

## Supervisor Guidelines for Honours Thesis (BIOL4100)

Although the majority of the responsibilities of honours supervisors are academic in nature, there are a number of items that all supervisors should be aware of in order to facilitate the successful planning and execution of an honours thesis project. The purpose of this document is to help clarify the role of supervising faculty members in the honours thesis course, and is not meant to restrict the supervisory role in any way. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact a current member of the Honours Thesis Committee (HTC) for clarification.

When assisting the student with planning and conducting the research, please note that this is a six credit-hour course intended to introduce students to the scientific method, and should not be seen as a 'mini-MSc'. Thus, there should be *no expectation* put on the student to complete a stand-alone published work; indeed, obtaining "positive data" is not a requirement of the course. Finally, please keep in mind that this is likely the first experience that most students will have with conducting research, so they may need more mentoring and guidance than is typical for graduate students (i.e., they would likely benefit from a structured outline and regular progress meetings). We hope you enjoy the experience!

### Deadlines and guidelines

Please read and keep a current copy of the BIOL4100 course outline at hand, possibly in the student's file. It contains all relevant information regarding course requirements, deadlines, and formats. Be sure that students adhere to these guidelines, as they will be graded on this.

### Responsibilities of students, supervisors, and HTC members

The student is responsible for:

- finding a supervisor
- in consultation with the supervisor, identifying an external member of the advisory committee well in advance of the proposal meeting
- conduct of research
- development of skills (if required)
- analysis and presentation of data
- writing all reports, drafts, and the final thesis document (including figures and tables)
- timely completion of the above items (you should help the student set goals for these)

The supervisor is expected to:

- in consultation with the student, identify an external member of the advisory committee well in advance of the proposal meeting
- provide reasonable resources and training for the conduct of research
- ensure that the student has completed all required safety and/or animal care training prior to initiating research
- be available for consultation on multiple iterations of written material and/or oral presentations, and provide constructive feedback in a timely manner

## **Supervisor Guidelines for Honours Thesis (BIOL4100)**

The HTC thesis advisory committee members:

- provide feedback to the student and advisor(s) to help develop the research project, with the aim of ensuring that each project is achievable within the timeline and expectations of the Honours Thesis Course
- provide consistency among all student projects (i.e., maintain a level playing field)
- ensure that course standards are met
- help resolve any disputes that may arise between students and their supervisor(s)

### **Co-advisors**

Our regulations require that external departmental members co-supervise honours thesis students with a faculty member within the department. Each co-advisor has equal stature on the committee, and together they count as a single vote. Likewise, student evaluations provided by each co-advisor will be averaged prior to being combined with those of other members of the advisory and examination committees.

### **Role of the external advisory committee member**

The external advisory committee member will be selected by the student and the student's advisor and appointed by the HTC. The external advisory committee member is involved in the discussion and judgment in all three meetings (proposal, progress, and final defense) as well in the grading (and input) of the submitted documents.

### **Evaluation of conduct of research by the supervisor(s)**

Following the honours thesis defense, you will be asked to provide the Chair of the HTC with a short evaluation (a mark out of 15) of the students conduct during their project. Evaluation schemes may vary from person to person, but several questions to consider are:

- Did the student put in an honest effort in all aspects of the research?
- Did the student show initiative and attempt to work independently with writing, research and problem solving?
- Did the student consistently meet mutually agreed upon deadlines and/or manage their time wisely?
- Did the student demonstrate effective communication skills during the project?
- Did the student incorporate feedback from their committee into their thesis or presentations?

### **Other deadlines and considerations**

Please keep in mind that other deadlines, such as those involving Animal Care Protocol Forms and trapping/collection permits, may have an impact upon the design of the Honours students' research projects. Alternatively, supervisors may want students to conduct time-sensitive research projects prior to the normal course starting date in May of each year. In both cases, supervisors should identify Honours students early and involve them in the planning phase of the project. In the latter case, it is imperative that the supervisor approach the HTC to make special arrangements (e.g., hold the proposal meeting earlier than is normally required).