DEPARTMENTAL HONORS IN BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS  
updated 4/30/2018

A. Apply for admission to the Program by March 30\textsuperscript{th} of the sophomore year or by November 30\textsuperscript{th} of junior year. See reverse for details.

B. Complete a major in the Department (Bioinformatics/Computational Biology, Biological Sciences, Ecology & Evolution, Microbiology, or Molecular Biology).

C. Final GPA in Biological Sciences courses of 3.250 or above. Final overall GPA of 3.250 or above.

D. 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. For students applying their junior year, you may petition the Honors committee to have BIOSC 1903 research credits counted toward the 6-credit total. To be considered, the research must be performed in the same lab and on a project for which you plan to do your honors research.

Research can be completed under the direction of a Biological Sciences faculty member in their laboratory or outside of the department. If the student performs research outside of the department, he/she must find a co-sponsor within Biological Sciences. This co-sponsor must be approved by the Chair of the Undergraduate Honors Committee. See additional handout for details of BIOSC 1904 equivalency and co-sponsors.

E. Complete research integrity training during (or prior to) the first semester of BIOSC 1904. The Honors Chair will provide instructions for how to complete the training.

F. Complete one term of a Departmental seminar course (BIOSC 1550, 1560, 1570, 1580, or 1907*) with a C or better. *1907 is offered spring semester of even years.

G. 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 national levels.

H. Write an Honors Thesis and give an Oral Presentation. Students must take BIOSC 1905 Honors Research Writing Practicum (1 credit), which is offered in the spring semester. Writing of the Honors Thesis fulfills the requirement for a Writing Course in the major.

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.

i) 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. The manuscript is written in BIOSC 1905 with the input of the research supervisor and the thesis committee. The final version is then submitted to the Departmental Honors Committee for approval.

ii) 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. The approved Honors Thesis will serve as the basis for preparation of the oral presentation.
APPLYING FOR ADMISSION (current overall and BIOSC GPA must be 3.250 or above)

The Departmental Honors Committee reviews applications twice a year. Submit applications by March 30th* of the sophomore year or by November 30th of the junior year. *recommended

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 – unofficial is acceptable
- 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

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:
   3.750 = Summa Cum Laude; 3.500 = Magna Cum Laude; 3.250 = 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 performing biology research in a laboratory external to the department must have a faculty member within the Department of Biological Sciences as a co-sponsor. This co-sponsor must be approved by the Chair of the Undergraduate Honors that the Chair of the Undergraduate Honors Committee before you enroll in BIOSC 1904. By the end of the second week of the term, submit a prospectus describing your research question and how you plan to address it. Monthly updates are sent to the co-sponsor, and a final research report is due by the last day of classes. The research supervisor must e-mail the Departmental co-sponsor at the end of the semester confirming the student’s completion of the appropriate hours.