

# ***DEPARTMENTAL HONORS IN BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES***

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## **PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

**9/6/2012**

- A. Apply for admission to the Program by March 30<sup>th</sup> of the sophomore year or by November 30<sup>th</sup> of junior year. *See reverse for details.*
- B. Complete a major in the Department (Biological Sciences, Ecology & Evolution, Microbiology, or Molecular Biology).
- C. Final GPA in Biological Sciences courses of 3.25 or above.
- D. Final overall GPA of 3.25 or above.
- E. Complete one 3-credit University Honors College (UHC) course in any discipline.
- F. Complete one term of a Departmental seminar course (BIOSC 1550, 1560, 1570, or 1580). *This requirement is occasionally waived for Biological Sciences majors who do not have the prerequisites for these courses.*
- G. Complete 6 credits of BIOSC 1904 Honors Research (or equivalent) prior to the final semester in which the Honors Thesis is to be written. *Students must be admitted to the Departmental Honors Program BEFORE enrolling in BIOSC 1904 or equivalent. The research requirement must be completed in at least two, and preferably three, semesters.*

Research must either be completed under the direction of a **Biological Sciences** faculty member in their laboratory or students may ask the Chair of the Undergraduate Honors Committee to serve as a co-sponsor for biology research to be performed in a different department. *See additional handout for details of BIOSC 1904 equivalency and co-sponsors.*

- H. Present your work at a poster session at any time while completing BIOSC 1904. The poster session may be at the departmental (fall retreat or spring/summer Undergraduate Research Fairs), university (fall Science 20XX or spring UHC Research Fair), or national levels.
- I. Complete research integrity training during (or prior to) the first semester of BIOSC 1904. The Department will provide instructions for how to complete the training.
- J. Write an Honors Thesis based on your research (~20 pages), which will be in the form of a journal article including a literature review, description of materials and methods used, results and data analysis including figures and tables, and a discussion including the conclusions and significance. A complete draft of the thesis will be due to the faculty sponsor(s) by the 8th week of the term. The faculty sponsor(s) directing your research will review the thesis and suggest any needed revisions. The revised copy is then submitted in the 10th week for approval by the research sponsor(s). The final copy is submitted to the Departmental Honors Committee for final approval. The approved Honors Thesis will serve as the basis for preparation of the oral report.

To have the writing of the Honors Thesis fulfill the requirement for a Writing Course in the major, students must take BIOSC 1905 Honors Research Writing Practicum (1 credit), which is offered in the spring semester.

*Students must have completed the 6 credits of BIOSC 1904 Honors Research before writing the Honors Thesis. Therefore, students writing theses in the spring semester of the senior year must have completed BIOSC 1904 by the end of the fall semester.*

- K. Present the results of your research orally, along with other Honors candidates, at a one-day Departmental Honors Symposium, usually held in the 13th week of the Spring Term.

## **APPLYING FOR ADMISSION** (*current* overall and BIOSC GPA must be 3.25 or above)

**The recommended time of application is March 30<sup>th</sup> of the sophomore year.** The Departmental Honors Committee reviews applications twice a year. Submit Applications by **March 30<sup>th</sup>** of the sophomore year or by **November 30<sup>th</sup>** of the junior year.

Only students **admitted** to the Departmental Honors Program may register for BIOSC 1904 or be considered for the equivalency.

Application checklist:

- Application form – available in the Biological Sciences Advising Office, A258 Langley Hall
- Transcript
- Essay (1 page) – career plans, reason for choosing your major, reasons for wanting to participate in the honors program, and any other pertinent information
- Research Prospectus (1 page) – a brief description of the research plan (basic goals and procedures) for 2-3 semesters of work, which should be reviewed by the faculty mentor before submission

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## **DIFFERENT “*HONORS*” OPTIONS YOU MAY ENCOUNTER AT PITT**

- (1) You can graduate with a BS degree from the Department of Biological Sciences with *Departmental Honors*. That’s what *this* application is for.
- (2) The University Honors College has a special degree option that grants a *Bachelor of Philosophy*. This is different from our Departmental Honors. You should speak to the UHC about this option.
- (3) The University of Pittsburgh grants undergraduate degrees *with Honors* (sometimes called “Latin Honors”) based solely on overall GPA. The University confers this automatically when you graduate. Based on GPA, they are:  
3.75 = Summa Cum Laude; 3.50 = Magna Cum Laude; 3.25 = Cum Laude

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## **EQUIVALENCY OPTION FOR BIOSC 1904**

The research credits may be obtained by enrolling in BIOSC 1904 or by documenting an equivalent research effort in the case where enrolling in credits is not feasible (e.g. paid research).

- A. The requirements for hours of laboratory work, and expected progress, should be comparable to that expected for students enrolled in BIOSC 1904.
- B. To **document BIOSC 1904 equivalency**, a student must submit materials to the Departmental Advising Office at the **beginning** and at the **end** of each semester:

*BEGINNING - No later than 1 week following the last day of the Add/Drop period:*

- **Prospectus** (1 page) describing the research to be *accomplished that semester*. The prospectus should include a background detailing the significance of the problem, and the approach or methodology to be implemented by the student to address the questions raised.

- **Letter** from the research sponsor indicating (a) how many credit equivalents will be performed that semester, as agreed upon by the student and advisor, (b) the method by which the student will be supervised and how progress will be assessed, and (c) the method by which the student will be evaluated at the end of the semester.

*END - The day after grades are due:*

The research sponsor must submit to the Departmental Advising Office, in writing, an **assessment** of the student's progress, either (a) S: Satisfactory or (b) U: Unsatisfactory. Credit towards BIOSC 1904 equivalence will be awarded when Satisfactory progress has been made.

## **RESEARCH OUTSIDE OF THE DEPARTMENT**

Students doing biology research in a laboratory external to the Department may request that the Chair of the Undergraduate Honors Committee serve as a co-sponsor for BIOSC 1904 or the equivalency. A midterm report, written by the student and signed by the external sponsor, must be submitted each term to the Departmental co-sponsor by 8 weeks into the term. This report will be reviewed and signed by the co-sponsor and then reviewed by the Undergraduate Research Committee. In the final term, the midterm report can be a draft of the thesis.