



Senior Honors Thesis/Project Faculty Guidelines

All UMKC Honors Program students are encouraged to undertake a 6-credit Senior Honors Thesis/Project in their senior year. This thesis or project is designed to be the culminating product of the student's undergraduate career. Oftentimes this work can be used as the writing or project sample in the student's application to graduate school or in an employment portfolio. The faculty advisor for this project plays an essential role in guiding the student in this high-impact learning experience.

If the student completes the requirements for the Honors Program and for the Senior Honors Thesis/Project, they will graduate not only with University Honors but also as an Honors Scholar. Both notations will appear on the transcript. In all cases, the Honors Scholar distinction will require an additional 6 credits of Honors Thesis/Project coursework in addition to the 27 credits which make up the basic University Honors requirements. These additional 6 credits can be piggybacked onto a major requirement (Senior Capstone or Seminar) if possible or taken as Directed or Independent Studies (and applied to the major in addition to the Honors requirements). Alternatively, if the student so chooses, they may instead choose to enroll in Honors 495 (Senior Honors Thesis).

Every Senior Honors Thesis/Project requires thoughtful and sustained collaboration between the student researcher and a faculty mentor. It is the responsibility of the student to seek out and cultivate a relationship with an appropriately qualified faculty mentor to serve in that role. The essential responsibilities of the faculty mentor and student researcher are outlined below. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Honors Program Director, Gayle Levy (levyg@umkc.edu).

Eligibility:

All fulltime faculty members (non-tenure track and tenure-track or tenured) at UMKC are eligible to serve as faculty mentors for the Senior Honors Thesis/Project.

Earning Credit for the Senior Honors Thesis/Project:

Students have three basic options for earning the 6 credits needed to complete the Senior Honors Thesis/Project:

1. Roll the credits into a class that lends itself to a thesis. Some departments offer open-ended Senior Seminars or Capstones in which students could begin to work on their theses. The Senior Honors Thesis/Project is a two-semester undertaking so the student will continue their work through the next semester.

2. Take Honors 495 (Senior Honors Thesis) for one or both of their thesis semesters. This course is offered for variable credit so the student can enroll in however many credits they need.
3. Enroll in a Directed or Independent Studies in their major. Many of these courses are also variable credit.

The Senior Honors Thesis/Project is normally completed over two or three semesters, ideally starting with an optional preparatory seminar in the spring semester of the junior year (Honors 330: Honors Thesis/Project Practicum, 1 credit). Although students can choose to devote all 6 credits entirely to the research and production of the thesis or project over 2 semesters, we suggest breaking down the 6 credits as follows:

Spring semester junior year

Honors 330: Honors Thesis/Project Practicum (1 credit; optional)

Summer or Fall semester senior year

Honors 495 or Directed Studies/Independent Study or Senior Seminar/Capstone in the major (2–3 credits)

Fall or Spring semester senior year

Honors 499: Honors Thesis/Project Writing Group (1 credit; optional)

Honors 495 or Directed Studies/Independent Study (2–3 credits)

Responsibilities of the Faculty Mentor:

- Explore possible research topics that reflect the student’s interests and preparation.
- Identify the knowledge, experience, and skills the student needs to complete the project. The faculty mentor may advise the student to enroll in an appropriate research methods course before embarking upon the project.
- Help the student define and focus the project, including the development of a timetable to assure that the project can be managed within the time frame allotted.
- Discuss with the student the details of how the proposed research, scholarly, or creative project will be carried out and the features of a good project proposal.
- Help the student determine if their project will require approval from UMKC’s [Institutional Review Board](#) if the student is involved in Human Subjects Research, from the [Institutional Biosafety Committee](#) if biohazardous materials will be involved or from the [Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee](#) in the case of vertebrate animals.
- If the student is conducting research outside of UMKC, discuss and identify the resources that will be available at the location of the research, including specific individuals to whom the student can turn for guidance.
- Develop a system of communication with the student during the project period that will allow for an appropriate balance of mentor guidance and student independence.
- Sign all the necessary contract and completion forms. If the Honors student has enrolled in Honors 495 (Senior Honors Thesis), then the senior honors thesis advisor will need to include the grade on the completion form so that the Honors Program Director can submit the grade.

- Assist the student in identifying appropriate forums in which to present their research or creative endeavor. All students completing a Senior Honors Thesis/Project are required to present their research at the Honors Program Research Colloquium (April or May), the UMKC Undergraduate Research Symposium (April), or the Great Plains Honors Council (April). Other research conferences or departmental forums may also be appropriate.
- Assist the student in editing and preparing the final version of their Senior Honors Thesis/Project for electronic publication. All students who complete the thesis or project are asked to give [permission](#) for the thesis to be stored in an online archive, [MOspace](#), through Miller Nichols Library, which can be accessed by any member of the UMKC community. If the final paper contains any proprietary material that is not suitable for publication, access can be restricted or embargoed. The student researcher should consult with their faculty mentor to determine whether any such restriction is necessary.

*If you would like to see examples of honors theses online at [Miller Nichols Library](#), please follow the step-by-step instruction guide [here](#).

Frequently Asked Questions:

Why am I being asked to direct a Senior Honors Thesis or Project?

- A student identified you as a faculty member they would like to work with and who does research of interest to them in the major.

How much time will this take?

- We suggest that you meet with the student weekly or biweekly simply to make sure they are on track and to hold them accountable for their project. These meetings can be quick or a bit longer, depending on the needs of the student, but relatively frequent meetings will help to keep the student on track. Certainly early on the student will need some thoughtful guidance in the exploratory stages of the project; towards the end the student will greatly benefit from suggestions and edits when writing the thesis. Students do their best work and get the most out of the experience with regular contact with their faculty mentor throughout the thesis or project year.

How long should the thesis or project be?

- This depends on the field and project. Humanities theses are often 30–40 pages in length. A biology thesis can be 10–15 pages. An artist statement that accompanies a public performance or art exhibit may only be 5 pages long. As a general rule the thesis should be the length of a substantial journal article in the field.

What will I get out of directing an honors thesis or project?

- Faculty members often say that working so closely with a motivated student is one of the most meaningful pedagogical experiences they have. Some students choose to work on a faculty member's research project and co-author a publishable paper together. If this is the case, the thesis portion of the project still needs to be written entirely by the student.

How many Honors Program students choose to write a thesis?

- Over the last few years 8–12 students per year have written a thesis. We hope that over the next five years 40–50 students will choose to do a Senior Honors Thesis/Project. This

is about one-fifth to one-quarter of students graduating from the Honors Program each year.

What if I don't know the student very well or am not sure if I want to be a thesis or project mentor?

- Ideally the student who asks you to mentor their will have taken at least one class with you. If this is not the case, then you will have to decide whether the student's project interests you and whether you have the time to take this on. If not, please consider giving the student suggestions on which of your colleagues might be willing to mentor someone.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

- Dr. Gayle Levy, Honors Program Director (levyg@umkc.edu) or (816) 235-2820.