

Frequently Asked Questions

The lab I work in is in another department. Can I still do Departmental Honors?

Yes, you can still do Departmental Honors in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology if your thesis work will take place in a lab run by another department. You should make sure that in your junior year, your Honors Independent Study (396 ISH) is listed as Biochem 396ISH. If it is listed as an Honors Independent Study in another department (for example, StockSch396ISH), that is OK as long as it has been approved by a BMB Honors Program Director (HPD) – we just have to fill out a Petition for Exception on CHC PATHS. Your 499Y and 499T credits for your thesis, in your senior year, should definitely be registered as Biochem 499Y and Biochem 499T.

How do I apply for an Honors Independent Study?

The application for Honors Independent Study is different than doing a regular (non-Honors) Independent Study in a department. You will need to log into CHC PATHS at <https://honorspaths1.honors.umass.edu/chc-paths> and from your dashboard, look on the right hand side for the button that says “Start New ISH (Independent Study Honors).” This will be your application form. You should fill it out with guidance from your PI. It will be sent to your PI for approval through the PATHS system, then to a BMB Honors Program Director (HPD), and finally to the Commonwealth Honors College for final approval and enrollment. Once you submit the application, your part is done unless your PI, the BMB HPD, or the CHC Academic Standards Committee asks for revisions.

Does my Honors Independent Study need to be a certain number of credits?

Yes – your junior year ISH should be 3 credits or more. A 3 credit ISH equals approximately 9 hours in a lab per week.

Why is the junior year writing class listed as being a part of my senior year? Can't I take it during my junior year?

If you can get into Biochem 430H during your junior year, that is great! Some people do not get into it during their junior year and must take it during senior year, which is also fine.

I've heard that junior year writing courses from other departments or another major (for double majors) can count as my junior year writing course. Is this true?

While this is true for earning the major, if you want to do Departmental Honors in BMB, taking Biochem 430H as your junior year writing course is a requirement. We also accept NatSci 289H, which iCons students take as their junior year writing course.

I'm a senior and haven't taken any of the required Departmental Honors courses yet. Can I still do an Honors thesis my senior year?

If this is the case, please reach out to an Academic Advisor or HPD (Honors Program Director) within BMB as soon as you can to determine what options you may have for doing either Departmental Honors or Multidisciplinary Honors. If we believe your thesis proposal could be a good fit for Departmental Honors, we will also have you meet with CHC to confirm eligibility.

What's the difference between Departmental Honors and Multidisciplinary Honors?

Multidisciplinary Honors is a good choice if you'd like to do an Honors Thesis outside of your major, or if you'd like to split the thesis requirements between two majors. Departmental Honors allows you to pursue advanced study within a specific major/field.

Do I need to be in Honors College to take these Honors classes?

No, you do not need to be in Honors College to take the courses listed above.

When do I need to apply to Honors College to do Departmental Honors?

If you are already an Honors College student (entered as a freshmen or joined during your first two years), you will be automatically listed as "Multidisciplinary Honors." You should meet with a Biochemistry HPD and describe your thesis plans. If they sound biochemical in nature, we will request to have you moved into Departmental Honors.

If you are not a member of Honors College, you will first submit a thesis proposal August 15th before your senior year. Then you will apply to Honors College in November of your senior year. You must apply in your fall semester or at the beginning of the spring semester your senior year. Do not wait until midway through your spring semester to apply to Honors College - you will not be able to graduate with Departmental Honors if you wait.

I'm doing a Departmental Honors thesis. How should it be formatted?

Biochemistry has a specific set of rules for formatting your thesis, which can be found on the Departmental Honors page of the BMB website. PLEASE follow these guidelines carefully.

I am forming my committee. Who needs to be on it?

Your committee chair is the PI of your lab. This person can be outside of the Biochemistry department. If you have a PI who is not a Biochemistry faculty member, then your second committee member (also called a second reader) **must** be a Biochemistry faculty member. You can have multiple committee members beside your PI/committee chair.

I didn't take Biochem 291H in my sophomore year. Am I behind?

No, you are not! While we like for people to take Biochem 291H in their sophomore year because it's a class that introduces you to the work of BMB professors, you can take it any time. Also, keep in mind that you don't need to take Biochem 291H to fulfill your "Biochem H course at any level" requirement – you can do that with Biochem 396ISH or an HPD-approved advanced elective about the 500 level (with a petition for exception). You can see more possibilities for satisfying Departmental Honors course requirements below.

What are some ways to fulfill Departmental Honors?

Please see some examples below of students who would be fulfilling their Departmental Honors requirements:

Student 1: Biochem 291H, Biochem 396ISH, Biochem 430H, Biochem 499Y, and Biochem 499T

Student 2: Biochem 396ISH, Bio 583 (Advanced Genetics), Biochem 430H, Biochem 499Y, and Biochem 499T

Student 3: Biochem 396ISH fall, Biochem 396ISH spring, NatSci 289H, Biochem 499Y, and Biochem 499T

Student 4: Biochem 291H, Chem 627, Biochem 430H, Biochem 499Y, and Biochem 499T