The Senior Thesis Requirement in the UMass Boston Honors College
Updated Fall 2018

All Honors College students are required to complete a senior thesis, including both thesis paper and an oral presentation, or an alternative senior project (examples listed below).

By October of your senior year (or equivalent month if you are not graduating in June), you should submit to us, in writing, the topic of your thesis and the name of your thesis director. When your thesis is complete and has been reviewed by your thesis director and other faculty readers, and you have made your oral presentation, your thesis director will submit your grade. The passing grade for Honors College requirements is a “B” or higher.

Descriptions of some examples of past Honors College thesis projects are described here: https://honors.umb.edu/current-students/student-research

Examples of Honors College thesis papers are linked here: http://scholarworks.umb.edu/honors_theses/

Option 1: A senior thesis in both the major department and the Honors College
Students will typically do their thesis in their major department. Students choosing this option must follow all thesis guidelines given by their major department. The Honors College will accept any Honors thesis that meets the requirements of the student’s major department.

If you choose this option: Beginning in your junior year, you should be working with your departmental advisor to find a faculty thesis mentor and a topic. The procedure varies from department to department, so be sure to find out how this works in your major. Some departments (e.g., English, Psychology, Chemistry, Women’s Studies, Political Science, Economics, Anthropology, and the College of Management) have an established senior thesis seminar to which students apply to be admitted. These applications have to be filed in the spring of your junior year.

Some departments require that you have some idea of the faculty member under whose guidance you wish to work; other departments will recommend a faculty member based on your articulated research area of interest. It is not necessary for you to have a sharply defined research topic when you identify your thesis mentor (although if you do, it is of course helpful), but you should have at least a rough sense of a broad topic area in which you wish to focus your inquiry. For example, as an Economics major, you might know that you want to study the impact of micro-credit loans in Costa Rica, but you don’t initially know what specific aspect of this topic your final research question will address. The sharply focused articulation of your research topic is what you and your thesis mentor will work on in the early stages of your endeavor.

In many natural science departments the thesis will involve work in a professor’s lab, which also needs to be arranged before your senior year (preferably during the spring
semester of junior year). Normally the department gives three to six upper-level credits for the thesis work. Departments have their own standards as to the type and depth of research, the number of pages, and other aspects of the thesis. Again, every Honors student doing a thesis in their major department must follow the thesis guidelines and stipulations in that department.

A senior thesis done through the department of your major will bring you honors in the major AND fulfill the requirements to make you a University Honors Scholar. In other words, you need to do only the senior thesis in your major to get two honors designations.

**Option 2: A senior thesis just in the Honors College**
If you want to write a thesis that does not fit within your department’s regular guidelines, or if your department does not have a way to give credit and grades for the senior thesis, you can do your senior thesis through the Honors College. In this case, your thesis will follow the minimum requirements for an Honors College thesis, which are:

- A minimum length of 9,000 words (approximately 30 double-spaced pages with 12 point font)
- Use of the MLA, Chicago, APA, or other standard style (depending on the thesis director’s preference)
- Inclusion of an annotated bibliography of no less than 15 sources

If you choose this option: You will need to find a thesis director and another faculty reader who is expert in the thesis subject area. You then should register under an independent study rubric in your thesis director’s department, or in Honors (that is, Honors 490). You and your thesis advisor can decide whether you wish to earn either three or six upper-level credits for the thesis work. The Honors College Dean and Associate Dean may serve as a third reader of your thesis.

A rigorous internship experience may often provide a student with the foundation for a senior thesis project. Depending on the nature of the internship, we will recommend that you work with an appropriate faculty member who can direct you to readings in the theoretical framework and extant literature associated with the internship activity. You will have to contextualize and analyze the internship experience with reference to these readings.

**Option 3: Senior Thesis Alternatives**
Some colleges and departments allow for use specific projects – such as Capstone course projects, or student teaching experiences – as options for the senior thesis project. Examples include:

**Nursing:** By arrangement with the College of Nursing, nursing majors may meet their Honors College thesis requirement with their Nursing 450 and 455 final clinical placements and capstone synthesis report, plus an additional essay reflecting on this experience and
report. The thesis presentation requirement may be met by a presentation and discussion of this essay with the Honors College Dean and Associate Dean and other students or faculty whom you wish to invite.

**Education:** Students who are majoring or minoring in Education often choose to use their portfolio (from their student teaching experience) as their thesis. These projects are supervised by the faculty member who is supervising the student’s student teaching experience.

**The Honors College Cross-Cultural Symposium:** From time to time, the Honors College creates other opportunities to undertake a project that has the same depth and rigor as the thesis but may have a different type of product. An example is the Cross-Cultural Symposium (an Honors 490 course). Open to juniors and seniors, this is a year-long, two-semester small seminar that examines a given topic from many disciplinary perspectives under the guidance of Honors faculty and invited guests, both scholars and practitioners. The symposium always examines its topic in both its domestic U.S. and its global aspects. Students who want to use the symposium as a starting off point for their Honors thesis also do an additional project, which might be an academic paper, or field work, or some other type of product, to be determined by the student and the Honors faculty member. Past symposia include one on “International Epidemics,” and one on “Museums, Libraries, and the Construction of Knowledge.”

**The Thesis Presentation (required for all options for the Senior Thesis)**
As a culminating activity, all Honors College seniors must make an oral presentation and discussion of their thesis. This presentation can take one of several forms:

- 10-15 minute presentation on a conference panel (either statewide or national undergraduate research conference)
- Poster presentation at statewide or national conference
- Departmental presentation to faculty and students
- 45-minute Honors College discussion with thesis director, Honors College Dean or Associate Dean (and, if possible, a third faculty member of the thesis director’s or student’s choosing)