

BIOLOGY HONORS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS & GUIDELINES

for Fall 2024-Spring 2025

The Biology Department requirements complement those of the College.

- 1) GPA requirement (**3.70 minimum**)
- 2) Graduate course requirement
- 3) Research proposal
- 4) Committee selection and responsibilities
- 5) Grading (for advisors)
- 6) Progress Report
- 7) Thesis
- 8) Dropping Honors
- 9) Honors Ceremony

Eligible invited students will need to:

--By mid-August, submit an application for the Biology Honors Program to Barbara Shannon, the Biology Department Academic Undergraduate Degree Program Coordinator (barbara.shannon@emory.edu). (The application deadline date will be annotated on the application form.)

--Attend a Fall meeting and a Spring meeting with Dr. Escobar (for all Biology Honors candidates). The date/time/location will be provided to the candidates once the meetings have been scheduled (normally late August for Fall semester and late January for Spring semester).

--Complete the mandatory Honors Intro Module and Copyright/ETD Information Meeting as required by the college. The College Honors Coordinator will contact the Biology Honors candidates with the dates of the meetings.

GPA REQUIREMENT

Eligible students must be a senior, in their last two semesters at Emory, and hold and maintain a **3.70** or higher GPA in **both** the biology major and overall (cumulative) during their last two semesters at Emory. Students approved for the Biology Honors Program are required to take two semesters of BIOL 495. **BIOL 495A** is taken in the first semester, for 4 credit hours; **BIOL 495BW** the second semester. (BIOL 495BW may be taken as variable credit (1 to 4 hours) by second-semester seniors to provide them the opportunity to pay by the credit hour versus the full semester tuition.) BIOL 495BW will also fulfill a writing requirement for the college GERs.

Students who plan to graduate in a FALL semester should register for BIOL 495A in the Spring semester prior to their graduation semester and BIOL 495BW in the Fall/graduation semester.

GRADUATE COURSE REQUIREMENT

Students must enroll in and pass (“C” grade or higher) a **graduate-level (500 level or higher) course** that is **related to their Honors research project**. The graduate-level course may be taken in either fall or spring semester.

--a two credit hour course will only fulfill the Honors requirement.

--a three or more credit hour course will fulfill the Honors requirement AND may fulfill one Biology major elective **with approval of the student’s Biology advisor**.

--the graduate course must be taken for letter grade; talk with the instructor about the syllabus, course requirements, etc.

--Students may take a graduate course in the Graduate Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences (GDBBS) or the Rollins School of Public Health. View the course atlas or respective website for available courses.

--To enroll in a graduate-level course, students will need to obtain written permission (e-mail is fine) from the course instructor. Once permission is received, please provide **Barbara Shannon** (barbara.shannon@emory.edu) with the approval e-mail and she will add the student to the class during the add/drop/swap period. (NOTE: The add/drop/swap period for the Rollins School of Public Health normally ends ONE WEEK PRIOR to the college’s end date.)

--Students approved to participate in the honors program will also need to contact **Tonya Woolcock** (tdavis6@emory.edu) to request a permission number for BIOL 495A in Fall semester and for BIOL 495BW in Spring semester. (Fall semester graduates take 495A the spring prior to their graduating semester, and 495BW in the graduating fall semester. Permission numbers will also be needed for enrollment.)

RESEARCH PROPOSAL (due by November 1st)

Students will submit (via e-mail to Dr. Escobar) a short research proposal (3-5 pages) describing their honors project. The proposal should introduce the research area and then address the hypotheses to be tested and the methods to be used.

Honors candidates who previously prepared a research proposal for Biology 499R (Undergraduate Research) will need to upgrade their proposal for the honors level and include the above information.

Students using human participants in their research must have **IRB approval** (<http://www.emory.edu/IRB/>). Approval to begin such research can take weeks or months; discuss this with the research advisor as soon as possible.

HONORS COMMITTEE

Students must select a **Honors Thesis Committee** and provide the committee names (roster) to the College Honors Coordinator, to Dr. Escobar, and to Ms. Shannon not later than **October 23rd**. The college will provide the honors candidates with the link to the online form.

The committee must include at least three faculty members employed at Emory University:

- one of whom must be the research advisor/mentor.
- at least one of whom must be in the Emory College Biology Department.
- at least one of whom must be from outside of the Biology Department.

If a student would like to include someone who is an adjunct, visiting, or emeritus faculty, or a post-doctoral fellow on their thesis committee, **the DEPARTMENT (not the student) MUST PETITION THE COLLEGE HONORS DIRECTOR for approval**. (Deadline for thesis committee member petitions to the College is October 16th; submit petition to Dr. Escobar at least one week prior to college deadline.)

Committee Responsibilities

Much like a graduate thesis committee, the Honors Committee mentors, facilitates, and monitors student progress. Specifically, committee members:

--read and evaluate student written and oral progress reports; student submits a form indicating completion of progress reports to the Honors Coordinator.

--read and comment on the student thesis (specific date determined by the College).

--evaluate the student thesis (written and oral) and assign the level of honors (as elaborated in the Thesis section).

GRADING (Advisor only; submit by early December and late April)—specific dates determined each semester).

--Research advisors: Please submit the Biology **495A Final Grade Report Form** for **Fall** semester (by **December 7th**) and the **Biology 495BW Final Grade Report** Form for **Spring** semester (by **April 30th**) to Dr. Alex Escobar, Biology Honors Program Director (alexander.escobar@emory.edu).

(NOTE: Students graduating in a Fall semester will need a Biology 495A Final Grade Report Form for the Spring semester prior to the graduating fall semester and a Biology 495BW Final Grade Report form for the Fall (graduation) semester.)

--Grades are based on an A to F scale, with +'s and -'s if needed. If you have any questions about appropriate grades, please contact Dr. Escobar.

ORAL and WRITTEN PROGRESS REPORTS (presented before the Thanksgiving break).

A 15-minute Oral Progress Report should be presented to the committee prior to the Thanksgiving break in November.

Submit the **Oral Progress Report Form** *and* a short **written progress report** to Dr. Escobar by **December 1st**.

The progress reports should address the following:

- Hypothesis tested.
- Aims/Goals of the project.
- Experimental approaches.
- Results to date.
- Interpretation/Assessment of results.
- Planned experiments prior to the end of the project.

--The committee will ask questions during and after the presentation of the ORAL progress report. These questions may pertain to specific data or more general issues of the research field: Be prepared!

--At this meeting, the student will inform the committee that they will be provided with a **publication quality thesis at least two weeks before the final thesis is due to the College (12:00 NOON on April 9th, 2025) and at least one week before the student's defense date** (see College CANVAS page for specific dates). **Students will need to reserve a Biology Department conference room for their Oral Progress Report**. (Contact Malia Escobar at mescobar@emory.edu or Tonya Woolcock at tdavis6@emory.edu to reserve a room in the Biology Department.)

--Under no circumstances should a student submit a thesis to their committee without their RESEARCH ADVISOR having read, revised, and approved the document.

ORAL DEFENSE/THESIS

ORAL DEFENSE/THESIS DEADLINE (for presentation to committee) is APRIL 2nd, 2025.

Present a 30-minute Oral Defense/Thesis to your Honors Committee at least one week prior to the final written college thesis deadline (**April 2nd, 2025**). This will be followed by general questions from the audience. Friends and family are welcome to attend, but will be asked to leave after the general Q&A so that the committee can ask questions and make comments. **Students will need to reserve a Biology Department conference room in which to present their respective Oral Defense/Thesis**. (Contact Malia Escobar at mescob@emory.edu or Tonya Woolcock at tdavis6@emory.edu to reserve a Biology Department conference room.)

The **Honors Thesis Approval Form** designating this approval will be submitted to the college along with the final, updated written Honors Thesis on the same date that the ETD thesis submission is due (**April 9th, 2025**). The Thesis Approval Form will also be the **cover sheet** for the student's thesis when presented to their respective committee.

NOTE: Some faculty are out of town in mid to late March/early April. Be certain to determine that the entire committee will be present during this time.

--Copies of former students' Honors theses are available to peruse in the Biology Department. Please do not remove these from the department.

LEVELS OF HONORS (Guidelines)

--**HONORS (cum laude)**: the student has performed excellent work and understands it, writes about it, and explains it well to an expert and to a general audience.

--**HIGH HONORS (magna cum laude)**: the student does excellent work and understands it, writes about it and explains it well to an expert and to a general audience, and the work has reached the level at which it is ready to be presented or has already been presented at a national meeting/conference.

--**HIGHEST HONORS (summa cum laude)**: the student does excellent work and understands it, writes about it and explains it well to an expert and to a general audience, and the work is publishable quality (i.e., it has been published or may be published as part of a larger paper in the future).

DROPPING HONORS

--If a student decides at any time during the academic year to NOT complete the Honors Program, inform Dr. Escobar and Ms. Shannon immediately. The student will also be required to submit the **Honors Program Drop Form** at: <https://collegeconnect.emory.edu/register/honorsprogramdrop>. This form is also available on the college Honors website, in the Honors Program FAQ document.

--If a student drops out of Honors during their BIOL 495BW semester, but still needs to complete a writing requirement, a thesis quality paper will need to be written and evaluated (but not presented to a committee).

HONORS CEREMONY & CELEBRATION

--Honors advisors are invited and expected to attend a special Honors graduation ceremony, where the student will be presented with their Honors fourragere, the symbol of their hard work. The Honors Ceremony is normally the Sunday before Commencement.

--GRADUATE WITH HONORS !!!