

Timeline for BMB Undergraduate Honors Thesis

Finding a Lab

Completing a lab-based BMB Honors Thesis is greatly facilitated by joining a lab early in your undergraduate career, with the goal of spending at least four semesters in a research group.

You can begin outreach to find a lab at any time, even in your first semesters at UMass. Faculty members are often most interested in students who will spend multiple years on a project. It is also important to know that you can do a BMB, lab-based thesis when working with a faculty member in another department, as many faculty members in other departments perform biochemical research that would be appropriate for a BMB thesis, including but not limited to: Biology, Chemistry, Microbiology, Econ, Food Science, VASCI, SSA and PBS. You can confirm your proposed project is appropriate for BMB by contacting the BMB Honors Program Directors.

If you are not already in a lab, the semester before your final four semesters you should begin doing significant outreach to find a lab position. The Biochemistry Club and the Office of Undergraduate Research and Studies (OURS) can help you identify strategies in finding a lab.

If you are unable to find a lab position, DO NOT wait until the start of your final two semesters to contact the BMB Honors program directors and Honors advisors; be sure to make an appointment at the end of the previous semester. Students who are unable to find a lab position before their senior year can still complete an Honors Thesis either by writing a thesis even in a non-STEM subject, or by enrolling in thesis courses through CHC (contact a CHC advisor for more information on these processes).

It is also important to know that you can move to another lab if you discover your interests change or other issues arise. Joining a new lab, even as a senior, remains possible as your prior lab experience will be a plus, even if on a different topic. Just remember STAY AHEAD OF THE CURVE – always make plans a semester ahead whenever possible.

Fall of Junior Year

Discuss with your advisor about applying for the following awards:

- Honors Research Grant through CHC PATHS (early **October**)
- Research Assistant Fellowship through CHC PATHS (early **October**)
- Junior Fellows program through Academic Works (**October**)
- Rising Researchers (**October**)
- Apply for Biochem 396ISH (Honors Independent Study) for at least 3 credits for the spring semester via CHC PATHS (**November**)

Spring of Junior Year

- Meet with your advisor to plan/discuss a thesis topic
- Begin to look for a second committee member
- Begin to draft a 499Y semester plan via CHC PATHS
- If you are short on Honors credits, consider taking Biochem 291H (check with CHC to inquire about your Honors credits)

Summer of Senior Year

- Submit a first draft of your thesis proposal to your advisor before July 1 to allow for revisions. Required content can be seen on CHC PATHS (Goals, Key Readings, Communication, Specialized training, Methods or Agenda, Timeline).
- Submit your 499Y semester proposal by **August 15th** to CHC PATHS – This deadline is important to meet, or you may not be registered for the necessary credits at the start of the semester.

Fall of Senior Year

- Continue to collect data and read the literature
- Finalize second committee member, ideally by **September 30**
- Outline and literature review should ideally be completed by **November 30**
- Submit a finalized 499T Thesis Proposal to CHC PATHS

Spring of Senior Year

- Meet with your advisor about Thesis content/progress of data collection ideally **by end of first week of classes**
- Draft introduction, ideally completed by **January 31**.
- Submit an abstract for the Massachusetts Statewide Undergraduate Research Conference (**Mid-February**)
- By **February 15**, select a date for an oral defense. Check your advisor's availability first, then ask the second committee member about their availability on dates that fit your advisor's schedule. The preferred timing for the oral defense is **late April**.
- Turn in Methodology of thesis to advisor, ideally by **February 28**.
- Turn in draft Results/Discussion of thesis to advisor, ideally by **March 15**. Ask second committee member if they want to see the Results/Discussion section at this time.
- Turn in a first draft of the entire thesis to advisor by **March 31**.
- Confirm again the date of the oral defense by **March 31**. Notify department about defense date.
- Continue to add data, work on revisions, and practice for oral defense
- Turn in a second, full finalized draft, of the thesis with revisions to committee, ideally by **April 15**.
- Provide a draft of presentation slides to your advisor by **April 15**.
- Revise slides and practice presentation with lab members approximately one week before defense date.
- Present your **oral defense** on your scheduled date.
- Participate in Massachusetts Undergraduate Research Conference, usually **last Friday of April**
- Print final thesis and obtain committee signatures by **May 1st**. Be sure to strictly abide by all BMB thesis manuscript guidelines.
- Upload thesis for the Honors College by **end of exam period**.