# Table of Contents

## INTRODUCTION

- Part of a Statewide Program ................................................................. 1
- College Mission .................................................................................. 1
- Benefits of Honors ............................................................................ 1

## HONORS COLLEGE CULTURE & TRADITIONS

- Culture ............................................................................................... 3
- Traditions .......................................................................................... 3
- Communication ................................................................................ 4

## ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

- Director and Associate Director ....................................................... 4
- Student Support Director and Assistant Director ......................... 4
- Honors Faculty .................................................................................. 5
- Academic Affiliates ......................................................................... 5
- Non-Academic Affiliates ................................................................. 5
- Honors Student Council & Officers ................................................. 5
- Honors Curriculum Committee ....................................................... 7
- Advisory Council ............................................................................. 7
- Administrative Support .................................................................. 7

## REQUIREMENTS

- Admission ......................................................................................... 8
  - High School Students .................................................................... 8
  - Transfer Students from Other Campuses .................................... 8
  - Admission of Current UMass Dartmouth Students ...................... 8
- Graduation Requirements ............................................................... 8
- Probation, Dismissal, and Withdrawal .......................................... 9

## HONORS COURSES AND CURRICULUM

- Overview .......................................................................................... 10
- What makes a course an “Honors” course? .................................. 10
- Required Courses ............................................................................ 10
- Recommended Courses ................................................................. 11
- Honors Contracts ............................................................................ 11
- The APEX ........................................................................................ 14
  - Overview ...................................................................................... 14
  - The Faculty Advisor ..................................................................... 15
  - APEX Credits .............................................................................. 16
  - APEX Grading ............................................................................. 16
  - Collaborative Projects ............................................................... 17
  - Six-Step Process and Forms ....................................................... 17

## ADVISING

- ......................................................................................................... 18

## RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

- ......................................................................................................... 19

## GLOSSARY

- ......................................................................................................... 20
Introduction

“Excellence is never an accident.” — Aristotle

Welcome to the Honors College! The purpose of this handbook is to provide comprehensive information about the College and its curriculum, requirements, policies, and procedures. Please direct questions about anything not covered here to Honors College staff or faculty.

Part of a Statewide Program

The University Honors College is part of the statewide Commonwealth Honors Program (CHP). CHP has programs on 25 campuses in Massachusetts including community colleges, state colleges and universities, and all UMass campuses. The Honors College is open to qualified undergraduate students from every college and academic department. It is a separate college that works alongside the other five colleges on campus.

College Mission

The major goals of the UMassD Honors College are summarized in our mission statement:

*Through our flexible curriculum and close mentoring, the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Honors College promotes curiosity, imagination, engagement, academic excellence, and original scholarly activities across diverse fields. Within a supportive and inclusive community, we empower high-achieving undergraduate students to widen their focus beyond the classroom and face the challenges of today and the future.*

Benefits of Honors

Honors classes provide a richer, deeper academic experience than is typical of most courses. Moreover, graduating as a Commonwealth Honors Scholar is a prestigious honor that is recognized throughout the Commonwealth and beyond. It communicates multiple things about graduates to employers, graduate schools, family and, perhaps most importantly, to oneself. It demonstrates that the Scholar was recognized by UMass as one of the top students on campus. It also indicates that the Scholar did not merely complete the minimum required to earn the degree. Rather, they chose to be challenged and to distinguish themselves academically through advanced coursework and independent scholarship. Fewer than 5% of UMassD students graduate as a Commonwealth Honors Scholar, making this designation very meaningful.

Honors students at UMassD enjoy many other tangible benefits, including:

**Priority Registration.** Honors students are allowed to register before all students except seniors. This allows most students to obtain their first choice of classes.
Honors Housing. Honors students who live on campus can choose honors housing. Honors housing space is available to first year students in the Honors Living/Learning Community, located in the Spruce residence hall. In collaboration with Student Affairs, the Honors College provides enrichment, cultural, and entertainment events in the Honors residence. Additionally, honors students may move into upper class housing as sophomores, whereas the rest of the student population must wait until the junior year.

Honors Annex. The Annex is located on the second floor of the library, adjacent to the Honors classrooms. It provides private workspaces and computers for Honors students to work alone or in small groups. Individual Honors faculty offices are also located in this suite.

Honors Scholarships. UMass Dartmouth offers several scholarships available only to Honors Students. You may locate and apply to scholarships through UMassD’s scholarship portal.

Leadership Opportunities. There are seven seats on the Student Council that provide students with leadership opportunities on campus. These positions sharpen leadership skills, look great on a resume, and provide a great way to be part of the college and larger campus.

Free Museum Memberships. Honors students enjoy free membership to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Institute of Contemporary Art. Stickers for your UMass Pass that allow free entry to these institutions are available in the Honors Office.

Networking. Honors students are part of the state’s Commonwealth Honors Program, which makes graduates part of a statewide network of dynamic and talented professionals. The Honors College participates in networking events with alumni and current students from Dartmouth and the other UMass campuses, designed to help students make professional connections with their peers and potential mentors in the Commonwealth.

Small class size. Full honors courses are capped 20 students or fewer. This allows honors students to engage with their fellow students and instructor and to immerse in interactive and engaging discussions.

Free or Reduced Cost Enrichment and Entertainment. The Honors College offers its students the opportunity to engage in many activities outside the classroom. Past events have included local theater productions, spring break learning trips, and noted guest speakers. There are themed social events on Fridays in the Honors Office that provide snacks and activities such as meditation, therapy dogs, Superbowl “Sundaes,” holiday celebrations, and more. The Student Council also puts on events such as apple picking, Candy Bar Bingo, scavenger hunts, movie night, game night, spring trip to Six Flags, and much more.

Research and Scholarship. As part of the Honors College, all students complete the APEX, a major project in the senior year. The APEX provides students with an opportunity to work closely with a faculty mentor on a unique research project or creative work. Students often
publish their work with faculty in peer-reviewed journals and/or present at professional conferences.

**Workshops.** Honors-only workshops are offered throughout the academic year on various topics from registration and internships to time management and well-being.

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**Honors College Culture & Traditions**

**Culture**

We in the UMassD Honors College think of ourselves as a family. We offer support and community to like-minded students who find joy in learning and striving to achieve their “personal best.” And we like to have fun! We hope all members of our community will join us for talks, trips, movies, holiday celebrations, and other events throughout the academic year.

We believe workplace collaboration is vital for students, faculty, and administrators. Inside and outside the classroom, we encourage students to work together and assist one another as friends and colleagues, and we encourage students to maintain that work philosophy and practice long after graduation. The Honors College administration collaborates within our office every day to provide students with the best honors experience possible. We also collaborate with the Office of Faculty Development (OFD) to provide faculty with the best information and PD in honors teaching. We collaborate with the academic colleges, Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR), Office of Economic Development, and Career Services to find opportunities and maximize funding for student research and internships.

**Traditions**

**Pinning Ceremony.** Beginning in fall 2022, the Honors College holds a pinning ceremony in which first-year students are formally inducted into the College and celebrated as new members of the Honors community. Students receive lapel pins, which they will wear on their graduation stoles during commencement.

**Annual Poster Session.** Each spring, typically just prior to the Convocation and Awards Banquet, student present their APEX work in the form of a scholarly poster presentation. The Honors College has an oversized printer and prints posters free of charge for the event.

**Convocation and Awards Banquet.** Each spring, graduating seniors are invited to a semi-formal banquet in which Honors College awards and recognitions are bestowed. Students also receive their graduation stoles, which are worn on top of graduation gowns at commencement, and certificates of completion as Commonwealth Honors Scholars.
Communication

**It is essential that students regularly read their UMassD email.** Important information about registration, events, finances, requirements, and opportunities are communicated to students throughout the year. Email is the only way the Honors College and the University have to reach students directly, outside the classroom.

Administrative Structure

This section covers the general structure of the Honors Program and outlines the roles of our directors, student support specialists, student council officers, faculty, curriculum committee, and advisory council. The administrative structure is illustrated in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Honors College Administrative Structure](image)

**Director and Associate Director**

The Honors College Director is responsible for all academic and nonacademic functions of the College. She is assisted by the Associate Director.

**Student Support Director and Assistant Director**

The Director and Assistant Director of Student Support provide quality advising and assist students in meeting their Honors College requirements in the most efficient manner. They design and offers workshops for students to assist with transition to university, navigating the
honors requirements, and more. They also ensure that students are compliant with eligibility
requirements to remain in the Honors College.

Honors Faculty
Honors Faculty are appointed by the Provost for terms of one year, renewable for a second.
They teach at least one course per semester for the Honors College. Courses offered directly by
the Honors College include HON 101, 201, 202, 203, and 301, as well as courses in their areas of
specialization. They are assigned offices in the Honors Annex. They serve on the Honors
Curriculum Committee and the Advisory Committee.

Academic Affiliates
Academic affiliates teach Honors courses on an *ad hoc* basis, either on-load or as additional
course assignments. They may serve on the Honors Curriculum Committee and/or the Advisory
Committee.

Non-Academic Affiliates
The non-academic affiliates of the Honors College provide service and/or informal consultation
to the College and its Director. They are appointed by the Director in consultation with College
staff, the Office of Advancement, and Career Services. They may be employees of UMass or
chosen from the larger community. These individuals may serve on the Advisory board.

Honors Student Council & Officers
The Student Council meets weekly during the Fall and Spring semesters and encourages the
entire Honors Community to attend and participate. All officers are elected for a one-year term,
as described in the Honors Student Council by-laws. There are seven formal seats on the
council.

**President.** The role of the President is to build and support the Honors College community of
students. They direct the student council in offering engaging and community-building activities
throughout the year. The President has primary responsibility for proper allocation of the
Council’s annual budget. The President works directly with the Honors College administration in
carrying out their role and represents Honors College students’ needs to the College
administration.

**Vice President.** The primary role of the Vice President of the Honors Student Council is to
support the President to offer engaging and community-building activities to students in the
Honors College.

**Secretary.** The role of the Honors Council Secretary is to document the events of all Honors
Council meetings. They are required to take notes at every meeting, post condensed notes in a
discussion board, and draft emails for the President’s use.
Treasurer. The role of the Honors Council Treasurer is to keep track of budgeting for the Honors Council. They will be required to track the Council’s spending throughout the semester. The holder of this position will stay in contact with anyone requesting funds for events, meetings, etc., to ensure that the Council does not go over budget at any point in the semester. They will also be responsible for drafting a budget request form at the end of each Spring Semester.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Representative. The role of the DEI Representative is to promote and maintain the equality of the Honors College. It is the responsibility of the holder of this position to speak on anything that threatens the racial and sexual equality of the Honors College. They will also work to create new policies that will ensure equal opportunities for all members of the community.

Events Coordinator. The role of the Event Coordinator is to plan events that are run by the Honors Council. They are required to lead in hosting at least one event per month each semester. The Event Coordinator will work with the treasurer to order decorations and potential prizes and plan food/drink accommodations for each event.

Social Media Director. The Social Media Director is responsible for managing all UMass Dartmouth Honors Council social media. The holder of this position has access to a shared folder of pictures and all Social Media Account information. The term limit for this position is two semesters, or until the end of the current year’s Spring semester, whichever is sooner. At the end of each Spring semester, the passwords for all social media accounts will be changed.

Community Service Director. The role of the Community Service Director is to plan community service opportunities for the Honors Council. The Community Service Director is responsible for planning at least two community service events per semester.

Upperclassmen Representative. The role of the Upperclassmen Representative is to represent the Honors College at promotional events. They are required to stay up-to-date with Honors by staying active in the community and participating in Honors Council meetings and events. Each Upperclassmen Representative is responsible for attending at least one promotional event per semester, being able to speak about their experience in Honors. This role is only available to current Juniors and Seniors.

Underclassmen Representative. The role of the Underclassmen Representative is to represent the Honors College at promotional events. They are required to stay up-to-date with Honors by staying active in the community and participating in Honors Council meetings and events. Each Underclassmen Representative is responsible for attending at least one promotional event per semester, being able to speak about why they chose Honors and their experience thus far. This role is only available to current Freshmen and Sophomores.

Photographer. The role of the Photographer is to take pictures at Honors meetings and events. They are responsible for attending as many events as possible, including community service and
promotional events. The pictures that the photographer takes will be uploaded to a shared google drive to be used for social media and promotional content.

**Honors Curriculum Committee**
The Honors Curriculum Committee is structured in accordance with the by-laws of the UMass Dartmouth Faculty Senate, last revised in spring 2022:

> There shall be an Honors Curriculum Committee. The size of this Committee shall be determined by the Honors Faculty, but in no circumstances shall there be fewer than six (6) faculty members together with the President and Vice President of the Honors Student Council, who shall be voting members. The Associate Director of Honors shall serve as an ex officio, non-voting member of the Committee. The Committee shall elect its own Chairperson, who shall be a faculty member.

> All Honors Faculty shall be eligible to vote in a secret ballot to elect the members of the Honors Curriculum Committee from among the Honors Faculty. Should the number of Honors Faculty elected be fewer than the number of positions to be filled, then there shall be a secret ballot to elect members of the Honors Affiliated Faculty to serve on the Committee.

> The Honors Curriculum Committee shall review and make recommendations regarding the initial approval of Honors courses and shall conduct periodic review of all Honors courses. The Honors Curriculum Committee shall recommend requirements for meeting the curriculum standards of the Commonwealth Honors Program. Such recommendations shall be forwarded to the Director of the Honors College for action then to the Provost then to the Chancellor. The recommendation shall take effect upon approval by the Chancellor. A copy of the recommendation shall be forwarded to the President of the Faculty Senate for informational purposes.

**Advisory Council**
The Advisory Council is comprised of the Honors faculty, academic affiliates, and non-academic affiliates. Its function is to offer the Director guidance on fundraising, marketing, enrollment, retention, curriculum, career networking, internships, and other topics relevant to student success and College administration.

**Administrative Support**
The Administrative Assistant is the first point of contact in the Honors College. Additionally, the Administrative Assistant coordinates Honors College events, keeps all college records, and manages the College purchasing and budget.
Requirements

Admission

High School Students
High school applicants to UMass Dartmouth as are accepted into the Honors College as part of the overall UMD admissions process. There is not a separate application process. Space in the Honors College is extremely limited. For the most recent entering class of 160+ students, the average GPA was 4.04.

Transfer Students from Other Campuses
Transfer students who have participated successfully in the Commonwealth Honors Program at other colleges and universities in the Massachusetts public system of higher educations are automatically eligible for the UMass Dartmouth Honors College. The Honors College accepts up to 12 Honors transfer credits.

Transfer students who have not previously participated in the Commonwealth Honors Program may apply to join the UMass Dartmouth Honors College. Admission into the Honors College is normally limited to those students who have completed 60 or fewer university credits, including AP credits. The 60-credit limit may be waived in the case of transfer students who participated in Honors Programs at their previous institution. Students will be required to enroll in a minimum of 3 honors credits for the semester immediately following enrollment into the College.

Admission of Current UMass Dartmouth Students
Students who have already begun their studies at UMass Dartmouth may apply to join the Honors College on the basis of their academic performance. Admission is normally limited to those students who have completed 60 or fewer university credits, including transfer and advanced placement test credits. Additionally, students must have earned a GPA of at least 3.5.

Students wishing to join the Honors College based on their UMass Dartmouth grades should complete the application form (https://www.umassd.edu/honors/admission/) and submit it to the Honors Office by the appropriate deadline. Decisions will be made shortly after grades are posted at the end of the semester. Notification will be by email. Students will be required to enroll in a minimum of 3 honors credits for the semester immediately following enrollment into the College.

Graduation Requirements
To graduate as a Commonwealth Honors Scholar, students must complete the following:

- Maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.2 or better
- Obtain a grade of “B” or better in all Honors Courses. Students are not able to utilize a Pass/Fail option for any honors course.
- Completion of 24 honors credits as specified below (see the sections on required and recommended courses for more specific information about each course):
Complete 21 credits of Honors coursework.

- Students in the Colleges of Arts & Science, Business, and Visual & Performing Arts are required to take HON 101 and a 200 level HON course as part of this requirement.
- HON 301 (Research Across the Disciplines; 3 credits) is required of all Honors students

Complete the Honors APEX (3-6 credits)

- A public presentation of your APEX work. This can be accomplished via many avenues such as a public defense, attendance at a professional conference where you display your work, or the Honors Convocation poster session.

Students can find honors curriculum guides for their specific college/major on the Honors website at www.umassd.edu/honors/requirements/. Generally speaking, students should plan to take at least one Honors course per semester to meet the 24-credit requirement (courses plus APEX) by graduation. Students are encouraged to meet with their Honors advisor to discuss routes to completion.

Probation, Dismissal, and Withdrawal

Probation and Dismissal

If a student's cumulative GPA falls below 3.2, the student will be placed on Honors probation for one semester. Probation may also be extended to students who fail to earn a B in at least one Honors course per year. Honors probation is not reflected on the student's transcript. If, at the end of the probationary semester, the student meets the minimum standards for good standing, the student will be released from probation. If, at the end of the probationary semester, the student still falls below the minimum standards for good standing, the student will be dismissed from the Honors College.

Students are required to enroll in at least one Honors course in their first semester in the Honors College. Students who have not taken any Honors courses for more than one semester are subject to dismissal.

Dismissal from the Honors College is not reflected on the student's transcript.

Withdrawal

Students may withdraw from the Honors College. An exit interview with the Director of Student Support and completion of the Honors College Discontinuation form is required. Withdrawal from the Honors College is not reflected on the student's transcript.
Honors Courses and Curriculum

Overview

Honors courses are open only to students in the Honors College and most sections are capped at 20 students. Honors courses carry the same number of credit hours as non-Honors courses and are graded according to the same 4-point scale. This is different from common practice at the high school level, where Honors courses often "count more" towards a student's GPA.

Each Honors course carries the notation "Honors" in the student's transcript. Honors courses all have either the “HON” prefix, or “H” after the section number. Some Honors courses are offered as “carve-outs.” These are sections with an H section number that meet at the same time and location as a non-honors section of the course. In these cases, students in the Honors section will attend the same lectures as those in the non-honors section, but will have a different syllabus, assignments, tests, and/or activities that distinguish their section as an Honors course. It should be noted that these carve-outs do not necessarily involve more work, but they do often require examining course material in more depth or perhaps finding different applications of the material.

If a course is not offered as an Honors course, a student may ask a professor to “honorize” the course by creating a course contract, essentially creating an individual carve-out for the student. Details on this process are provided below.

What makes a course an "Honors" course?
Honors courses are more interactive. In addition to their smaller size and higher standards for enrollment, Honors courses encourage discussion, debate, and student leadership. Of course, not every class can be dedicated to freewheeling discussion, and not all courses are equally amenable to a discussion-and-debate format. Nevertheless, to the fullest extent possible, Honors courses encourage students to actively participate in the learning process.

To the extent possible, Honors faculty expose students to more advanced material. The small class size also allows them to assess student learning in more interesting ways. Honors students often report that their honors courses allow them to take a deeper dive into the material they are studying than in their non-honors courses, making them more interesting.

Honors courses involve special activities. Ideally, every Honors course should incorporate opportunities for learning that would not be practical in larger courses. Honors courses routinely involve field trips, special experiments, group activities, and guest speakers.

Required Courses
HON 101 (Reasoning and Communication across the Disciplines) is required for students entering as first-time students in the Colleges of Arts & Sciences, Business, and Visual and Performing Arts. New students in the College of Engineering may take HON 101 to fulfill a
university studies requirement on a space-available basis. Engineering students should take an Honors section of EGR 111 in the first year, and Nursing students should take Honors NUR 102. HON 101 fulfills University Studies areas 1E and 4A.

**HON 301 (Research across Disciplines)** is required of all Honors students and is typically taken in late sophomore or in junior year. This is a 3-credit seminar that meets once per week. The credits earned in HON 301 (if completed with a grade of B or better) count toward the minimum requirement of 21 credits of Honors coursework. In this seminar, students will explore the different APEX tracks, work toward their APEX proposal, and identify a faculty advisor for their APEX. HON 301 fulfills University Studies 4B.

**Recommended Courses**

**HON 201, 202, 203**: One course from this group is **required** for students in the Colleges of Arts & Sciences, Business, and Visual and Performing Arts. One course from this group is **recommended** for students in the Colleges of Nursing and Health Sciences and Engineering. HON 201, 202, and 203 fulfill University Studies are 4A, 4B, and 4C, respectively. For students in the College of Arts and Sciences, these courses may also fill a humanities or social science college distribution requirement. The Honors College website will indicate the distinction.

**Major Courses and Honors Electives**: To complete the 21-credit course requirement, students will need to take Honors sections in their major, University Studies requirements, and/or Honors electives. Many majors offer Honors sections of required courses, and the Honors College offers numerous Honors “electives” each semester. The Honors Student Support specialists will meet with you each semester to make sure you are taking the right courses and staying on track to graduate. The Honors College also provides a tracking sheet for each college/major, that provides a guide to meeting requirements within each. The Honors College updates its website each semester with offerings for the upcoming semester ([www.umassd.edu/honors/courses](http://www.umassd.edu/honors/courses)). Students can also search for discipline-specific Honors sections in COIN by selecting *Honors* in the course attributes pull-down menus. HON classes can also be searched using the HON prefix.

**Honors Contracts**

An Honors contract is a negotiated agreement between a student, a course instructor, and the Honors Director that enables the student to take a non-Honors course for Honors credit. The Honors contract is a useful alternative to regular Honors courses for students with particularly inflexible schedules and/or few elective courses. The contract also enables the student to undertake more advanced study than the constraints of the course normally allow.

A course contracted for Honors credit carries the same number of credit hours as the non-Honors version of the course. However, "Honors" appears on the transcript, and all credits earned count toward graduation as a Commonwealth Scholar, provided that the final course grade is B or better.
The work assigned as a result of the contract does not determine the final course grade. Final grades reflect the quality and content of the regular assigned work in the course. The Honors work is what allows the Honors designation to appear on the transcript for the course.

The following restrictions apply:
- No more than six credits of Honors contract coursework may be counted toward the required 21 hours of Honors coursework. Exceptions must be approved in advance by the Honors Director.
- 100-level courses cannot be contracted for Honors credit. Exceptions must be approved in advance by the Honors Director.
- Contracted courses must be taken for a letter grade. Like all Honors courses, courses contracted for Honors credit must be completed with a grade of B or better in order to remain in good standing in the Honors Program.
- The consequences for failure to complete the work to the satisfaction of the instructor must be clearly stated in the contract. Typically, it means the course will not receive the Honors designation on the transcript and will not count toward Honors requirements for graduation.

The Honors contract process involves four stages:
- Negotiation of an individualized syllabus with the course instructor.
- Submitting the contract for approval by the Honors Director.
- Completion of the agreed-upon assignments and activities.
- Submission of the completed work and Honors Contract completion form.

Stage One: Negotiating the Honors Contract
The Honors Contract is a mutual commitment to a learning experience above and beyond normal course requirements. The Honors Contract is a product of negotiation, and instructors are under no obligation to supervise Honors Contracts. This undertaking involves regular interaction between the student and the instructor. While the details of contracted assignments and activities vary greatly, possible course enhancements include:
- Collaboration with the instructor on a joint research project.
- An analytical, research, or policy paper, in addition to or more sophisticated than those assigned in the "regular" syllabus, and/or more reliant on primary or original source material.
- A service-learning experience or internship related to the course focus.
- An audio/video project, performance, or artistic work related to the course focus.
- Curriculum development projects, such as assisting the professor with the development and implementation of new teaching tools or class activities.

The Honors contract is intended to enrich the quality of education rather than simply increasing the workload. Nevertheless, it may involve more hours of student work, especially since regular meetings with the instructor to discuss the Honors work will be necessary outside of class.
The student and instructor must also agree on the criteria for evaluating the project. This includes agreement on the criteria by which it will be judged satisfactory or unsatisfactory, and the consequences for unsatisfactory work.

Stage Two: Submission of the Contract
The Honors contract consists of three parts: (a) the cover sheet, which must be filled out completely and signed by both the student and the instructor; (b) a copy of the original course syllabus; and (c) a brief (one to two page) description of your proposed project. All Honors contract proposals must be submitted no later than the end of the third week of classes, counting forward from the first day of the semester.

The following information should be included in your proposal.

- State precisely how your project differs from the regular work of the class.
- Make very clear what you're doing, why you're doing it, how you're doing it, when you're doing it, and what the outcome (or final product) of your project will be. It may help to think of your proposal as a question or problem that you wish to answer or solve, or at least to shed more light upon.
- Include an explicit timetable for meetings with the course instructor, submission of the components or drafts of the project, and submission of the final product. The final deadline can be no later than the scheduled final exam period for the course.
- Include an explicit statement of the criteria that will be used to evaluate the contracted work. What are the minimum requirements that must be met in order to be judged acceptable?
- Very important! What will happen if the contracted work is not satisfactory? It is vital that the criteria by which your work will be evaluated, and the consequences for unsatisfactory work, be stated clearly and explicitly. This is for your own protection.

The Honors Director may approve your proposal as written, reject it, or request more information before making a decision. Once your proposal is approved, the Honors Director will sign it and send a copy to both the student and the instructor.

Stage Three: Completion of the Contracted Work
Once the contract is approved, work will proceed according to the timetable established in the contract. Like all creative work, your project will change and grow as you work on it and learn more about the subject and the resources available to you. This is entirely normal, and few completed projects wind up exactly as envisaged in the proposal.

In some cases, there may come a point at which you and the instructor agree to alter your project so substantially that the approved proposal is no longer an adequate guide for the completion and evaluation of your work. If so, you should submit an amended Honors contract proposal describing the new criteria for completion and assessment. Both you and the course instructor should sign the amended proposal before submitting to the Honors Director. If you are unsure whether you need to file an amended proposal, discuss the matter with the Honors Director.
Stage Four: Submission of the Completed Work and Contract Completion Form
If a presentation or performance is part of your proposal, invite the Honors Director to attend. As soon as the contracted work is complete and approved by the instructor, you must submit a copy of the work and the Honors Contract Completion Form to the Honors College (honors@umassd.edu). These must be submitted no later than 3:00 PM on the last day of the final examination period. The instructor will submit the grade to the Registrar and sign the contract completion form. The Honors College will then notify the Registrar to note the course as Honors on the student’s transcript.

The APEX Overview
The APEX (Academic Project or Experience) is the culmination of your Honors education. Every student in the Honors College must complete an APEX project in order to graduate as a Commonwealth Scholar. Your project may take the form of a research project, a critical or philosophical analysis, a computer program, a performance, an art exhibit, a public service project, or any other original work that makes a significant contribution to your field of study. By undertaking and completing the APEX, you will demonstrate your ability to work independently in your chosen field—precisely the quality sought by all employers and graduate school admissions committees.

There are three “tracks” that you can take to complete the APEX, all of which are explored in the HON 301 course (Research Across Disciplines). You are free to choose any track, but you should have a discussion with your HON 301 instructor, APEX advisor, and/or Honors academic advisor to choose the track that is most appropriate for your project and career/education plans. The three tracks are:

Traditional Research. For this track, “research” is broadly defined and can include scientific experiments, critical literature evaluations, human subject research, etc.

Creative Work/Performance/Expression. This track is often appropriate for creative endeavors such as public art installations, musical performances, art exhibits, screenplays, and poetry and fiction writing. Marketing or business plans are also appropriate.

Applied/Service/Internship. This track is for students who are doing work in an applied setting such as internships or community service. In the Charleton College of Business this track is formalized in the Honors internship course. Please note, however, that this track is available in all colleges.

Work on the APEX typically takes place in two consecutive semesters, beginning in either the second semester of the junior year or the first semester of the senior year, but single-semester projects are possible. The APEX may simultaneously fulfill a college or departmental thesis or capstone project requirement. Typically, students earn three academic credits per semester for APEX work, but the number of credits may differ if your college or department has different requirements.
requirements. You may take APEX credits in a major department or in the Honors College, where HON 490 and HON 491 are designated for this purpose. **Important note:** **Credits earned for work on the APEX cannot be counted toward the minimum 21 credits of Honors coursework required for graduation as a Commonwealth Honors Scholar.**

If your APEX is a traditional thesis, its scope and length should reflect the norm for undergraduate theses in your major field. It should be written or otherwise presented in a professional or academic style characteristic of the subject matter or discipline of the thesis, and it should contain documentation that is appropriate to the field. If the APEX is a performance, presentation, exhibit, or public service project, it should be of sufficient scope and quality to demonstrate competence in the field. Your APEX advisor will help you to determine what is appropriate for your field.

Some theses are entirely written, while others, such as those in the visual or performing arts, consist of both written and non-written components. However, all theses and projects should have a written component, which includes the following elements:

- The purpose of your APEX, such as the question addressed or artistic goal
- A review of what has been done before, such as the prior literature on a research topic, or an analysis of previous artistic works and traditions that set the stage for your current project
- A written description of your individual work, which may include illustrations or other visual materials
- An explanation and discussion of your own individual contribution to the field in which you have chosen to work, including policy recommendations and/or suggestions for future work

Finally, all theses or projects must be presented at least once in an appropriate public venue. This can take the form of a traditional thesis defense before the student's committee, a public performance or display, and/or conference presentation. All students are encouraged to present their theses or projects in poster format at Honors Convocation in April. The Convocation poster presentation alone is sufficient to meet the Honors College requirements, but your supervisor may require an additional presentation. In practice, many Commonwealth Scholars present their work in more than one public venue prior to graduation.

**The Faculty Advisor**

The faculty supervisor or advisor (the terms are used interchangeably) must be a member of the UMass Dartmouth faculty, and most often will be a member of the student’s major department. Faculty members are not obligated to serve as thesis/project supervisors. Faculty are often more inclined to supervise an APEX when the project is related to their research interests or expertise. One approach to identifying an advisor is to research faculty in your major department to determine who is doing work that interests you. You should also remain open minded to modifying your topic in consultation with potential advisors.
APEX Credits
Credits earned for work on the thesis/project cannot be counted toward the minimum 21 credits of Honors coursework required for graduation as a Commonwealth Scholar. When you enroll for the first semester for which you plan to earn APEX credit, you should confer with your Honors academic advisor to determine which course to take. There are two methods for earning APEX credits:

HON 490/491
If you are undertaking an interdisciplinary project, or if your major department does not have suitable thesis/project or independent study courses, you may register for HON 490 (first semester) and HON 491 (second semester, if needed). You must request a permission number from the Honors Director in order to enroll. The Honors Director serves as the formal instructor of record, but your APEX Advisor supervises the work and determines the grade.

Department-Specific APEX Courses
Many departments have 400-level course numbers set aside for theses, projects, and/or independent study. Credits earned in this way may also count toward your department's graduation requirements. The thesis supervisor serves as the course instructor and assigns a grade at the end of each semester. It is important to note that departmental thesis/project and independent study courses are not normally listed in COIN until a student expresses the intention to take one of them and finds a faculty supervisor willing to serve as instructor. Once you have identified a faculty member willing to supervise the course, your supervisor or department chair will ask the registrar to create a section for the relevant semester and place you in that section.

APEX Grading
Prior to registering for APEX credit, the APEX contract will have specified whether the project will require one or two semesters of work. The APEX contract also specifies the scope of work to be completed in HON 490/491. If two semesters are planned, students will be graded independently in each course. If the work planned for HON 490 is incomplete at the end of the semester, the student should receive a grade of incomplete until the work is completed. All University policies on unfinished work and the assignment of incomplete grades apply. HON 491 may not be taken to complete unfinished work from HON 490. If taking APEX credits within a course other than HON 490/491, the grading will follow the approved policy for that course.

Grades for APEX work are determined by the APEX supervisor. Grading policies, expectations, rubrics or other information should be made clear to students prior to the beginning of the work, and preferably in the APEX contract. Sample grading rubrics for faculty are available in the Honors office upon request.
Collaborative Projects
It is possible to collaborate with another student on an APEX project. This is encouraged if the projects are related in a fundamental way. For example, an engineering student who develops a new technology may partner with a business student, who might develop a funding pitch and business model to monetize the invention. Each student is still required to produce an independent APEX paper and presentation in such a case.

Six-Step Process and Forms
The APEX process spans a year or more and is managed in six basic steps. There are four forms required in this process. All forms are digital and accommodate digital signatures. These forms are available on the Honors College APEX website

1. APEX Proposal Form. The APEX proposal is developed in HON 301 and requires approval by your APEX advisor and the Honors College Director. The proposal provides a brief description of your proposed project, and the course(s) and semester(s) in which the work will be completed. Your supervisor must approve and sign the proposal before submitting to the Honors College.

2. APEX Contract Form. This step requires a much more detailed description of your proposed project and a detailed timetable for its completion. Some major departments also require that students identify at least one additional member for your APEX committee. The second committee member must be a faculty member at UMassD. He or she need not be from the same department as your primary advisor. The Honors College does not require a committee member in addition to the primary advisor, though it is strongly recommended. You may also add a second committee member if you wish, and they need not be UMassD faculty members. (This is very useful if you wish to encourage an outside expert to read your work.) Committee members’ signatures are not required on the cover sheet, though the primary advisor signature is required. If the primary advisor is not in your major department, you must have at least one committee member from your major department. For example, if the APEX primary advisor for a Physics major is in Bioengineering, the student must have a Physics faculty member on the committee.

3. Progress Report Form. By the 8th week of the semester, all APEX students must submit a progress report to the Honors College, signed by your APEX advisor.

4. Completion of the project. As part of the contract, you and your APEX advisor should have agreed upon a detailed timetable for the completion of your project and for the submission of sections or drafts. Unlike most papers or projects that you will have undertaken in your courses, the "final draft" that you submit to your advisor and/or committee is very unlikely to be the final version. Instead, advisors and committee members often demand further revisions before approving the final version of the thesis or project. It is therefore very important that you submit your thesis/project well before the end of the semester!
5. **Public presentation of the project.** As you near completion of the work, you must undertake at least one public presentation or performance of your work, to take place no later than the last day of classes. All graduating Commonwealth Scholars are expected to present a professional conference poster of their work at Honors Convocation in late April. This poster presentation is sufficient to meet the requirements of the Commonwealth Honors Program, but your supervisor may require other public presentations of your work.

Some departments require a "thesis defense," in which the students present the work, and committee members ask questions about the project and then decide what revisions, if any, are required before approval. Your advisor may require a different form of public presentation, such as a conference presentation or performance, instead of, or in addition to, a thesis defense. These types of forums would also meet the public presentation requirement. The timing and scheduling of all presentations other than the poster at Honors Convocation is your responsibility. The Director and/or Associate Director of the Honors College should be invited to attend any defense, performance, or other presentation.

6. **Submission of the project and approval form to the Honors College.** Finally, once your APEX has been evaluated and approved by your committee, you must file a copy of your thesis/project with the Honors College, together with the original copy of the signed approval sheet. Signatures of the primary advisor and all committee members are required prior to submission. If your project is not primarily a written document, check with the Honors Director to see what other materials (recordings, photographs, etc.) to include. These materials remain the property of the UMass Dartmouth Honors College. Publication rights are reserved to the author unless research contracts, patent rights, or other agreements made with other departments of the university prohibit such publications.

**Advising**

Students in the Honors College are assigned an honors advisor, which will be one of the Student Support Directors. They will assist you in navigating your honors requirements alongside your major requirements, ensuring you complete the Honors requirements within the program requirements for your major. Students should request an honors advisement meeting with their advisor prior to registration each semester. Since honors students receive priority registration, it’s imperative to meet early in the registration process. Students should also identify themselves as honors students to their major advisor.

The Student Support Directors will also connect with students regarding their status in the Honors College. For students who fall below a 3.2 GPA, they will reach out to discuss probation status within the Honors College and strategies to reach good academic standing within the college. Outreach from Student Support will also include information about course offerings for
each semester, workshops, and opportunities offered to honors students from other resources on campus.

**Resources for Students**

**Honors College Annex:** The Honors College Annex located in LIB 228 is a space available only to Honors Students. This quiet study space houses five computers available to Honors Students to use at their convenience. The Annex also has faculty office space allowing students convenient access their honors faculty.

**The Honors Classrooms:** The Honors College classrooms in Library 225 and 226 are classrooms dedicated to honors instruction. They are also available to Honors students for additional quiet study when a class is not in progress.

**Office of Undergraduate Research:** The Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) “promotes original undergraduate research and helps students share it with the world”. They also offer funding opportunities for the APEX and independent study projects. You can find more information here: https://www.umassd.edu/our/
Glossary

**APEX**: Academic Project or Experience. The APEX is your Honors College final project. See the section on the APEX in this handbook for detailed information.

**Carve-Out**: Courses in which faculty have “carved out” seats so that honors students can take them as honors courses.

**Contracts or Honors Contracts**: Courses in which a student and a professor “contract” to make a non-honors course an honors course. See above for information on honors contracts.

**Convocation**: The year-end celebration of graduating students who display their research projects.

**Distribution Requirements**: This term is used for the College of Arts and Sciences to describe requirements needed to be met by all students in the College.

**Honors College Listserv**: Students will be connected to the Honors email distribution list allowing for quick communication from the Honors College staff.

**Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR)**: Assists students wishing to undertake undergraduate research.