

The VCUarts Qatar Honors Program

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About Honors at VCUarts Qatar

A branch of the VCU Honors College in Richmond, Virginia, the Honors Program at VCUarts Qatar is designed to meet the needs of academically high-achieving undergraduate students by offering an advanced, rigorous, and student-driven liberal education that cultivates interdisciplinary research, creativity, and experiential learning.

Students are required to complete a number of honors-level courses in a diverse range of disciplines that will help prepare them for careers or graduate school. The curriculum provides students with the freedom to pursue honors in the social and behavioral sciences, the natural and physical sciences, the humanities, and fine arts and design, in order to create versatile and open-minded thinkers and makers.

Students in the program regularly engage in advanced undergraduate research to produce creative, innovative work that integrates concepts and approaches from multiple disciplines, a process that demands risk-taking and the pursuit of novel methods.

Honors students are expected to adapt to changing environments and utilize emerging technologies as well as to develop advanced levels of multicultural literacy and the general capacity to positively impact whatever groups and communities they find themselves in.

As part of the VCU's School of the Arts, the honors program endorses expanding the boundaries of new knowledge by emphasizing research, creative expression and interdisciplinary collaborations.

(POINT FORM OR ACCORDION)

Why Join the Honors Program?

Honors programs are commonly found in universities in the United States, but they are relatively new to the Gulf region. There are many different types and sizes of programs, but at the core of all honors education lies a commitment to creating stimulating and rigorous pathways for advanced students to go beyond the typical expectations of a university degree.

Graduating with university honors is the highest academic distinction bestowed upon undergraduate students by Virginia Commonwealth University.

Graduating with honors can be an asset for students who plan on pursuing advanced degrees like a Master's or PhD, particularly in the application process, which can be highly competitive. Also, ambitious students often discover that consistently choosing to climb steep academic paths can be a somewhat lonely venture, but by joining an honors program, such students can become part of a community of like-minded peers to bond and collaborate with.

Beyond these more immediate, practical returns, graduating with honors is a lifetime achievement that students can reflect on throughout their entire lives, serving as a reservoir of pride and confidence.

Requirements for Honors

To graduate with university honors, students admitted to the program must earn a total of 24 honors credits by completing a variety of honors-level courses in a range of disciplines in the Liberal Arts & Sciences and in the student's major course of study. Three of the 24 honors credits must be earned by completing an Honors Experiential Learning Project, an independent, student-driven project that involves applied, hands-on learning that transpires outside the classroom and bridges academic and experiential learning. The number, level, and type of honors courses offered each semester varies. Honors students meet with the Honors Program Administrator each semester to engage in in-depth honors advising to help students curate their schedules from an honors perspective, track and discuss program requirements, map out potential educational pathways, and discuss other honors-related matters.

In honors classes, honors students share the classroom with regular, non-honors students. However, honors students work closely with their Professors to create a unique honors component that typically constitutes 20-25% of the total coursework. Honors components can assume many forms, depending on the nature of the course, the interests of the faculty and the student, and so on.

Honors students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher. If a student's GPA falls below 3.5 but not below 3.0, the student is given one semester to re-establish the minimum 3.5 requirement. To graduate with University Honors, students must have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.5, and an honors-course specific GPA of at least 3.2.

Honors Admissions

Applications are accepted and processed once a year. The application deadline is December 1.

Only current VCUarts Qatar students may apply, and students from all degree programs are eligible and encouraged to apply. Students can apply as early as the first semester of their freshman year, and as late as the first semester of their sophomore year.

Applications from junior and senior level students are not considered as there is not adequate time remaining in their degree programs to properly complete the honors requirements.

Students must have at least a 3.5 cumulative GPA to be eligible for admission. If the applicant is a first semester freshman and has yet to establish a GPA, the application will be evaluated after the release of final grades for the fall semester. Final decisions will be made by the start of spring classes.

If admitted, students will attend an honors orientation and advising session in the first week of spring classes so that students can adjust their schedules to include honors courses prior to the end of add/drop week in the first week of the semester.

To apply, follow these steps:

- 1.) Write a brief (2-3 double-spaced page, MLA formatting) personal education paper. The paper should address why you want to join the honors program and how you think it will help you advance your short-term and long-term goals (academic, personal, creative, career, and so on--however you define "goal"). It should also address the major influences on your creative, intellectual, and personal development, such as experiences in primary and secondary education (elementary and high school, in American terms), key or formative experiences outside your formal education, influential people, events, or ideas.
- 2.) Respectfully approach one of your faculty members (either in or outside your major) and ask if they are willing to write a short, one-page letter

(officially called a “statement of endorsement”) that discusses your strengths, areas for improvement, and suitability to the program. You will submit the name and email of the faculty member as part of the online application. They will be contacted via email with instructions on how to upload the letter. Faculty endorsements are due by 11:59 p.m. on the faculty final grade submission deadline for the fall semester. Check the VCUarts Qatar academic calendar for specific dates, as they vary from year to year.

- 3.) Complete the online application for “Current VCU Students” in the admissions section of the VCU Honors College website: <https://honors.vcu.edu/admissions/>. For students on the Qatar campus, there are a number of application fields that require special attention. Please contact the Honors Program Coordinator on the Qatar campus via email (contact info is below) to obtain a step-by-step guide for completing the online application. To complete the application, you will need your VCU eID, your VCU V# (which you can find in DegreeWorks), your cumulative GPA at VCU, the name and email of the faculty member submitting a statement of endorsement, a CV/Resume, and your personal education paper.