

# *MCC Honors Program Handbook*

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## About the Honors Program

### Description

The Honors Program is for students to pursue and complete work beyond the academic requirements of regular courses. The program challenges students to think, analyze, investigate, and discover at a more advanced level than commonly demanded, and it provides special recognition and reward for academically outstanding students.

### Benefits

Participation in the Honors Program provides many benefits:

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

### 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. (Liberal Arts) 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.

### 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) 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  
Dr. Danielle Kness, Danielle.Kness@iavalley.edu  
Room #513, 641-844-5788  
3700 S Center Street  
Marshalltown, IA 50158

## Requirements

### Applying to the Honors Program

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

1. Be formally admitted to MCC
2. Students with < 12 college credits can be admitted with a high school GPA of 3.5 or higher, or an ACT composite score of 26 or higher (or equivalent SAT composite).
3. Students with  $\geq$  12 college credits can be admitted with a college (transfer or MCC) GPA of 3.3 or higher.
4. 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.
  - 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)

## **Sample honors coursework**

Research paper, synthesis/analysis paper, website design, service learning, activism, unique lab procedures, etc.

## **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 8.

## **Honors Seminars**

The honors seminars can count towards A. A. 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 seminars will consist of discussion, directed readings or presentations, and formal oral and/or written student presentations. A vital component of Honors Seminars is student involvement. Students are key contributors within the learning and teaching process.

Content topics vary widely based on instructor and societal relevance. Honors Seminars are 1-credit each.

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” on page 8.

## **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)

## **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 Honors Project**

If a student wants to complete an Independent Honors Project during the Fall or Summer Semester, the Independent Honors Project and Independent Study forms are due by April 1.

If a student wants to complete an Independent Honors Project during the Winter Interim or Spring Semester, the Independent Honors Project and Independent Study forms are due by October 15.

### **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 and submit a copy on Blackboard.

## **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.

### **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.
- Complete a comprehensive service-learning project.

## Additional Information

### Faculty Participation

Faculty participation is voluntary. All MCC full-time and part-time (adjunct) faculty may agree to participate in an honors course contract with honors program students. Honors course contracts signed by an adjunct faculty member require review and approval by a full-time faculty member in the subject or division area. All MCC full-time faculty may offer honors seminars and independent honors projects in subjects they are qualified to teach. If they are interested in teaching an honors seminar, they should speak with the Honors Program Coordinator and Dean of Academic Affairs. Upon approval, they must add the course to the schedule, submit a description to the Academic Affairs Office Associate, and submit a syllabus at the start of the semester.

Faculty are encouraged to experiment with curriculum and pedagogy for both the honors courses and honors seminars. For more information about honors course and seminar expectations, see “Requirements” and “Past Honors Coursework, Seminars, and Projects” sections above.

At the end of the semester, faculty who completed an honors contract with an honors student must report the student’s completion of the honors coursework and the overall course grade. The Honors Program Coordinator will provide this paperwork.

### Honors Program Committee

The Honors Program Committee regularly meets to discuss and implement components of the Honors Program. The Honors Program Committee consists of the Honors Program Coordinator, the Dean Academic Affairs, the Provost, the Director of Operations and Research/Registrar, and at least two faculty members from separate divisions.

#### **Honors Program Committee**

Dr. Danielle Kness, Honors Program Coordinator

Dr. Patrick Kennedy, Dean of Academic Affairs

Dr. Robin Lilienthal, Provost

Mandy Brown, Director of Operations and Research/Registrar

Sally Wilson, Biology Faculty

Carolyn Briggs, English Faculty

## Student Testimonials

*“The MCC Honors Program played an integral part in my development as a student by challenging me to go above and beyond in the classroom. I would recommend this program to anyone who wants to be the best student they can be.” – Cody S., 2014 Graduate*

*“Being in the honors program has been a great experience for me. Not only has it connected me with lifelong friends, it challenged me to dig deeper into material, and look at the world through a different interpretation. An example of this would be during our “Once Upon a Time” seminar, in which we looked at different fairy tales written by Hans Christian Anderson, and we began to express deeper meanings behind the written world and apply those truths found in today’s world. I would defiantly recommend the honor seminars to anyone who wants a bit of a challenge. You will be stretched to think differently, step out of the comfort zone of the everyday school life, and become part of a group of creative people wanting to use the gifts and talents that challenge new ideas and higher learning.” – Josh B., 2017 Graduate*

*“Throughout high school and earlier I had been involved in extracurricular programs that allowed me to further my learning beyond the classroom. The MCC Honors Program allowed me to continue learning above and beyond the required course material. I had the freedom to choose which classes I wanted to complete Honors work in, choose a topic that interested me, and work independently as I completed the research for my projects. Being able to choose which topic I wanted to work on ensured that I loved and finished all my projects. All of my instructors were very helpful in coaching me and giving me feedback whenever I needed it, while still allowing me to complete the majority of it on my own. Along with all of the academic rigors that accompanied my work in the Honors Program, I was able to develop closer relationships with these professors that I worked with, even calling on many of them to write recommendation letters for me. I would not have formed these great friendships with them if not for the extra time we had put in working on my Honors projects. I thoroughly enjoyed all my work with the Honors Program; it has benefitted me greatly during my time at MCC and – I believe – beyond graduation. I would definitely recommend this program as another one of MCC’s organizations that more students should get involved in!” – Hannah S., 2017 Graduate*