



# MCC Honors Program

Student Handbook

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## About the Honors Program

### Description

The Honors Program enables students to pursue and complete work beyond the academic requirements of regular coursework. The program challenges students to think, analyze, investigate, and discover at a more advanced level than commonly demanded. For students that complete all of the program requirements, it provides special recognition and reward for their work.

### Benefits

Participation in the Honors Program provides many benefits:

- Grants priority registration
- Facilitates greater opportunities to establish professional relationships with faculty
- Helps students reach their potential
- Offers unique learning opportunities
- Enhances the strength of academic transcripts
- Improves transfer and scholarship opportunities
- Builds resume strength

### Participation

In general, any MCC student may apply to the program (e.g. full-time, part-time, online, etc.). The program is typically available for students seeking an A.A. (Associate of Liberal Arts) or A.S (Associate of Science) degree. Students in other programs should meet with their advisor and the Honors Program Coordinator to discuss if Honors Program participation is possible within their degree program. Students currently in the Nursing and most trades programs are not eligible to complete Honors coursework at this time.

### Cost

Students pay appropriate tuition, fees, and book/supply costs for their Honors Courses, Seminars, and Projects. Students can typically complete all Honors Program requirements within an A.A. (Liberal Arts) or A.S. (Assoc. of Science) degree, such that paying additional tuition and fees are usually not necessary in order to complete the program. However, this is not a guarantee. Depending on a student's degree program or courses taken, they may have to register for additional courses and pay for corresponding tuition, fees, and supplies to complete the Honors Program requirements.

### Timeline

Students may participate in the Honors Program for one or more semesters. If students wish to complete the *Degree in Honors*, they should have at least 2-3 semesters left of school after admission to the Honors Program.

### Contact

Honors Program Coordinator  
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## Requirements

### Applying to the Honors Program

For admission to the MCC Honors Program, students must meet the following requirements

1. Be enrolled in an MCC Course. Student can be full-time, part-time or a dual enrolled status.
2. Students with  $\geq 12$  college credits can be admitted with a college (transfer or MCC) GPA of 3.3 or higher.
3. Students with  $< 12$  college credits can be admitted with a high school GPA of 3.5 or higher, an ACT composite score of 26 or higher or an SAT composite score of 1230 or higher.
4. In the event that students have  $< 12$  college credits and have not taken the ACT or SAT and their previous institution did not have a standard GPA procedure, then they can be admitted provisionally into the program. They are on probation the first semester during which they are only allowed 1 course project but unlimited seminars. If their GPA is below 3.3 at the end of their first semester, they would be dismissed from the program. But are eligible to re-apply if their GPA meets the standard in future semesters.
5. Submit the MCC Honors Program admission application to the Honors Program Coordinator. An [application is available online](#) at or can be obtained from the Honors Program Coordinator.

### Degree in Honors

To graduate with a *Degree in Honors*, (designated on a student's transcript) a student must

1. Satisfactorily complete a minimum of 12 semester hours in Honors coursework.
  - o Satisfactorily complete at least three honors courses, excluding seminars.
  - o Satisfactorily complete at least three honors seminars.
2. Graduate with at least a 3.3 cumulative grade point average.
3. Submit a graduation application for approval by the Honors Program Committee to the Registrar's office.
4. Submit a final Honors Program Log (submitted by Honors Program Coordinator).

In the event that one or more instructional requirements cannot be fulfilled, the student should meet with the Honors Program Coordinator to discuss options such as an Independent Honors Project.

### Honors Courses

For each regular course students wish to complete honors coursework and earn honors credit, the first step is to discuss the possibility with the instructor(s). Most instructors are willing to participate; however, it is voluntary. In addition, it may not be possible to complete honors coursework in some specific program courses (e.g. nursing).

Students can complete honors courses during Fall and Spring semesters. Students can only complete honors courses for summer courses with permission of the Honors Program Coordinator. Students cannot complete Honors courses during the Winter Interim.

After a student and instructor agree upon honors coursework (see guidelines below), students must:

1. Complete and sign an honors contract with each instructor in each course for which they wish to receive honors credit.
2. Submit the completed honors contract to the Honors Program Coordinator.
3. Email the course syllabus to the Honors Program Coordinator or attach it to the completed contract.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the honors coursework is to engage students in the course in a meaningful way. The coursework serves a pedagogical purpose of expanding the honors program students' knowledge and application of course material, rather than just for the sake of being extra work.

This coursework tends to be approximately 15-25% additional learning; however, the depth and quality of the assignment matters more than the amount of work.

### **Criteria**

The honors contract coursework must meet four criteria:

- Be independent of standard course expectations in the syllabus
- Advance knowledge and application of course material
- Include ongoing dialogue between the student and instructor concerning the progress about the honors coursework
- Result in a final product such as a presentation, paper, poster, and/or creative artifact (e.g. art, video, website design)

### **Honors Coursework guidelines:**

Project may be in any format agreed upon with the instructor. Typically these are one of the following: Research paper, synthesis/analysis paper, website design, service learning, activism, unique lab procedures, etc.

1. Student must meet with the Honors Program Advisor within the first three weeks of the semester to review ideas for project. Discussion will include student workload and feasibility of number of projects, identification of potential courses available for projects based on the instructor of record for the course and discussion of student interest in projects for identified courses.
2. Project outline due by 3rd week of class (or no later than Sept. 20th)
3. Must meet with instructor by mid-term to discuss progress on project. Form due to Dr. Kness by mid-term. If fail to do so, project may be canceled.
4. Rough draft of project is due by November 1st.
5. Meet with Instructor before November 22nd to receive feedback.
6. Project due no later than end of finals week.
7. Forms signed by instructor with final grade in course & comment on project by Tuesday after finals (coordinated by Honors Program advisor/coordinator).

### **Project Options**

1. Papers
  - a. Must be at least 15 pages in length
  - b. Double Spaced
  - c. Excludes references, title page
  - d. Includes at least 5 references

- e. At LEAST four references must come from database or journals
  - f. For sophomore students, highly encourage try interlibrary loan
  - g. APA or MLA is instructor choice
2. Presentations
- a. Should be no shorter than 20 minutes (could be cumulative)
  - b. Must include at least 5 references
  - c. At LEAST four references must come from database or journals
  - d. For sophomore students, highly encourage try interlibrary loan
  - e. Must include at least three educational graphics (exceptions based on content)
3. Other: Other project modalities are accepted and encouraged. Details to worked out with the instructor and student. Honors Program coordinator will be available to help work out details and will review plan to determine if project meets expectations of “Honors” coursework.

Projects are course dependent and should be at least 15 – 20% more work in the class

- a. If extra lab for standard 4 credit class, then 20% would be 3 extra labs (6 hours).
- b. If project for standard 3 credit lecture lab, then 20% would be about 9 hours of work outside of class time.

### **Grading**

The grade for the honors coursework should not be included with the standard coursework grades. Students must earn at least a “B” on the honors coursework for it to be considered “successfully completed” at an honors level. Students must earn at least a “B” on **both** the honors coursework and the standard coursework to earn honors credit for the course. For both the honors coursework grade and the overall course grade, a “B-” does not count as a “B”.

### **Past Coursework**

See “Past Honors Coursework Examples” on page 10.

### **Honors Seminars**

The Honors seminars can count towards A. A. or A.S. degree electives. Students in a different degree program should speak to their advisor and the Honors Program Coordinator to see if Honors seminars can count towards electives in their degree program.

Faculty offer Honors Seminars only during the Fall and Spring semesters.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of Honors Seminars is to challenge students intellectually through small-group engagement.

### **Description**

These 1 credit hour seminars will consist of discussion, directed readings or presentations, and formal oral and/or written student presentations. Content topics vary widely based on instructor and societal relevance. A vital component of Honors Seminars is student involvement. Students are key contributors within the learning and teaching process.

Students may take an Honors Seminar with or without Honors Program acceptance. The course assignments are the same for all students.

### **Grading**

Students must earn at least a “B” in the course to earn honors credit towards the Honors Program requirements. A “B-” does not count as a “B”.

### **Past Seminars**

See “Past Honors Seminars Examples” at the end of this document.

### **Prior Honors Seminars Completion**

Honors Seminars successfully completed prior to admission into the Honors Program will count towards the Honors Programs Requirements upon admission.

### **Alternative Options: Independent Honors Project**

In the event that one or more instructional requirements cannot be fulfilled, the student should meet with the Honors Program Coordinator to discuss options such as, but not limited to, an Independent Honors Project. Examples of circumstances include institutional scheduling conflicts, seminars cancelled, etc. Honors Program Committee approval is required.

An Independent Honors Project may be completed for up to 3 credits.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Independent Honors Project is to provide students with an academically challenging and engaging experience.

### **Criteria**

To complete an Independent Honors Project, students must follow four criteria:

- Provide project details via the Independent Honors Project and Independent Study forms. Submit both forms to the Honors Program Coordinator. Obtain these forms from the Honors Program Coordinator.
- For every credit hour, commit to at least 30 hours of time on the project, including meetings with the instructor as well as independent progress.
- Regularly communicate with the instructor about the progress of the project
- Complete a final product of a presentation, paper, poster, and/or creative artifact (e.g. art, video, website design)

### **Building an Independent Project**

If a student wants to complete an Independent Honors Project:

- Student must meet with the Honors Coordinator to discuss project idea.
- Student must identify a full time faculty member that would be qualified and willing to work with them on the project. If the student is unsure of who to contact, the Honors Coordinator can assist in identifying potential mentors.
- The following forms must be completed and returned to the Honors Program Coordinator at least 2 weeks prior to the end of preceding term.

- Independent Honors Project (Honors Coordinator Completes with Student and Mentor)
- Independent Study Form (Faculty Mentor completes)
- Once approved by the Academic Dean, the Honors Coordinator will communicate with the Faculty Mentor and the student to let them know their project has been approved.

No Honors independent projects are allowed during the Winter Interim term.

### **Grading**

Students must earn at least a “B” on the project to earn honors credit towards the Honors Program requirements. If at least a “B” is not earned on the project, the project will only earn elective credit. A “B-” does not count as a “B”.

## **Policies**

### **Deadlines**

#### **Applications**

Honors Program applications are accepted throughout the semester.

Students must be accepted to the program no later than by the 3rd week of the semester in order to complete an Honors Course for that semester. A student accepted after the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the semester has to wait until the following semester to complete an Honors Course. A student accepted after the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the semester but before the start of second-half term Honors Seminar may enroll in the seminar if seats are available.

#### **Honors Course Contracts**

Honors Course contracts are due by midterm for Fall/Spring courses and by the 5<sup>th</sup> business day from the beginning date of courses shorter than 15 weeks.

#### **Independent Projects**

Must be approved by the Academic Dean and the Honors Committee prior to the start of the term. Advanced planning for these projects is required and students should start the process the semester prior to the term in which the project is anticipated.

### **Active Status**

Students must adhere to three conditions to remain active in the Honors Program:

1. Maintain at least a 3.3 overall GPA
2. Successfully complete either an honors course or an honors seminar each semester
3. Follow Student Code of Conduct as detailed in the [Student Handbook](#)

### **Probation**

The Honors Program Coordinator continuously reviews progress of all honors program students. Honors students are on probation once at least one of the following conditions occurs

1. Their overall MCC G.P.A. falls below 3.3

2. They do not successfully complete either an honors course or an honors seminar in a given semester
3. They do not meet with the Honors Program Coordinator in a given semester

Students receive notification of probation via email from the Honors Program Coordinator. Probation is a warning system to prevent dismissal from the Honors Program. Students on probation may continue in the Honors Program.

If the condition(s) are resolved the following semester, the student's probation status is removed. Students receive notification of probation removal via email from the Honors Program Coordinator.

### **Program Dismissal**

The Honors Program Coordinator continuously reviews progress of all honors program students. Honors students are dismissed from the honors program when at least one of the following conditions occurs:

1. Their overall G.P.A. stays below 3.3 for two consecutive semesters
2. They do not successfully complete either an honors course or an honors seminar for two consecutive semesters.
3. They violate Student Code of Conduct as detailed in the [Student Handbook](#)

Students receive notification of probation via email from the Honors Program Coordinator. After dismissal from the honors program, students retain all honors credits and transcript designations previously earned. If dismissal is during the semester, students will not earn any honors credits currently in progress.

Honors students dismissed from the program may appeal their dismissal by completing the Honors Program Dismissal Appeal form and submitting it to the Honors Program Coordinator. The Honors Program Committee reviews the appeals. Obtain this from the Honors Program Coordinator.

### **Program Withdrawal**

Honors students may request to withdraw from the honors program at any time by emailing the Honors Program Coordinator. It is preferred, but not required, that the students indicate why they are leaving the program. After exit from the Honors Program, students retain all honors credits and transcript designations previously earned.

### **Incomplete**

A student may earn an Incomplete in an Honors Course, Honors Seminar, or Independent Honors Project at the discretion of the faculty member, in accordance with the MCC Incomplete Policy. However, a student may not receive an Incomplete solely to complete Honors coursework if they successfully completed all other requirements in a course prior to the end of the semester.

### **Transfer Credit**

Students may request to transfer in honors credits obtained at another university. The credits must meet the grade and quality requirements set for MCC Honors courses. Students interested in transferring honors credits in should submit a transcript and copy of syllabi to the Honors

Program Coordinator. The Honors Program Committee will review the materials and decide if the credits can be transferred into the program.

### **Advising**

The Honors Program Coordinator regularly provides advising to all Honors students with respect to honors program requirements. All Honors students must meet with Honors Program Coordinator at least once each semester for advising. They also must meet with their other advisor(s) regularly to ensure that they are completing other degree plan requirements.

### **Submitting Honors Coursework**

All Honors Program students should save their honors coursework. This could be valuable upon transfer or when seeking employment in the future.

## **Additional Opportunities**

### **Honors Program Symposium**

The Honors Program Symposium offers Honors Program students an annual opportunity to display and present their honors coursework. All Honors Program students are expected, but not required, to participate in the symposium if scheduled.

### **Student Leadership Retreat**

The Student Leadership Retreat is held in conjunction with the Student Senate. The retreat is planned by the Director of Student Engagement and the Honors Program Coordinator. This 2 day event is held yearly each fall the week prior to or just after the start of the fall semester. In addition to Honors Program students, other student leaders from Student Senate and student club leaders are invited to attend. During the retreat, students will partake in team building exercises lead by faculty, staff or event hosts. This event is held at WildWoods Hills Ranch in St. Charles, Iowa if possible. All costs are covered by the school and the event is free for current Honors Students in good standing.

### **Scholarships**

The MCC Foundation is able to offer some MCC Honors Program students scholarships each semester. Students are encouraged to share their planned areas of study or field of work with the coordinator. This information will be used by the MCC Foundation to match students to potential scholarships.

### **Honors Recruitment Scholarship**

The MCC Foundation has designated funds for recruitment of new Honors Program students. As of 2024, there are 10 available scholarships worth \$1,000 each. Students must meet all Honors Program requirements and be accepted into the program by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of Fall Term. A separate scholarship application is also due at that time. The scholarship applications will be reviewed by the committee with decisions made within a week of the due date. The award will be distributed in two parts: \$250 during Fall Semester and \$750 in Spring Semester. To receive the funding students must complete ONE Honors course project during the Fall semester to fulfill obligations and for award distribution in Spring semester.

## Graduation

### Graduation Medallions

Students who complete the Honors Program requirements will receive a medallion, recognizing their completion of the program, to wear at graduation.

## Past Honors Coursework, Seminars, and Projects

### Past Honors Coursework Examples

- Review academic journals and conduct an interview about adolescents taking online education courses. Then write a paper and give a presentation (Adolescent Psychology)
- Prepare a study guide of complex muscle groups (Anatomy and Physiology I)
- Write a research paper on a contemporary artist (Art Appreciation)
- Create study materials on the endocrine system for classmates to use (videos, crossword puzzles, etc. (Biology II)
- Take and edit pictures of microscope slides and research the topics further (Biology II)
- Create a PowerPoint on logical fallacies, which is used for other students to learn from (Composition II)
- Research a musician, create a PowerPoint, and teach the information to the class (Music Appreciation)
- Write a research paper about sports psychology (Psychology)
- Research the sociological relationship between museums and communities (Introduction to Sociology)

### Past Honors Seminars Examples

- Escaping North Korea (Sociology)
- Art in the Environment (Humanities)
- Extinct (Biology)
- Saving Nemo [Focus on oceans] (Biology)
- Fairytales (English)
- The Hunger Games (Humanities)
- Mythbusters Math (Math)
- Ghosts and Monsters (Sociology)
- Tattoos and Piercings (Sociology)
- The Leaf in the Pen (Humanities)

### Independent Honors Project Examples

- Complete an original research project that includes reviewing literature and collecting and analyzing data: Piaget's Cognitive Developmental Theory
- Field experience projects: Ethology of African Lions in captivity.
- Complete a comprehensive service-learning project: Recycling opportunities in Marshalltown.
- Develop your own: Created a Virtual Art Gallery.

## **Honors Program Committee**

The Honors Program Committee regularly meets to discuss and implement components of the Honors Program. The Honors Program Committee includes the MCC Provost, Chief Academic Registrar, Dean of Academic Affairs, Honors Program Coordinator, two Faculty members from different divisions and one Academic Adviser.

### **Honors Program Committee 2026**

Dr. Danielle Kness, Honors Program Coordinator

Dr. Matt Schmit, Provost

Tracy Crippin, Chief Academic Registrar

Benita Peterson, Registrar officer

Dr. MaryAnne Nickle, Dean of Academic Affairs

Kristen Murphy, Computer Applications/Computer Science Faculty

Dr. Cecil Holland, History/Education Faculty

Allie Osmundson, Academic Advising Specialist