

## Honors Thesis Guidelines

A senior thesis is one of the hallmarks of Honors work across the nation, and is widely recognized as the culmination of a student's baccalaureate academic career. Usually, this work is done on a more or less independent, tutorial basis. The point of a thesis is to give exceptional students a chance to do truly deep, synthetic, and extraordinary work that serves as part of the capstone of their college education. The Honors thesis may be undertaken in the junior or senior year. Students are encouraged to write the thesis early so that the results can be included in applications for graduate schools or employment. The thesis can be in the major field, but it need not be in the major field, and it may interdisciplinary.

1. **Form:** The Honors thesis is a twenty-page (minimum) research paper written under the guidance of a **faculty advisor** from a discipline appropriate to the area of the thesis topic. Students whose majors require a senior thesis for graduation have two options. First, they can simply earn the ranking for an honors thesis in their field. Students should consult the department for guidelines for an honors thesis in that field. Second, students whose majors require a senior thesis for graduation can add a second discipline to their thesis. For instance, a politics major might add in economic considerations. This addition should be reflected in the choice of the second reader.

Students in majors that require a thesis should consult their department for guidelines for the thesis. These requirements are designed to work with departmental requirements, not replace or ameliorate them. However, some Honors thesis requirements, even if not departmental requirements, must be followed for Honors thesis credit. In any case of uncertainty, communicating with the Honors Director is advised.

**Exception:** The Honors thesis may be shorter if it accompanies a piece of applied work in the field of the thesis. This might be a series of laboratory experiments, a field study in a social science, or an artistic work such as an exhibition or a recital. For instance, if a student creates a senior recital for completion of the graduation requirements in fine arts, the Honors thesis could be an accompaniment to that artistic work. Similarly, if a student does laboratory research in chemistry, and generates a series of findings, the Honors thesis could be an accompaniment to that lab work. In such cases, the thesis could be shorter, considering departmental requirements when appropriate, though no Honors thesis should be fewer than twelve pages.

2. **Procedure:** Students must select the advisor with whom they will work on the thesis and one additional reader, called the second reader. The second reader's work must begin roughly at the start of the project, so the two readers are collegially working with the student on the design and execution of the project. Regardless of departmental requirements, a second reader is required

for Honors credit. After initial consultation with the advisor and reader, students submit a thesis proposal and a bibliography to the advisor and reader for approval. Once the thesis proposal and bibliography are approved, the student should submit the thesis proposal form to the Director of the Program. (Appended Below) Forms should be submitted by October 15 of the academic year in which the thesis is written. Students submit a first draft for response to both the **advisor and the second reader**. The final version reflects their comments and corrections. Occasionally, students may find it useful or necessary to add a third reader, especially for theses that are interdisciplinary in nature. Two readers are required, three readers are permitted. In either case, the final product should reflect the comments and guidance from all the readers.

3. **Schedule:** Students should allow sufficient time for faculty advisors and second and if necessary third readers to read drafts and final versions. For seniors, first drafts must be completed no later than the end of February. Final drafts must be GRADED and submitted to the Honors Office by April 15 of the year of the student's graduation. Exceptions to this rule are granted when students are in departments that have senior theses that are assigned a later date. In such cases, the departmental date becomes the required date. The completed thesis should be submitted electronically to the Honors Office by this date. In no case can any part of the thesis be completed after a student's graduation, whether in December or May.
4. **Grading:** The faculty advisor and all faculty readers will evaluate the thesis and assign it one of three grades: Pass, Fail, or Pass with Distinction. Two marks in any one category are sufficient to earn the grade of that category. In the unlikely event of equal distribution of the marks among all three categories from an advisor and two readers, the thesis will be deemed as passing. The advisor submits the final grade to the Honors Director in writing. The advisor's judgment will have greatest weight in any disputed issues among the various readers, and will settle disagreements between two readers.
5. **Faculty Information:** All faculty readers of Honors theses should inquire at the Honors office for the Guide to Directing Honors Thesis guidelines available there. These should come directly to readers, rather than from the students, and is available on the website.

# Honors Thesis Checklist

- Student selects Faculty Advisor and Second Reader
  - Student selects Third Reader if Necessary
- Student submits proposal and bibliography to Advisor and Reader(s)
- Advisor and Reader(s) approve proposal and bibliography
- Student submits completed Honors Thesis Proposal Form to Honors Director by **October 15**
- Student submits first draft to Advisor, and Reader(s) by **February 15**, or date set by student's department
- Student submits final draft to Advisor and Reader(s) by **April 1**, or date set by student's department
- Advisor submits grade of Pass with Distinction, Pass, or Fail to Honors Director by **April 15**, or date set by student's department
- Advisor informs student of grade directly after informing Honors Director
- Student submits final draft of Honors Thesis to Honors Director, electronically, by **April 30**

# **Honors Thesis Proposal Form**

**(Due by October 15)**

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Faculty Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Faculty Second Reader: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Faculty Third Reader: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Thesis/Project: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Brief Description of Project: (One paragraph)

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Advisor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Second Reader Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Third Reader Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_

Honors Director Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_