

MCDB – Senior Essay Topic Approval Form

For the MCDB BA degree only

\*Students must attach thesis paragraph describing topic and submit to the office of Director of Undergraduate Studies. Electronic submission is acceptable and preferred, please send to [andrea.chamba@yale.edu](mailto:andrea.chamba@yale.edu). Form and topic paragraph due no later than the **course selection period** of the term of expected graduation.

Final Senior Essay Due – last day of classes for Fall or Spring Graduation

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ College: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic for Senior Essay: \_\_\_\_\_

**To the Senior Essay Research Faculty Mentor:**

By signing this form, I approve the choice of the above topic and submitted paragraph for a Senior Essay for the MCDB BA degree. I also agree to read and grade the final paper and report the grade to the DUS Office ([andrea.chamba@yale.edu](mailto:andrea.chamba@yale.edu)).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Research Faculty Mentor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Research Faculty Mentor Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**MCDB SENIOR ESSAY**  
**For the MCDB BA degree only**

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.*

**Senior Essay Form & Topic Paragraph:**

The Senior Essay should be a critical evaluation of some aspect of the current and pertinent, 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 the MCDB DUS to assure that the subject is promising. The Senior Essay form must be returned to the office of the DUS via electronic submission to [andrea.chamba@yale.edu](mailto:andrea.chamba@yale.edu) ***no later than the course selection period.*** A thesis paragraph describing the chosen topic is required.

**Senior Essay Final Paper:**

The deadline for submission of the Final Senior Essay paper for seniors finishing in the Fall term is the **last day of classes**. For those finishing in the Spring term the deadline is the **last day of classes**.

The final paper must be *15-20 double-spaced pages, including bibliography*. It is the student's obligation to procure a research faculty mentor to read and grade each paper. If a student needs assistance in this area, the office of the DUS is available for guidance. Papers are to be submitted to the office of DUS. Electronic submission is acceptable and preferred to: [andrea.chamba@yale.edu](mailto:andrea.chamba@yale.edu). Normally, a grade of "Satisfactory" is reported to the registrar by the DUS. However, honor candidates must achieve a grade of A, which is of course reported. If the essay is "Unsatisfactory", the student may decide with the DUS to submit another paper. Papers received late may not be processed in time for Commencement.

**Submission and Formatting Instructions for All Written Work:** Papers should be sent electronically to [andrea.chamba@yale.edu](mailto:andrea.chamba@yale.edu) by the deadlines stated. **Additionally, please follow these formatting instructions:**

Students should follow the American Psychological Association Guidelines for formatting. You can use the following URLs for more information:

- [www.apastyle.org](http://www.apastyle.org)
- [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/general\\_format.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html) (which is referenced by the Center for Teaching and Learning at this URL:
  - <https://ctl.yale.edu/FacultyResources/English>
- <https://ctl.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Formatted%20Writing%20an%20APA%20Style%20Empirical%20Paper%20KVCulin.pdf>

Be sure to include a title page with the following information: (a) Title of Paper, (b) Student Name and Class Year, (c) PI Name, (e) Senior Essay for MCDB BA degree. Make sure to include a header on pages 2 through the end of the document with (a) Student Name, (b) "Essay" and (c) Page Number. Save papers as a pdf using the following nomenclature: *StudentLastName\_FirstName\_SrEssay\_Year.pdf*. **Please send a copy to your Research Faculty Mentor!**

In choosing a research faculty mentor to advise on your Senior Essay, first decide on the general area in biological science you would like to explore. Then determine which faculty member might have interest or expertise in that area. The best source is the MCDB Department handbook, available on the MCDB Website. Second, if a faculty member discussed the topic in a course, they would be a good choice or source for suggestions. Otherwise, the Yale College Program of Study provides a list of faculty members and courses that may include your prospective topic.

Approach the research faculty mentor identified above. If they are 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 research faculty mentor will often not be the same as your MCDB faculty advisor.

In discussion with the Senior Essay research faculty mentor, 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 research faculty mentor may also suggest a few references to start off your reading in the field.