What is a Keystone Project?

The Keystone Project is a substantial, in-depth work of research, creation, or invention in a student’s chosen field. The primary purpose of the Keystone Projects is to provide students with a sustained experience of intellectual discovery. That experience begins in the junior year, when students learn to balance the excitement of imaginative approaches to their intellectual interests with the rigor of field-specific methodologies, and work on the design of their research/creative project. The process continues in the senior year, when students conduct their research, create their artwork, or invent their devices, and assess the significance of the work they have done.

The form of the Keystone Project may vary from field to field, but it should aim for the highest standards of the disciplinary or interdisciplinary area in question. For example, students of international relations might write a policy paper; biomedical engineers might create a device; stage designers might create a set for a specific play; ecologists might design a study of the urban heat environment; journalism majors might create a portfolio of articles; artists might create a pop-up gallery; a business student may design a playground for disabled children. Although the Keystone Project originates in and is supported by Kilachand Honors College, students will undertake their research, and be advised, in their chosen field of study.

Keystone Projects during the junior year:

All Kilachand Honors College juniors are required to take the seminar, KHC HC 401: The Process of Discovery (either semester, 4 credits), aimed at helping them identify the question they wish to investigate, find the appropriate sources and methods they will use to answer that question, and then construct a research project around that question that is both imaginative yet feasible (that is, a project that is intellectually ambitious but that can be completed by the end of the student’s senior year using the resources students have at their disposal). In addition to regular participation and completion of individual assignments, students enrolled in KHC HC 401 are required to:

1. Submit a proposal outlining their project
2. Make an oral presentation of the proposed project to their peers
3. Submit a budget (where relevant)
4. Identify a faculty advisor in their major discipline who has agreed to supervise their project.
5. Complete KHC HC 401 with a B+ or better. Students who do not will be removed from Kilachand.
6. If applicable, petition to carryout honors in the major (CAS) or senior design (ENG) to count as the Keystone requirement. While the college does not encourage students to pursue honors merely for the accolade, we understand that there are intellectual benefits in specific cases. Students should refer to the petition form for further information.

Keystone Projects during the senior year:

All Kilachand Honors College seniors work on their Keystone with their faculty advisor while continuing to develop and communicate their work to peers in Kilachand Honors College and are required to:

1. Take a year-long seminar, KHC HC 501 and HC 502: Innovation, Culture, and Society (2 semesters, 2 credits per semester), which employs evaluations of case studies in innovation to complement the writing that students do for their Keystone Projects.
2. Submit proof of IRB approval (where relevant), by October 1.
3. Complete data collection, where relevant, by December 31 to ensure that they are able to analyze and write up findings and submit final projects by the April deadline.
4. Take a directed study - KHC HC 503 and 504 (2 semesters, 2 credits per semester) - with their faculty advisors.
5. Help to plan and attend the Keystone Symposium, where students will present their completed projects to the Kilachand community in April of their senior year.
6. Complete KHC HC 501, 502, 503 and 504 with a B+ or better. Students who do not will be removed from Kilachand.
What are the Keystone project requirements?

In order to successfully complete the Keystone Project and Kilachand Honors College, students must:

1. Complete the junior and senior seminars and Keystone directed study with a grade of B+ or higher in each course.
2. Obtain by the close of the junior seminar a faculty advisor willing to supervise their Keystone Project.
3. Propose a viable Keystone Project by submitting a formal research proposal by the end of the junior seminar. The proposal and budget, where relevant, must be approved by the student's KHC HC 401 instructor within the context of the course, as well as the student's faculty advisor and the Kilachand Directors.
4. Submit a detailed budget using the Kilachand budget template by the end of the junior seminar (where relevant). A justification for each line item is required.
5. Submit proof of IRB approval by October 1 of the senior year (where relevant). Remember that data collection must be completed by December 31 and that IRB turnaround may be significantly delayed by late submissions.
6. Participate in the planning process and attend the Keystone Symposium during the senior year.
7. Complete, submit and present the Keystone Project to Kilachand students and faculty at the close of the senior year.

Are there any institutional constraints on the Keystone Project?

The short answer is no. Students are generally encouraged to work in their chosen disciplines, but exceptions may be made upon consultation with the Directors. Student collaboration is encouraged, but students working together must take the junior seminar together (that is, take the same section of the course together). All students working in a collaborative context (e.g., group projects, working in a lab, or working as part of a larger research team/initiative, must make clear their specific contribution to the joint project. Faculty advisors must be tenure-track faculty members at Boston University.

What happens if I decide to switch topics?

It is perfectly natural that some students will decide to switch topics. If a project is substantially different from the one originally proposed, students must submit a new project proposal with written approval from their faculty advisor to the Directors. Similarly, they should submit a new budget proposal where relevant.

Can honors or distinction projects in other schools, colleges, or departments count for the Keystone Project?

The Keystone project is a unique requirement of Kilachand Honors College. Students may petition to carry out senior research through their home school, college, or department if doing so is not merely about acquiring accolades but entails a demonstrable contribution to the student’s intellectual growth. All petitions must be submitted with Keystone proposal materials at the end of the junior seminar. Carrying out senior research at both Kilachand and one’s home school, college, or department without petitioning the Kilachand Directors is grounds for immediate dismissal from Kilachand.

Funding the Keystone

Kilachand provides modest funding to support original research and creative projects. Students seeking funding must submit budget requests by the close of the junior seminar. A budget request consists of a funding proposal included the Keystone Project proposal itself as well as an itemized budget spreadsheet using the Kilachand budget template with detailed justifications for each specific line item.

In the past the college has supported various types of work in the field as well as the purchase of certain types of materials. Please note the following guidelines:

1. All travel requests must be directly related to field work and approval is contingent upon travel being completed by December 31.
2. The college cannot provide funds for housing or tuition. Students who wish to acquire specific skills or an accreditation related to a project they envision must acquire those skills or accreditation on their own power or rethink their projects.
3. Kilachand can but does not typically provide funds to outsource research. Because data transcription contains an educational component, students are required to do initial transcription work themselves. After demonstrating that they have transcribed at least 10 interviews, students may apply for up to $1000 for transcription services contingent on written authorization from their faculty advisor.
4. Kilachand is not authorized to purchase equipment, including lab equipment. Exceptions can be made for smaller items after such as cameras, voice recorders, flash drives, and the like if the student has ascertained that the equipment cannot be borrowed elsewhere at the University or rented locally at a reasonable cost. (All equipment purchased by Kilachand is University property and must be returned to Kilachand at the end of the senior year).
5. Kilachand can support the purchase of lab materials up to 50% of the cost to students on a case by case basis.
6. We ask all students requesting software to first investigate licensing arrangements already available via the University.
7. We do not purchase books or journals for students and encourages students to utilize University subscriptions and inter-library loan.