



Senior Honors Thesis/Project
Student Guidelines

All UMKC Honors Program students are encouraged to undertake a 6-credit Senior Honors Thesis/Project in their senior year. If you complete the requirements for the Honors Program and for the Senior Honors Thesis/Project, you will graduate not only with University Honors but also as an Honors Scholar. Both notations will appear on your 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.

The Senior Honors Thesis/Project is normally completed over two or three semesters, ideally starting with an optional preparatory seminar in the fall or spring semester of your junior year (Honors 330; see below). As you begin to consider your thesis topic, please consult with your faculty advisor and make an appointment with the Honors Program Director who will advise you on how to organize the 6 credits you will need. Although students can choose to devote all 6 credits entirely to the research and production of the thesis or project over 2 semesters (Honors 330 and 499 are optional), we suggest breaking down the 6 credits as follows:

Spring semester junior year

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

Summer or Fall semester senior year

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

Fall or Spring semester senior year

Honors 499: Honors Thesis/Project Writing Group (1 credit; see below)
Honors 495 or Directed Studies/Independent Study in your major (2 credits)

The Senior Honors Thesis/Project should be a research paper, project, exhibit or performance in your major discipline. Regardless of the discipline(s), topic(s), or nature of the project, all Senior Honors Theses/Projects must include the following elements:

- Each project must involve original research or creative scholarship.
- Each project must include some kind of written interpretation and analysis (artist's statement, analysis of methods and results, etc.), even when the main focus of the project is technical, creative, or performative in nature. The final paper should be consistent with the standards of the discipline and appropriate in length and format to the topic of the project.

- Each project needs to be supervised and evaluated by a fulltime UMKC faculty member who will serve as the student's mentor throughout. Ideally this person will be a faculty member whom the student knows from classes or advising. This individual needs to have an interest or experience in the research topic. Students should begin to cultivate this mentoring relationship early: go see all of your instructors often and get to know them from the time you begin your studies. Meet with faculty members whose research interests you even if you do not have the opportunity to take their classes. Ask questions and be polite. Faculty are not compensated for advising Senior Honors Theses or Projects so keep this in mind as you create relationships with your instructors. Students may choose to have two mentors if the interdisciplinary nature of the project requires it.
- All students completing a senior thesis or project must conclude with a public presentation of the results. Students may choose to present at the Honors Program Research Symposium (April or May), the Undergraduate Research Symposium (April), the Great Plains Honors Council (April) or any disciplinary conference or colloquium in the student's field. Please make sure you inform the Honors Program Director of the venue where you will present your work by October 1 (December graduates) or March 1 (May graduates).
- All students who complete the Senior Honors Research Project are required to submit an electronic copy of their undergraduate thesis to the Honors Program. **Submission deadline** is Tuesday after finals week is over.

As you consider topics for your thesis, keep in mind what you plan to do after graduation and how this culminating work might help you achieve your goals. Are you planning to apply for graduate or professional school? Your Senior Honors Thesis/Project can be used as a writing sample or evidence of your research experience. Will you be applying for internships or jobs? Your work can serve as the central focus of your portfolio.

Preparatory Semester: Optional (normally spring semester of your junior year):

Enroll in Honors 330: Honors Thesis/Project Practicum: this 1-credit course will prepare you to undertake a Senior Honors Thesis/Project. In this course, students will explore different options for theses or projects; identify a topic and faculty advisor; plan the production of the thesis or project; produce a component of the thesis or project; and collaborate effectively with other honors students to develop their plans. This course is appropriate for juniors who can then devote their senior year to producing an honors thesis or project.

First Semester of Senior Year:

- Choose the specific course you will enroll in (the honors credit must be attached to a class), either a course in your major (such as a Directed or Independent Studies, a Senior Seminar or a Senior Capstone) or the Honors Senior Thesis course (Honors 495; permission of Honors Program Director needed). You will take this course for 2 or 3 credits. You should meet with your major advisor and your thesis advisor to ascertain if it is possible to piggyback the senior honors thesis semesters (2 or 3 credits per semester) with a major requirement. You will also need to meet with the Honors Program Director.
- Complete the [Senior Honors Thesis Contract Form \(First Semester\)](#) with your faculty advisor. This person will oversee your thesis or project. The first-semester work is

normally research, planning and outlining. Decide how often you will meet (every few weeks is customary) and note this on the contract.

- Write a [prospectus](#) outlining the scope of the senior thesis (2-3 pages long) and attach this to the contract. Both are due to the Honors Program Director during the first month of the first semester of work.
- Upon completion of the first-semester work, submit (email) the [Senior Honors Thesis Completion Form \(First Semester\)](#) to the Honors Program, honors@umkc.edu. Completion forms are due no later than the Tuesday following finals week. If additional time is required, email the Honors Program Director with this request before the close of the semester.

Second Semester of Senior Year:

- Complete the [Senior Honors Thesis Contract Form \(Second Semester\)](#) with your senior thesis advisor and submit to the Honors Program Director during the first month of the second semester of work. The second semester is normally reserved for writing or producing and any necessary additional research. Like the first semester, the honors contract must be associated with a specific course (2-3 credits) in which you are enrolled. A course grade of B or higher is required.
- Consider enrolling in Honors 499: Honors Thesis/Project Writing Group during the semester in which they plan to complete their Senior Honors Thesis. This 1-credit, optional course is a collaborative research writing workshop for students of all majors. No matter what your thesis topic may be, you will benefit from the friendly critique and peer review offered by fellow honors students and the professional writing advice and support provided by the course instructor.
- Make sure you have established how long the thesis will be, in collaboration with your thesis advisor. This varies depending on the field of study and the format of the thesis or project.
- Use a standard bibliographic system for all citations, works cited or references, footnotes or endnotes, etc. Again, the system you use will depend primarily on your field of study. Make sure you are consistent with your citation method; use only one system, i.e., APA, MLA, Chicago.
- Double space text and leave a 1-1/2 inch left margin and one inch everywhere else, and use 12-point Times New Roman font.
- **The title page should look like the example on the last page of this document. Please include all of the information noted there.**
- **After the title page, include an abstract.** In about 200-300 words, summarize the purpose of the thesis/project, the methods used for collecting and analyzing the information, and the conclusions you draw.
- Provide the Honors Program (honors@umkc.edu) with an electronic PDF copy of your thesis.
- With your [permission](#), the thesis will be stored in an online archive, [MOspace](#), through Miller Nichols Library, and can be accessed by any member of the UMKC community.
- Submit the second semester [Senior Honors Thesis Completion Form \(Second Semester\)](#) signed by your honors thesis advisor. Completion forms are due no later than the Tuesday following finals week. If additional time is required, contact the Honors Program Director before the close of the semester.

Honors students who are thinking about producing a Senior Honors Thesis or Project can read example of Honors Program graduates' great work online at [Miller Nichols Library](#). To view theses currently in the MOspace database, please follow the step-by-step instruction guide [here](#).

Frequently Asked Questions:

Why should I do a Senior Honors Thesis or Project?

- The Senior Honors Thesis/Project is the kind of work that comes closest to what many students will be doing in graduate school and as such provides you with an opportunity to, in a sense, “test drive” sustained research and the analysis that goes with a sophisticated research project. Many honors students publish their work in undergraduate journals, such as [Lucerna](#), or in disciplinary journals. Other students have won awards for their posters based on their senior honors thesis research. Finally, students who have completed an honors thesis or project have found it to be a very rewarding experience—some count it as the most exciting work they did as an undergraduate.

I'm not sure if I want to do a Senior Honors Thesis or Project. How do I decide?

- Doing an extended research project is a lot of work and you will need to determine if you are motivated enough to do this kind of project. Are you just doing it to graduate as an Honors Scholar or do you really want to explore a topic, work independently, complete some original research? Students who take pleasure in reading, writing, creating and doing research will enjoy working on a Senior Honors Thesis/Project.

How do I choose a faculty advisor?

- Ideally you will choose an advisor with whom you have taken a class and get along with, and whose work dovetails in some way with your research interest. Make an appointment to meet with your potential advisor the semester before you intend to begin your thesis. Bring along the faculty guidelines to give them and discuss your ideas. Do not go in and say that you want to write a thesis but have no idea what to work on. Your idea does not have to be finely tuned, but you need to have a general topic or questions in mind. Taking Honors 330 (see above) the spring semester of your junior year will help you hone a topic idea, find resources and select an advisor.

How much time will this take?

- You will be earning 6 credits over 2 semesters for your work so you should assume that you will be devoting roughly 12–15 hours per week to the project. This is a rough estimate and students who are working in a lab may spend more time on the project. In any case, do not procrastinate! All researchers and artists learn that one must work in a regular and sustained way to complete a project.

How long should my Senior Honors Thesis/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. Your honors thesis mentor will help you ascertain the appropriate length.

How often should I meet with my faculty advisor?

- We suggest that you meet with your faculty advisor weekly or biweekly. These meetings can be quick or a bit longer, depending on your needs, but relatively frequent meetings will help keep you on track.

I have more questions that are not answered here!

- You may want to read *How to Write a Senior Thesis: A Practical Guide from Your First Ideas to Your Finished Paper* by Charles Lipson (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2005) and please make an appointment to talk with Dr. Levy, Honors Program Director, who can try to answer your questions (levyg@umkc.edu).

The Honors Program at the University of Missouri-Kansas City

(Title of Thesis)

(Author's Name)

(Date of Submission: please spell out the month name)

Written under the direction of Professor (Thesis Advisor)

(Department or School)

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements to graduate as an
Honors Scholar from the University of Missouri-Kansas City