



Earth & Environment

Department Honors in Earth & Environment

The faculty of the Department of Earth & Environment are engaged in cutting-edge research in order to understand our changing Earth and its relationships with humankind, and to develop strategies for a sustainable future. This work covers the spectrum of environmental research from land surface processes, to coupled human-natural systems, to geospatial sciences, and to environmental policy. Many Earth & Environment students are equally passionate about these investigations and take the opportunity to work closely with faculty on their own independent research into the earth and environment. Honors affords seniors the most stimulating intellectual enterprise an undergraduate can undertake, demanding dedication and the ability to exercise independent judgment. Upon successful completion of the Honors program, your diploma will reflect the designation.

Previous theses receiving Department Honors have included:

- “Effects of Climate Change Across Seasons on Soil Nutrients Associated with Northern Hardwood Forest Saplings” (Eliza Puritz)
- “Ice-Block Lakes Amplify Paleoclimate Signals: Exploring Late Holocene Hydrologic and Biogeochemical Variability of Antarctic Lake Eggers” (Emelia Chamberlain)
- “Physiochemical Dimensions of Crack Morphology and Dynamics of Dessicating Clays” (Keita DeCarlo)
- “Evaluating Metamorphic Conditions in Phillipston, MA: Literature Review, Garnet Geochronology and Garnet Geothermometry” (Claire Ostwald)
- “Peak Oil and the Impact of Economic Policies on the Environmental Consequences of The Oil Market” (Shane Banerjee)

Honors in Earth & Environment carries four formal requirements:

1. Enrollment in EE 401 and 402 during the project semesters
2. Composition of a thesis based on original research (approximately 25 pages including graphs and images and at least 25 works cited; consult with your advisor about the appropriate format)
3. Public presentation and defense of that thesis while enrolled in EE 402
4. Experiencing research and practice of environmental work through attendance at research seminars and/or participation in public meetings and other activities related to the environment. Students must participate in a total of four seminars, public meetings, and/or other activities chosen in consultation with your advisor.

Application Guidelines

Students who maintain a minimum GPA of 3.5 by the end of their junior year are eligible to apply. Requirements are described above. In appropriate circumstances, and with department approval, students may apply significant summer research or fieldwork toward the production of a senior thesis and completion of Department Honors.

With an advisor who is an Earth & Environment faculty member, and well in advance of deadlines noted below, applicants should identify a research project to propose for honors. With the research question identified, students and faculty advisors complete the application attached.

Deadlines

For projects beginning in the fall semester: May 15

For projects beginning in the spring semester or summer: November 15

Because research projects evolve, particularly as many past honors recipients begin and continue research in the summer between the junior and senior year, the true application deadline is *the last day to add courses* of the semester you begin the project. By then, the appropriate courses (EE 401 and 402) will be added to the student's schedule.

Applications will not be considered prior to the student's fourth semester or after time necessary to complete 401 and 402.

NOTE: The CAS Honors Research Travel Award program funds grants of up to \$1,000 for travel to conduct research by advanced undergraduates pursuing the BA with honors in any College of Arts & Sciences major. Visit <https://www.bu.edu/cas/academics/undergraduate-education/special-academic-opportunities/honors-in-the-major/cas-honors-research-travel-awards/> to review guidelines and application procedures. Applications are welcome throughout the year and will be reviewed on receipt by the College Honors Committee. However, students must in all cases apply at least one month before they are scheduled to depart. Deadlines are as follows. Travel support cannot be provided for travel that has already occurred.

- For fall semester travel: mid-September
- For travel during Winter Break: November 1
- For spring semester travel: January 6
- For summer travel: March 31

Additional Information

Phi Beta Kappa:

- Successful completion of Departmental Honors is one criterion for nomination to Phi Beta Kappa.

Study Abroad/BU Programs Outside of Charles River Campus:

- The Departmental Honors project is designed for seniors to work on a two-semester independent study while on campus during their final two semesters. Both the faculty advisor and the student should be on campus while working on the project.
- If you will not be on campus during the first semester of your project and want to appeal this requirement for strong academic reasons, please contact the Undergraduate Program Coordinator.

Part-time:

- If a part-time status is approved by CAS, it is acceptable to be enrolled part-time for one of the semesters in which a student is registered for Departmental Honors work. If you are considering a part-time status as a senior student, please contact CAS Student Services.

Elective/Hub Credit:

- Up to one Directed/Independent Study course may be counted as an elective in the majors.
- Effective Fall 2026, EE 402 fulfills a single requirement in the following BU HUB area: Writing-Intensive Course.

BU CAS Information for Honors in the Major

Review prior to submitting application:

<https://www.bu.edu/cas/academics/undergraduate-education/special-academic-opportunities/honors-in-the-major/>

*****Retain a copy of this information and the application for your records*****



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APPLICATION FOR DEPARTMENTAL HONORS

Name: _____

BU ID: _____ Expected graduation (month/year): _____

Email: _____ Current GPA: _____

Faculty Advisor: _____

Additional Committee Members (*at least one must be from E&E*):

1. _____

2. _____

Title of project (*even if tentative*):

Course Enrollment

Please note the semesters in which you will enroll in the following:

EE 401 Semester/ Year: _____ EE 402 Semester/ Year: _____

Thesis Defense

Please note the semester in which you will present and defend your thesis (same as 402 above):

Semester/ Year: _____

Proposal Narrative

Attach a 4-5 page description of your intended project. Outline the significance of the proposed work, the method of investigation that will be employed, and the ways the result of the investigation will be analyzed. Include information about how you intend to share the results of the project. Explain how this project fits in with your academic and career goals. Include a bibliography of readings that are relevant to your work.

Student Signature _____ Date: _____

To be completed by the faculty project advisor:

Faculty Project Advisor Name: _____

Student Name: _____

How long and in what capacity have you known the student?

Please evaluate the applicant's aptitude for independent research according to the criteria

listed below. Please add any applicable comments.

	Exceptional	Good	Fair	Poor	Unable to judge
Native intellectual ability					
Breadth of subject knowledge					
Written communication skills					
Ability to work independently					
Level of initiative					
Level of motivation					
Comments					

Please describe the scope of the students' work and research, including hours planned for the lab or field. Please describe your involvement.

I have read the student's proposal and recommend that it be accepted as a Departmental Honors project.

Faculty Project Advisor Signature _____ Date: _____

Chair Signature _____ Date: _____

Submit all materials to Earth & Environment Undergraduate Program Coordinator Sayaka Yamaki, syamaki@bu.edu, 685 Commonwealth Avenue, Room 131C.