

Undergraduate Honors Research Program
Department of Biology
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Portland State University

The function of the Biology Honors Program is to provide research and scientific writing experience for outstanding undergraduates in the Department of Biology. Students perform research with a Biology faculty member, and present the research in the form of a written thesis. The thesis must be approved by a committee consisting of the research mentor, and two other (usually Biology) faculty members whose expertise intersects with the student's research.

Selection:

Students should apply for the Biology Honors Program in the spring term of their junior (or next to last) year, or earlier. A minimum 3.0 Grade Point Average, overall as well as in science courses, is required.

To be considered for the program, the student must identify a faculty member who is willing to serve as the principal Research Advisor (see below), as well as two other faculty members who will serve on the Thesis Committee.

Guidelines for applicants:

Submit your **transcripts** and the following to the Department of Biology Honors Research Program (Director: Dr. Mike Bartlett, micb@pdx.edu) no later than the Spring term preceding your final year of enrollment.

1. Identify a faculty member who you would like to work with, and who is willing to serve as your Research Advisor. Most undergraduate honors students select faculty members from the PSU Biology Department, but some students in the past have had Research Advisors in other PSU departments or at the Oregon Health Sciences University (who are doing Biology-related work). It is very important to work in an area of Biology that is exciting to you, and it also crucial to find a laboratory where you feel comfortable. Therefore it is recommended that you use careful planning and thought to make this decision. Submit a signed letter from the faculty member detailing the agreement to serve as mentor.
2. Give the names and contact information for three faculty members in science departments who have agreed to serve as committee members for your thesis (one of whom will be your Research Advisor).
3. Submit a brief written statement (250 words maximum) describing the nature of the research you expect to complete, and the nature of the guidance you expect to receive from your Research Advisor.
4. Include a mailing address, phone number, and email address where the Biology Honors Program can contact you.

(Note: There is some flexibility in regard to the dates of application for and admission to the program, since many students' progress may vary from the from the "standard" 4 year program.)

Supervision:

Most supervision will come directly from the Research Advisor. A three person thesis committee (including the Research Advisor) will evaluate the progress of the student at the end of each quarter. Students not performing adequately will be dropped from the program at the recommendation of this committee. Students may request a change of Research Advisor during the first term of participation in the program. The Research Advisor does not necessarily have to be in the Biology Department, although approval of the choice of Research Advisor rests with the Director of the Biology Undergraduate Honors Research Program.

Requirements for completion of the program:

A three quarter sequence of Biology 401 (10 credits) is required, and should be entitled Honors Reading (3 credits) for the first term, Honors Research (3 credits) for the second term, and Honors Thesis (4 credits) for the third term. Student enrollment in Biology 401 requires submitting a yellow "By Arrangement Request" form with the help of the Research Advisor and the Honors Program Director. The forms are available from the Science Support Office or the Registrar's Office. Grading should be P/NP, NOT letter. A useful rule of thumb: each credit represents a *minimum* of 35 hours of work towards the thesis. This represents a substantial commitment of time (10-14 hours per week in a 10 week term), and the Research Advisor is responsible for making sure this requirement is met. (Note: for Bi 401 credits: normally a maximum of 6 credits can be counted towards a biology degree as upper division electives, but if a student is pursuing an honors biology degree a maximum of 8 credits are allowed).

(Note: the requirement for 10 credits of Bi 401 may be partly or completely waived if the student is completing equivalent research and writing credits in the course of satisfying Capstone or PSU Honors College requirements. Waiving of credit will be approached on a case by case basis).

A written thesis is required, and will be completed during the third term of work. To have "Honors Thesis in Biology" listed on the diploma, the completed thesis must be approved by the Director of the Honors Research Program and the Chair of the Biology Department. The completed thesis along with a letter of approval from the Honors Program Director and the Biology Department Chair must be given to the Degree Requirements and Certification Office, 104A Neuberger Hall (Victoria Chau). The thesis must be completed and approved by the student's thesis committee by the last day of classes of the term in which the student will graduate.