin@ku.edu](mailto:fautin@ku.edu));

in Microbiology, contact Stephen H. Benedict, 7035 Haworth Hall (864-4007, email sbene@ku.edu);

or contact Jan Elder, 2045 Haworth Hall (864-5883, email bilbo@ku.edu).