

Guidelines for Graduation with Honors in Biology

KU Undergraduate Biology The University of Kansas

General Information

The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences recognizes students with high achievements in coursework and laboratory research by awarding Departmental Honors. Students earning a B.A. degree in Biology, Biochemistry, Microbiology or Human Biology (see below), or a B.S. degree in Biochemistry, Microbiology, or Biology (Cell Biology, Genetics, Neurobiology, Organismal Biology, or Ecology & Evolutionary Biology) are eligible for Department Honors. *These guidelines do not apply to Honors in Human Biology with 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.*

This document describes the procedures and requirements for attaining **Departmental Honors**. To learn about **University Honors**, consult the University Honors Program's website: www.honors.ku.edu.

Requirements for Graduation with Honors in Biology (*specific requirements for some degrees are noted in italics*)

1. **Coursework:** Complete all coursework required for the appropriate biology degree with a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.25 overall and 3.5 in the major. GPA is based on grades from courses taken at KU *and* those transferred from other schools.
2. **BIOL 419:** Complete BIOL 419 (Topics in: Advanced Biology Seminar, 2 credits) with a grade of "B" or "A". Students and faculty discuss the rationale, methods, and interpretations of research projects carried out in individual faculty labs at KU to gain an understanding of how scientific research actually is carried out. *Honors candidates earning a B.A. or B.S. in Microbiology must substitute one semester of BIOL 599 (Senior Seminar in Microbiology) with a grade of "B" or better.*
3. **BIOL 699:** Complete BIOL 699 (Divisional Honors Research Colloquium, 1 credit) with a grade of "B" or "A". Honors candidates present and discuss their own research projects with a group of peers and faculty. This course is usually taken during the student's final semester at KU. *For Honors candidates earning a Biochemistry degree, BIOL 599 (Senior Seminar in Biochemistry) may be substituted for BIOL 699.*
4. **Honors Research Project and Honors Thesis:** In collaboration with their research mentor, students design and complete an independent research project. Projects are individually tailored and may involve laboratory, field, and/or literature studies. The projects require a significant amount of effort and ample time must be allowed to design a project, read pertinent literature, learn and develop appropriate research techniques, and obtain and interpret results. It is possible to complete some projects in less than a year, but most projects require more than a year of work. Candidates are strongly urged to begin their projects during their freshmen, sophomore or junior years.

To choose a research mentor, first examine the kinds of research projects carried out by faculty. Faculty research descriptions are presented at (<http://www.kuub.ku.edu>) and in individual departmental and faculty websites (linked to <http://www.kuub.ku.edu>). You also are invited to discuss research and finding a mentor with the Honors Committee Chairperson. The Honors project must be independent, but many individual projects are part of larger projects in the mentors laboratory. Each candidate should have a clearly defined part of a project and collect and present their own data to earn Biology Honors.

Honors students generally enroll in BIOL 424 (Independent Study); grade earned must be “B” or better. The number of credits (no maximum) and number of semesters enrolled are determined by consulting with the faculty mentor. A maximum of three credits may be applied towards biology degree requirements; two of these can be counted for a laboratory requirement.

When a project is completed, candidates write an **Honors Thesis** describing the project, results, and interpretation of results in a format appropriate for publication in a scientific journal for the research area. Each thesis must include a Title page, Abstract, Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, Discussion, and Literature citations. The thesis must be written by the candidate and reflect sole authorship on the title page. Research carried out as part of a large collaborative project must identify results that were not collected by the candidate.

Prior to submission to the Honors Committee, the thesis must be reviewed and approved *in writing* by the faculty mentor. One paper copy and one electronic (PDF) copy of the thesis must be submitted to the Honors Committee on or before the announced deadline (usually one week prior to the Honors Research Symposium). A current ARTS form and a letter from the faculty mentor must accompany the thesis. The letter should confirm that the candidate independently carried out the project or, if part of a collaborative project, specifically address the candidate’s contributions.

5. **Oral Presentation:** Honors candidates present a formal 15 minute summary of their research at the Honors Research Symposium, faculty, friends, and family members are encouraged to attend this event. Following the symposium, the Honors Committee meets and determines if the candidate has met the Honors requirements. Students earning Biology Honors will receive a certificate and Honors cord at the Undergraduate Biology Graduation Recognition Ceremony (held the Saturday before Commencement).

Students Graduating in the Fall Semester

Honors candidates planning to graduate at the end of the Fall Semester must contact the Honors Committee Chairperson in September. The Chair may request that the student return and present their research to the Honors Symposium in the Spring Semester if the number of Honors students graduating in December is insufficient to warrant a Fall Symposium.

Registering for Graduation with Honors

Students who wish to graduate with Biology Honors must register with the Honors Committee by completing the “Departmental Honors Intent Form” attached to these guidelines. Please submit completed forms with approval by the faculty mentor to Pam McElroy in 2045 Haworth.

If You Have Questions

If you have any questions about graduation with Honors, contact --
in **Biology**, William Dentler, 4011 Haworth Hall (864-3490, wdent@ku.edu);
in **Microbiology**, Stephen H. Benedict, 7035 Haworth (864-4007, sbene@ku.edu);
or contact Jan Elder, 2045 Haworth Hall (864-5883, jelder@ku.edu).