# MCDB – Senior Essay Topic Approval Form

\*Students must attach thesis paragraph describing topic and submit to: office of Director of Undergraduate Studies (1220B KBT).

Electronic submission is acceptable and preferred to the office of the Director of Undergraduate Studies: [crystal.adamchek@yale.edu.](mailto:crystal.adamchek@yale.edu)

Form and topic paragraph due ***at least*** one month before the end of classes in term of expected graduation

Senior Essay Due by first week of December for Fall Graduation Senior Essay Due by first week of April for Spring Graduation

Student’s Name: (please print) College: \_ Phone No.

Topic for Senior Paper:

\_

\_

**To the Senior Essay Faculty Member:**

By signing this form, I approve the choice of the above topic and submitted paragraph for a senior essay. I also agree to read and grade the final paper and report the grade to the DUS Office (crystal.adamchek@yale.edu).

Faculty Member Signature Date

Faculty Member Printed Name Department

Student’s Signature Date

\_ Director Undergraduate Studies Signature Date

# MCDB SENIOR ESSAY

Graduation from Yale College requires the passing of a departmental examination or the equivalent.

The MCDB requirement is met by having each student do an individual research course (usually MCDB 475, 485, or 495) or submit a senior essay. *The senior essay is graded, but it carries no course credit.* The **deadline** for seniors finishing in the fall term is **first week of December.** For those finishing in the spring term the deadline is **first week of April.**

The senior essay should be a critical evaluation of some portion of the current, primary biological literature.

The topic may be anything within the realm of biology or it may explore the relationships of biology to other fields. Each student must obtain approval of the paper topic from a faculty member of the MCDB department to assure that the subject is a promising one. A **form** for this is attached and must be returned to the office of the Director of Undergraduate Studies (1220B KBT) ***at least one month before the paper is due***. Students should attach a thesis paragraph describing the chosen topic.

The paper is to be *15-20 double-spaced pages, including bibliography.* It is the student’s obligation to procure a faculty advisor to read and grade each paper. If a student needs assistance in this area, the office of the DUS is available for assistance. Papers are to be submitted to the office of the Director of Undergraduate Studies (1220B KBT). Electronic submission is acceptable and preferred to the office of the director of undergraduate studies: [crystal.adamchek@yale.edu.](mailto:crystal.adamchek@yale.edu) Normally, a grade of “Satisfactory” is reported to the registrar by the Director of Undergraduate Studies. However, honor candidates must achieve a grade of A, which is of course reported.

If the essay is “Unsatisfactory”, the student may make arrangements with the Director of Undergraduate Studies to submit another paper. Papers received late may not be processed before Commencement.

\*\*Hints for finding a faculty member to advise on senior essay\*\*

In choosing a faculty member to advise on your senior essay, first decide on the general area you would like to explore in your senior essay. Then determine which faculty member might have interest or expertise in that area. The best source is the MCDB Department booklet, available from the office of the Director of Undergraduate Studies, under the section “Faculty and Research Interests”. Second, if a faculty member discussed the topic in a course, he/she would be a good choice or source for suggestions. Otherwise, the Yale College Program of Study (Blue Book) provides a list of faculty member and courses that may include your prospective topic.

Approach the faculty member identified above. If he/she is not the best person to advise you on your topic, the faculty member should know who would be more knowledgeable in your area. Your senior essay advisor will often not be the same advisor that signs your course listings.

In discussion with the essay advisor, narrow your area of interest to a focused topic on which you can write in depth; a superficial review of a broad field is not appropriate. The advisor may also suggest a few references to start off your reading in the field.