

Types of Honors Courses

As one of 24,000 University of Massachusetts Amherst students, you'll choose from among the 90 academic majors a large research university offers. As one of 2,800 Commonwealth Honors College students, you'll enjoy the small classes, individual academic counseling, and a strong sense of community a college provides.

Officially Recognized Honors Courses

To meet your own personal challenges, Commonwealth Honors College joins with departments and programs campus-wide to offer you various types of officially recognized honors courses. These courses, when completed with a grade of "B" or higher, are automatically counted toward your honors course requirements.

[Enriched Honors Courses](#)

[Honors Colloquia](#)

[Independent Study Honors](#)

[Six-Credit Intensive Language Courses](#)

[UMass Amherst Graduate Courses](#)

[Honors Thesis or Project](#)

Enriched Honors Courses are three-or-more credit courses and seminars taught at the honors level with a 25-person enrollment capacity. They can be identified in the CHC Honors Course Guide and on SPIRE by their course number suffix "H," e.g., ANTH 104H. These courses are intensive and due to their small class size, allow for direct mentoring relationships between faculty and students.

Honors Colloquia are one-credit "add-ons" which enrich non-honors courses that exceed 25 students in capacity. These colloquia offer 25 or fewer students in the large class the opportunity for more focused study of the course content. Honors Colloquia can be identified in the CHC Honors Course Guide and on SPIRE by their course number suffix "HH," e.g., ANTH 104HH. These courses carry the attributes of the non-honors course (i.e., class capacity; credits, GenEd) plus award an additional credit for the honors work (e.g., ANTH 104HH for 5cr and SB Gen Ed).

Some departments also offer a 1-credit enrichment option under the honors seminar number "291H," "391H," and "491H." In this model, enrollment in the honors seminar must be preceded by satisfactory completion (grade of "B" or higher) of the designated, affiliated 3-4 credit non-honors course. Both components together will comprise one honors course for CHC requirements' purposes.

Honors Colloquia may also be established after the semester begins. If two or more students in a non-honors course are interested in establishing an honors colloquium version, and the instructor is willing to work additionally with them, the instructor may submit a request for a late-added honors colloquium via the CHC website's "[For Faculty](#)" web page. Enrollment must be 2-25 students.

If you are the only student interested in enriching a course, read about the Honors Independent Study option below.

Independent Study Honors (ISH) comes in two forms. If a non-honors University course you wish to take does not offer a regularly scheduled Honors colloquium option, you may contract with the course instructor for one or two credits of additional in-depth, independent work. You may also contract with a faculty member for a three- to six-credit "stand-alone" Independent Study Honors of your own design.

Independent Study Honors (ISH) Contract Registration ([online via CHC Paths student portal](#))

All Independent Study Honors are initiated through an Honors College advisor who will explain to you the specific requirements and processes for enrollment.

- 1-2 credit ISH enriching a non-honors course of 3 or more credits: must involve at least eight hours of student/faculty contact time over the course of the semester.*
- 3-6 credit "stand-alone" ISH: students requesting this option must provide a syllabus-like proposal and documentation of the work load and have at least one-half hour of contact with the sponsor per credit per week with approximately three to four hours of work per credit per week.

* **NOTE:** a maximum of three Independent Study Honors (ISH) may be applied to the Commonwealth Honors College honors requirements.

Six-Credit Intensive Language Courses (maximum: two courses for 12 credits) may be applied to Commonwealth Honors College honors requirements.

UMass Amherst Graduate Courses at the 600-, 700-, and 800-level apply automatically to Commonwealth Honors College honors requirements. As part of a large research university with 64 master's and 50 doctoral programs, Commonwealth Honors College is uniquely positioned to support students ready and eager for the rigorous challenges graduate courses afford. Therefore, it accepts any upper-level graduate course, completed with a grade of B or better, as applying toward its own honors requirements.

The 6 credit Honors Thesis or Project provides the culminating experience of a Commonwealth Honors College student's academic life and is designed to provide Honors College seniors with an opportunity to integrate their undergraduate experiences while preparing for their intended career paths. Whether you choose to design an individually contracted honors thesis or project with an instructor, or participate with other students in a faculty-taught thesis or project seminar, you will

have an opportunity to conduct in-depth scholarly research under the guidance of an experienced faculty mentor and with the support of the College's Research Literacy. For complete information, see the [Honors Thesis or Project](#) section of our website.

Petitioned Courses

Commonwealth Honors College recognizes that other courses may be as rigorous as UMass Amherst honors courses yet are not automatically recognized as applying toward your Commonwealth Honors College requirements. While no traditional undergraduate UMass non-honors courses can be petitioned for honors course recognition, other types of courses can. An Honors College advisor will inform you about and help you through the petition process. Petitions must be submitted on the [Petition for Exception form](#).

[Non-UMass Amherst Five-College Courses](#)

[Study Abroad](#)

[National Exchange and Transfer Honors Courses](#)

[500-Level UMass Amherst Graduate Courses](#)

Non-UMass Amherst Five-College Courses -taken at neighboring Amherst, Smith, Mount Holyoke or Hampshire College through the Five College Exchange-may be petitioned for honors credit as long as they have 25 or fewer students enrolled, a high degree of interaction between instructor and students, and a challenging course syllabus. Exceptions: Five-College language courses which are less than 8 credits per semester may not be used to satisfy CHC requirements.

Study Abroad Courses may be petitioned for honors credit. Each year hundreds of students from the University of Massachusetts Amherst experience the challenges and rewards of study abroad. Commonwealth Honors College and the International Programs Office co-sponsor the International Scholars Program, which allows highly qualified freshmen to integrate international studies coursework at the University with study abroad during their Junior year. And in conjunction with UMass-based Living Routes, Commonwealth Honors College also supports a variety of Community Service Learning programs around the world.

The International Programs Office additionally offers University students the opportunity to select from over 100 exchange programs in more than 30 countries, ranging from total immersion in a non-English speaking country to English speaking programs in both English and non-English-speaking countries. The programs are designed to provide foreign study at a cost comparable to that of UMass Amherst. Any financial aid, scholarships, or loans that you receive to attend UMass Amherst will apply while you participate in an approved study abroad program.

Even if you are not planning to major in the study of a culture or language, by integrating foreign study into your undergraduate program you gain a deeper appreciation for the complexity and diversity of world affairs. For more information on opportunities to study abroad, see Off-Campus Study Programs.

The maximum number of study abroad courses which may be petitioned for honors credit is one per semester.

National Student Exchange and Transfer Honors Courses may be petitioned for honors credit provided they received honors distinction at the home institution.

Commonwealth Honors Program

Students who transfer into Commonwealth Honors College from a Massachusetts community college and have completed an Associate's Degree through a certified Commonwealth Honors Program are recognized as having completed the first two years of their Commonwealth Honors College requirements. However, Honors 201H and Honors 391AH requirements and the honors thesis or project requirement will not be waived under any circumstances for students pursuing the graduation honor of Commonwealth Honors College Scholar.

UMass Amherst Graduate Courses at the 500-level may be petitioned for honors credit provided they

- are three or more graded credits
- are taught at the graduate level
- have a maximum enrollment of 25 students
- feature a high degree of interaction between professor and students
- feature a rigorous syllabus

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