

School of Biology Honors Thesis Requirement and Guidelines

Eligible Students

Students eligible to perform an honors thesis are Biology majors who have completed 20 hours of Biology coursework, have a minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.3, and are in good standing. Students who do not meet these eligibility criteria can petition to waive these requirements by submitting a petition and a letter of recommendation by the potential mentor to the Biology Honors Advisor.

Eligible Mentors

Any permanent full-time faculty members in the School of Biology.

Final Product

The product of the thesis could include one of the following:

1) A written paper, at least 20 pages long (double spaced, not including references) detailing the work that the student performed with the mentor. Additionally, the student will also present the work in poster format at a conference (professional or University conference, for example, the Georgia State Undergraduate Research Conference (GSURC)).

2) A written paper with the format above, and an oral presentation of the work presented to either the student's committee (if the committee exists) or as an open seminar to the School of Biology.

3) A written paper with the format above and physical product of the student's design (for example: model, laboratory assay, piece of technology, teaching tool, etc).

4) A student can propose an alternative final product, subject to approval by the thesis mentor and the Biology Honors Advisor.

Product Evaluation

Final product will be evaluated in the following ways:

1) The final paper will be reviewed and graded by the thesis mentor and one other reader, (selected by the Mentor) from the Biology faculty.

2) The final poster, seminar or physical product will be evaluated by an ad hoc committee consisting of the thesis mentor, the reader and at least one other Biology faculty member.

Coursework

There are two models for performing the honors thesis:

1) Model 1. The student identifies a mentor for the honors thesis, and submits a proposal to the Biology Honors Advisor for approval. If approved, the student will register for BIOL 4870 in semester

one, and BIOL 4880 (at least 3 credit hours) in semester two. The student should have regular meetings with the mentor, at least twice a month, during that time. To successfully complete and receive a grade for semester one, the student must submit a statement of progress, outlining the work that was done during that semester and what must be done to complete the thesis in semester two. This will be evaluated by the mentor.

2) Model 2. The student will register for at least one semester of an alternative course in semester one that includes research, field work, or internship experience (examples include but are not limited to: BIOL 4905, BIOL 4910, BIOL 4915, BIOL 4916, domestic field school or study abroad experience). If the student decides to extend that work done in semester one to a full honors thesis, a proposal to do so will be submitted to the Biology Honors Advisor for approval. If approved, the student will then register for BIOL 4880 (at least 3 credit hours), under the mentorship of the instructor from the alternative course in semester one.

Proposal and Course Authorization

In order to obtain approval from the School of Biology to perform the honors thesis, the student must submit a proposal with the parameters below to the Biology Honors Advisor. For students engaged in Model 1, the proposal must be submitted prior to semester one. For students engaged in Model 2, the proposal must be submitted prior to semester two.

Proposal guidelines: Students must notify the Honors College of their intent to conduct an honors thesis by completing the online Intent to Conduct a Thesis Form, which requires that students: 1) Identify the faculty member who has agreed to supervise their project; 2) write a 200-word summary of their project, and; 3) provide a tentative title for their project. In Model 1, the form is due prior to semester one. In Model 2, the form is due prior to semester two. This form is due April 1 for summer registration, August 1 for fall registration, and December 1 for spring registration.

Final Product Evaluation

In either model, the final paper and product must be submitted to the mentor no later than 30 days before the last day of classes in semester two. The mentor will then review and suggest edits/changes to the student. The final draft and final product will then be submitted to the reader and/or committee for final evaluation. Students who receive a passing grade must notify the Honors College that they have successfully completed their honors thesis by completing the Certification of Successful Completion form. This form is due by the last day of final exams during the semester in which the thesis is completed.

Required attendance at Honors Thesis Sessions

Students are required to attend three sessions led by the Honors College Thesis Team each semester that they are working on their honors thesis. The three 2-hour sessions are held at the beginning, middle and end of the semester. The last session is the Thesis Pitch, which is an oral competition event where

students have 3 minutes to communicate the importance of their research. Presenting at the Thesis Pitch is voluntary, but attendance is required.

Honors College support

Honors College students participating in Honors Theses are eligible to borrow a laptop computer from the Honors College for the semester, contingent on availability. These students may also apply for financial support to present at conferences and purchase supplies for their research. In addition, to the three required sessions, there are several workshops held in the Honors College each semester to provide support for Honors College thesis students. The Faculty Associate for Research and Theses and the Research Program Coordinator are available to advise students and their mentors.

Questions

Contact the School of Biology Honors Advisor, the Honors College Research Program Coordinator, and/or the Office of Undergraduate Research and Fellowships Director.

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