What is an honors thesis? Who can do one?

An honors thesis is not an assigned activity, but rather an opportunity for a student to conduct an NPB related research project of the student’s own choosing.

Students who have completed 135 units and have a minimum 3.5 GPA (in courses counted toward the major) are eligible to do an honors thesis. An interested student who meets the GPA criteria should locate a UC Davis faculty sponsor whose mentorship, expertise and resources will allow the student to complete said project.

Please note: Graduation with honors in the College of Biological Sciences is based strictly on a student’s cumulative GPA, and the completion (or lack thereof) of an honors thesis will have no bearing on this.

How do I get approval? Who is eligible to sponsor my project?

All students completing an honors thesis must have a faculty sponsor, someone who can mentor and supervise their project. Any faculty member on campus may potentially serve as a faculty sponsor given a project that is NPB appropriate. However, in addition to faculty sponsorship, all students completing an NPB honors thesis will need the approval of a designated NPB faculty advisor.

The NPB master advisors are: Prof. Will DeBello & Prof. Lee Miller.

If your last name falls into the Alpha: A-M, your contact will be Prof. DeBello (wmdebello@ucdavis.edu)

If your last name falls into the Alpha: N-Z, your contact will be Prof. Miller (leemiller@ucdavis.edu).

Students conducting an honors thesis may encounter reference to an “honors thesis committee”. The committee is simply your faculty sponsor & your NPB master advisor.

Please note: For students who may be searching for faculty sponsors, please know that faculty with relevant expertise will typically be any member of: the NPB department, the Physiology Graduate Group, the Neuroscience Graduate Group, or the Animal Behavior Graduate Group.

Honors Thesis Structure

The honors thesis will be a focused research project spanning at least three quarters. During each of these quarters, the student will complete a specific portion of their project while enrolling in the corresponding honors thesis courses: 194HA, 194HB, 194HC.

This three-quarter sequence will proceed as follows:

1) First Quarter: NPB 194HA

Student will make a written presentation of the proposed project. The project should be focused towards a specific question. The proposal must include a brief literature review presenting the background for the project which leads to the experimental question. It must also include a statement defining the problem or hypothesis to be tested. Finally, a description of the methods planned for testing the hypothesis or answering the question must be included in the proposal.

NPB 194HA will award 1 unit. May not be repeated. Grading: Pass/No Pass. A Pass is given with submission and acceptance of the proposal by both the sponsoring faculty member and NPB faculty advisor.
2) Second Quarter: NPB 194HB

This part of the honors thesis involves the collection of the experimental data and data analysis. Students will need to submit a progress report at the end of the quarter. Submission of this report will go to both the faculty sponsor and the NPB faculty advisor.

**194HB**: 4 units. May not be repeated. Grading: Pass/No Pass. A Pass is given with submission of a progress report to both the sponsoring faculty member and NPB faculty advisor. Report must demonstrate data collected and data analysis.

3) Third Quarter: NPB 194HC

This is the final portion of the honors thesis series. During this quarter, students will write and submit the honors thesis for review by the sponsoring faculty and NPB faculty advisor. The thesis should consist of a review of the pertinent literature, presentation of methods, and results including statistical analysis, and a discussion of the results and significance. An honors thesis should resemble a submitted research paper, suitable for scientific journal submission.

**194HC** is 2 units. May not be repeated. Grading: Pass/No Pass. A Pass is given upon acceptance of the honors thesis by both the sponsoring faculty member and NPB faculty advisor.

How to Use NPB 194HB towards the NPB major

If you have not gotten approval to use NPB 199 as a track elective and your research is related to the NPB track you are pursuing, you can get permission to use NPB 194HB towards the major.

Here are the instructions:
1) Email your designated master advisor by the tenth day of instruction of the quarter you are taking NPB 194HB. The email should explain how your research is related to your track.
2) If approved, the NPB master advisor will inform a BASC advisor for NPB.
3) After you have completed your thesis (NPB 194HC), the NPB master advisor should inform the same BASC advisor for NPB to update your degree certification and include NPB 194HB.

Recap/Instructions for moving forward

1) Obtain a faculty sponsor and discuss your project. Show your faculty sponsor this document so they are aware of the honors thesis structure/expectations.
2) Talk to a BASC advisor for NPB to ensure that you understand the honors thesis and how it fits into your overall academic planning.
3) Contact your designated NPB master advisor for project approval. Students last name A-M, should email Prof. DeBello (wmdebello@ucdavis.edu). Students last name N-Z should email Prof. Miller (leemiller@ucdavis.edu). In your request for approval, please submit the following information: Your Name, Your Student ID#, your UCD email address, how many units you’ve completed at UCD, your faculty sponsor’s name and email, your proposed research topic, your proposed project title, and a brief (1-4 sentence) description of your project. If you wish to meet in person with a faculty advisor, go to the BASC website and select a “meeting with faculty advisor” as the reason for your appointment.
4) Either your faculty advisor, or NPB department instructional coordinator Dianna Smith (dbsmith@ucdavis.edu), will email you the CRN to add the 194H.
5) Be prepared to facilitate communication between your faculty sponsor and your NPB faculty advisor. Ask your faculty advisor what they expect regarding communication. In addition to the proposal/report/thesis submitted at the end of each respective quarter, you should expect to send one or two email updates per quarter, with your faculty sponsor and the NPB faculty advisor each cc’d on them. It is your responsibility to maintain contact with the faculty advisor should you have any issues completing your project.