

BIOLOGY HONOURS PROGRAM

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Biology Honours Program provides an opportunity for qualified senior undergraduates to undertake a research project, to work closely with a research supervisor, and to improve their skills in oral and written scientific communication. The Honours Program is especially recommended for students considering postgraduate work in biology. It comprises four required courses, in addition to the Biology Majors program requirements: BIOL 330, Study Design and Data Analysis; BIOL 460, Honours Seminar; and BIOL 499A and 499B, Honours Thesis.

BIOL 460 is a seminar course to be taken in the Fall Term of the student's final year. Students practice public speaking skills on a range of topics. Supervisors may attend.

Research for BIOL 499A/B (the Honours Thesis) is normally carried out in the fall term prior to graduation. The thesis is typically prepared in the final winter term, and presented in a public, oral defence during the April examination period.

ENTRY INTO THE HONOURS PROGRAM

Entry into the Biology Honours Program requires an overall GPA of 6.0 in all biology courses (from UVic and elsewhere). The student must find a regular faculty member in the Department of Biology willing to supervise their research project. The student may be co-supervised by an adjunct faculty member in Biology or an appropriately qualified co-supervisor from outside the Department, but the other co-supervisor must be a regular faculty member in the Department. Biology Honours Advisors can offer helpful suggestions on potential supervisors and projects. The student, supervisor(s) and Honours Advisor must agree upon a suitable project.

Students registered in a Combined Honours program may register for their Honours project in either of the two contributing departments, as determined by the home department of their supervisor.

Interested students should be entering their final year and should have completed most of the requirements for a Major in Biology (or a combined degree program). Students should contact a Biology Honours Advisor (biology.honours@uvic.ca), preferably in the Spring Term prior to their final year, and declare their intention to apply. The Advisor will review the student's academic history and confirm that the student meets the GPA requirement. If the Honours admission standards are met, the student should submit an application form briefly describing the project and confirming the supervisor. The Biology Honours Advisor will then recommend to the Advising Centre that the student be admitted to the program.

The normal deadline for application to the Biology Honours program is July 1. Late applications will be accepted if space is available in the program.

After acceptance into the Honours Program, the student must submit a Request for Program Change on the DeclareMe portal, before registering in BIOL 460 and BIOL 499A/B at the appropriate time. The courses must be added by the last ADD date in the fall term.

Students should register in BIOL 460 and BIOL 499A in the fall term, and BIOL 499B in the spring term. In special cases, students may register for Honours in other terms, but BIOL 460 must be taken in the fall and BIOL 499A and 499B must be taken in consecutive terms.

HONOURS PROJECT RESEARCH

Each student develops an Honours research project in consultation with their supervisor or co-supervisors. A two-page outline of the research project is submitted to the Supervisor(s) and Honours Advisor within 6 weeks of the start of classes in fall term. The outline should explain the objectives of the research, the hypotheses to be tested, and the methodology to be used in data collection and analysis of results.

For BIOL 460, all students present a 15 minute research project seminar during the fall term, followed by questions and evaluation. The seminar should outline the context for the research and explain the objectives, methods and planned experiments. At this stage, a comprehensive account of results is not expected.

A two-page summary of results achieved in the experimental work for the thesis is submitted to the Supervisor(s) and Honours Advisor by the end of February in the spring term. The purpose of this summary is to demonstrate that the student has completed the research phase of the work in time to prepare the thesis.

HONOURS THESIS AND DEFENSE

The Honours thesis is a written document similar in format to a graduate thesis. Honours students should submit their theses by the last day of lectures and defend them during the April examination period. The Supervisor(s) must approve a draft copy of the thesis before submission. The student distributes electronic or hard copies of the thesis for all members of the examining committee. This committee consists of the student's project supervisor(s), an Honours Advisor, and another examiner (to be chosen by the supervisor in consultation with the student, and approved by the Honours advisors).

The oral defence consists of a 20 minute presentation by the student on their results, followed by questions on the thesis and presentation from the members of the examining committee. After the defense, at least one final, corrected copy of the thesis should be submitted to the Biology General Office. This copy will be bound and returned to the student. The student should consult with their supervisor(s) to ask if the supervisor would like to pay for a bound copy of the thesis. If so, the student should print and submit this additional copy.

GRADING

BIOL 460 is a COM/INC course.

BIOL 499A/B receives a grade, based on the evaluation of the thesis and thesis defense and on the research supervisor(s)'s assessment of the student's performance.