

Honors Thesis Procedures Check List

Directions: Please refer to Steps in written procedures below.

Decide on a graduation date: _____. Using a calendar, determine deadline dates for actions below by counting back from target graduation date. Fill in appropriate deadline dates. After an action is completed, write the completion date in the space provided and have it initialed by your supervisor.

Action	Step(s) in Written Procedures	Deadline (Thesis procedures that occur before the deadline are most welcome)	Completion Date	Supervisor's Initials
Maintain the proper QPA	Step 1	QPA \geq 3.2 for Junior & Senior Years QPA \geq 3.35 for Honors courses		
Initiate discussion with potential faculty advisor regarding research. Optional: Take Independent Study (BIOL 498)	Step 2	Freshman & Sophomore Year		
Attend Thesis Workshop	Step 3	Sophomore Year		
Meet with Honors College Director	Step 4	Sophomore Year		
Faculty Advisor and Thesis Topic is Identified	Step 5	Beginning of Junior Year		
Choose Thesis Committee Supervisor Member 1 Member 2 (Member of Honors College) Optional Member 3	Step 6	Beginning of Junior Year		
Complete Thesis Prospectus/Statement of Intent; Submit to Honors College Office	Step 7	End of First Semester of Junior Year		
Completed thesis proposal for Thesis Committee and obtain proper research permits (e.g., IRB, IACUC etc.)	Step 8	End of First Semester of Junior Year		
Register for BIOL 499 or 498 (\geq 1 credit).	Step 9	Junior & Senior Year		
First Committee Meeting	Step 10	Junior Year		

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Attend Honors College Jam Session (Optional)	Step 11	Junior Year and/or Senior Year		
Register for BIOL 499 (≥ 1 credit).	Step 12	Junior & Senior Year (Make sure you total at least 2 credits)		
Begin writing thesis (Outline, Introduction, and Methods & Materials)	Step 13	First Semester of Senior Year		
Second committee meeting. Total number of committee meetings should be determined by the student and thesis advisor.	Step 14	First Semester of Senior Year		
First full draft of thesis paper to thesis committee	Step 15	Beginning of Second Semester of Senior Year		
Third committee meeting. Total number of committee meetings should be determined by the student and thesis advisor.	Step 16	Second Semester of Senior Year		
Inform committee of date, time, and place of thesis defense	Step 17	At least one month before Thesis Defense		
Second draft (defense-ready) to Committee	Step 18	At least one month before Thesis Defense		
Advertise public oral defense for the Department.	Step 19	1 week before Thesis Defense or an agreed upon time set by the Committee.		
Public oral defense for the Department.	Step 20	2 weeks before Graduation or an agreed upon time set by the Committee.		
Final revised draft to committee	Step 21	Before the Thesis Defense or an agreed upon time set by the Committee.		
Obtain signatures; print hard copies of thesis and provide to Honors College, Department and all thesis committee members; original signature page to Honors College Office	Step 22	Within 1 week post Thesis Defense or an agreed upon time set by the committee.		

Recommendations for Completing a University Honors Thesis in Biology

A University Honors Thesis in Biology should include original research (theoretical, laboratory or field) designed and executed by the student in consultation with a research advisor that aims to answer a novel question or address a relevant problem in a specific discipline. The student must describe and analyze his/her results in a formal written thesis. The thesis must be defended in a public forum. Students should use the recommended attached checklist to document completion of the procedures below.

- Step 1.** To be eligible for University Honors, a student needs a 3.2 by graduation and 3.35 in honors courses by graduation
- Step 2.** During the freshman year and beginning of their sophomore year, students should investigate faculty research interests and expertise, and be prepared to initiate discussions with potential faculty advisors regarding thesis research opportunities and topics.
- Steps 3 & 4.** During the sophomore year, students must attend the Thesis Workshop and meet individually with the Director of the Honors College. By the end of their sophomore year, students should have a faculty advisor with a thesis topic identified.
- Steps 5 & 6.** During the first semester of their junior year, students should work with their thesis advisor to choose a faculty committee comprised of at least two faculty members other than their advisor. The selection of this committee depends on the nature of the thesis research. It is necessary to involve your committee early in the thesis process so they can have input on your Thesis Proposal. One committee member should represent the Honors College (see list of faculty on Honors College webpage).
- Step 7.** During the first semester of their junior year (or earlier), students must complete a Thesis Prospectus/Statement of Intent document that is submitted to the University Honors College.
- Step 8.** By the end of the first semester of their junior year, students should have a completed a formal Thesis Proposal that outlines their Departmental Honors research project. Students should have also worked with their advisor to submit their protocols for obtaining proper research permits (e.g., IRB, IACUC etc.). Students should take one credit of Honors Independent Study (BIOL 489) during their junior year.
- Step 9.** Students in the University Honors College (UHC) are required to complete a minimum of 2 credits of BIOL 489 and 1 credit of BIOL 499 or 1 credit of 489 and 2 of 499. BIOL 499 is taken in the semester of the thesis defense. A maximum of 8 total credits of BIOL 489/499 may be used to fulfill UHC requirements. BIOL 489 & 499 credits (1-3) will satisfy the General Education Advanced Writing requirement, provided total credit requirements for the major and the degree are met.
- Step 10.** It is recommended that the student should meet with their committee at least once during the junior year and once during the senior year, or as frequently as agreed upon by the student, advisor, and committee. It is recommended that, at a minimum, a committee meeting should occur after completion of the thesis proposal and prior to the start of data collection, and again one semester prior to the thesis defense. The student and advisor are encouraged to involve committee members in the design of the research project. Committee meetings provide an opportunity for the student and committee to discuss progress, strengths, and shortcomings of the thesis proposal and

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research, and provide the chance for committee members to communicate their expectations for the finished thesis product.

- Step 11.** Students should try to attend one or more Honors College Thesis Jam Sessions, which are social gatherings within the Honors College where students share information on their thesis projects.
- Step 12.** Continue to register for Honors thesis credits. If the student does not meet satisfactory progress in a timely fashion as agreed upon by the student and advisor, a decision should be made as to whether the student should continue their thesis project.
- Step 13.** The written thesis shall be a formal, technical, and polished document that **must** meet the following guidelines: a) relevant background on the topic and rationale for the study; clear hypotheses and predictions (Introduction); b) description of how the results were obtained and analyzed (Methods); c) a narrative plus tables and figures that clearly summarize data and analyses (Results); and d) discussion of how findings address the research hypotheses, biological interpretation of results, reflection on how findings fit with those of prior research, and application of findings to the broader topic at hand (Discussion). The thesis must include proper citations of the original literature in the respective field of study. The exact format and content of the written thesis shall be determined by the thesis advisor. The thesis paper must also include a title and signature page. Examples of honors theses are available for review in the Biology Department office and the University Honors College Office at the Franklin House.
- Steps 14, 15, 16 & 18.** Definitive timeframes for the completion of thesis drafts and revisions should be determined and agreed upon by the student and thesis advisor. It is recommended that a first draft of the thesis be submitted to the advisor at the beginning of the semester in which the defense is planned. After an initial round of revision(s) based on the advisor's feedback, the student will submit a complete and polished draft of the thesis to their committee for review. Students should expect to revise the thesis based on the committee's feedback, and submit a near final draft to the committee no later than one week prior to their defense date so that they can review the thesis prior to the defense. Committee members may request additional edits to the thesis before or during the thesis defense. The final thesis draft will not be approved until it sufficiently addresses all feedback received from the advisor and committee.
- Steps 17 & 19.** The exact date of the public oral defense should be determined and agreed upon well in advance by the student and thesis advisor. It is recommended that the oral defense occur during the second to last week of the semester (before finals). Earlier would be preferred. Committee members shall be notified in writing of the date, time and place of the defense at least one month before the defense. The defense must be advertised to the department at least one week prior to the defense date.
- Step 20.** The oral thesis defense will be a formal public department presentation given by the student. It will be immediately followed by questions from the audience. After the public question session, a closed defense will occur where the student will address questions and receive feedback regarding the oral presentation and written thesis from the thesis advisor and committee members.
- Step 21.** At least within one week post defense, or a timeframe agreed upon by the committee, the approved written thesis shall be signed by the advisor and committee members, at which point a grade will be issued by thesis advisor. One copy of the approved written thesis will be distributed

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to each committee member and the Biology Department office. Two copies of the thesis, one of which contains the original signature page, will be provided to the University Honors College. One electronic PDF will be emailed to the Honors College Office.

Step 22. Honors designation and a final thesis grade will be based on the collective quality of the work (research, written thesis, oral presentation, and responses to questions during the defense) as determined by the thesis committee in a faculty-only session immediately following the closed portion of the defense. To receive University Honors credit, a final thesis grade of B- or higher must be earned; this grade will awarded for the BIOL 499 credit taken during the student's final semester.

Step 22. University Honors may not be awarded if the student fails to comply with proper procedures and expectations, and the student will not receive credit for BIOL 499. In some cases, it may be appropriate to award credit for BIOL 498 (Independent Study) in lieu of BIOL 499. Failure to comply with University Honors Thesis requirements should be determined by the thesis advisor and committee. Note: If University Honors and associated credit (BIOL 499) is not granted, then the student will be unable to apply their thesis credits towards fulfilling the General Education Advanced Writing Requirement.