Planning Guide and Instructions for Honors Program Senior Thesis Contracts and Proposals

Honors Thesis Projects may be (1) traditional primary research in the lab (usually natural and social sciences); (2) major creative or translation projects (usually Fine and Performing Arts, English or Modern Languages); or (3) synthesizing research or applying theory to analyze texts, data or other phenomena to develop one’s own conclusions (often Humanities and Social Sciences). Students may not use collaborative team projects to fulfill this honors requirement.

Honors Program Students may fulfill their 4-credit thesis requirement a number of ways. Each of these requires prior Honors Program approval before enrolling in the thesis credits to ensure your credits are transcripted appropriately as Honors Credits. This process cannot be done retroactively because that would invalidate any previously issued official transcripts such as those you send in graduate school, professional school, grant, scholarship, or other applications.

1. **Honors 301 Thesis Preparation** (1 thesis credit, P/NP) is offered every spring should be taken in the Junior year. For most students this course is optional, but is highly recommended to those who struggle with writing, those intimidated by planning and completing a year-long major project, those whose departments offer a flexible number thesis credits, or those who know (or suspect) they do not meet qualifications to be invited to Honors in the Discipline in their major department. **Business majors are required to take Honors 301 to get the full 4 thesis credits because BA 400 is only 3 credits.**

2. **Honors in the Discipline (HID) of the major department** is the simplest and most common vehicle to fulfill the Honors Program requirement. Typically most departments process invitations to eligible students to participate Honors in the Discipline in the **spring semester of students’ junior year**.

Departmental qualifying requirements vary, so students should investigate the specifics of their department guidelines in **fall semester of junior year** in order to plan accordingly. For example, some departments’ GPA cut off is 3.50; others require 3.60 in both cumulative and major GPAs. If students know or suspect they are not eligible for HID participation, they should enroll in Hon 301 in spring of their junior year.

**MAY 1 of the Junior year** (after students have accepted their departmental invitations to participate in HID) is the deadline for students to file a signed thesis contract and the proposal with the Honors Program and enroll in departmental thesis coursework in the senior year. Some departments require students submit a somewhat formal proposal in the spring upon acceptance of the invitation (e. g. Religious Studies, English, Communications). Some departments have later **proposal deadlines**, for example, the Business Department thesis proposal deadline is in October of senior year, **so those students will file the contract in May and the proposal** (to both department and the Honors Program) by their department deadline.

**Department Thesis Courses:**
- Biology 491-492
- Business 400 (**only 3 credits, requires student takes Hon 301 Thesis Prep in spring of junior year for first credit**)
- Chemistry 491-492
- Communications 498-499
- Computer Science 495
• Education 399-400  **Education majors** must file an honors thesis contract when enrolling in Ed 399 in **December of the Junior year** when they have been approved to participate in HID. These students will file their proposal as an addendum to this contract in May.

• English 498-499
• Engineering and Physics: ENGR 480 (IS), or Physics 491-492
• Fine and Performing Arts: MU, TH, ART 490
• History 400
• Mathematics 400
• Modern Languages 496-497
• Occupational Therapy 492-494
• Political Science, Philosophy and Legal Studies--PS 498-499 or Philosophy 490
• Psychology 490
• Religious Studies 490-491
• Sociology and Anthropology:  SO, AN 400
• Social Work SW 400

3. **Independent Study** is the primary method for students who may not meet the minimum qualifying standards to be invited to participate in HID, usually minimum 3.60 GPA, but sometimes higher, but still have the required 3.50 Honors Program GPA. It is highly recommended students take **Honors 301** to develop the IS proposal. Sometimes students who do not wish to participate in HID in their department, but who would like to do thesis work in their minor department opt for Independent Study. In either case, students who suspect they may not be invited to their department’s HID process or those who know they want to work with their minor department should enroll in Honors 301 Thesis Preparation (1 credit, P/NP), which is only offered in the spring of the junior year. The remaining 3 credits will form the independent study project. Students enrolled in Hon 301 complete a proposal as part of the class to submit by the May 1 deadline.

4. **Departmental Thesis courses not taken for HID** is a rare option. Some departments combine thesis and HID students into one class (Religious Studies), or they do not wish to overload faculty schedules with Independent Study supervision. These departments often have Honors Program students run through their research or thesis course while making clear the student will not be eligible for HID.

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**Thesis Contracts** may be filed provisionally without an attached proposal only in special cases. These situations are dependent upon the student’s departmental proposal deadline and must be approved by the Honors Program Director in advance of contract submission, with a submission date for the proposal indicated on the contract. In all cases contracts must be signed prior to submission. Contracts with incorrect information may invalidate the student’s honors credits. All contracts must be filed prior to enrolling in the thesis credits to ensure proper honors designation on the transcript and credit for completion of requirements.

Some departments maintain rigorous standards for thesis proposals and become the first segment of the thesis document. However, not all disciplines are so detailed at the early stages. To help in your planning and writing, consider the following guidelines.
For most projects, including laboratory, field, historical document, textual, theoretical, or statistical research:
- A brief background of the issue/texts/theory you are planning to examine/analyze/apply, etc., including the fundamentals of the scholarly debate about it
- A clear statement of the purpose, objective or goals of your thesis project
- Research questions and/or hypotheses
- A statement of rationale for your conducting this work
- The proposed design, plan, or methodology of your project: if appropriate, how will you analyze your data and present the results?
- Intended outcome(s) of your research: what results do you anticipate?

For creative projects, performances, and translations the proposal should address the following:
- A narrow theme or topic and approach to the theme (fiction, sculpture, music composition, etc.)
- A background statement of your experience with and qualifications in your chosen medium/genre/language
- A statement of how you plan to include a component of research or meta-analysis to supplement the creative element
- A description of the proposed design, plan or methodology of your work
- A description of the final form of the project.

Proposals for all types of projects should also contain the following information:
- Working bibliography
- What contributions, conclusions, or applications do you anticipate as a result of your thesis?
- What plans for dissemination beyond a library copy of the thesis document to you have? (publications, exhibits, conference presentations, performances, etc.),
- Projected budget (estimated costs) for your project (only necessary if supplies and materials will be requiring application for Academic Grant funds to cover these costs.
- Time table for completion of the research, writing, and presentation of the thesis at Scholarship and Creative Arts Day.
- A rationale for your selection of thesis committee members. You may have more than two members on your committee, but you may have no less than two. You should first look to qualified secondary advisors in your department or a relevant department if you are doing an interdisciplinary project. All committee members should be full-time faculty members of the college.

Human subjects research
- Plans for handling Institutional Review Board requirements, including timeline of IRB mandatory training, submission and approvals.
## Senior Thesis Contract and Proposal Form

Due May 1 of Junior year OR prior to enrolling in any courses for thesis credits, whichever is earlier.

### Student Information

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<th>Student Name</th>
<th>ID #</th>
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### Course List

List all courses in which you will be enrolling to complete a minimum of 4 Honors Thesis credits. These details must match the college catalog and schedule for you to receive honors credit on your transcript.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Number of credits</th>
<th>Semester you will be enrolled</th>
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### Thesis Requirement

- Are you fulfilling the Honors Program Senior Thesis Requirement through Honors in the Discipline (HID)?
  - Yes □ No □
- If not HID, are you fulfilling the Honors Program Senior Thesis Requirement through Independent Study (IS) Credits?
  - Yes □ No □
- If not HID or Independent Study what means are you using to fulfill thesis credits?
  - Date filed with IS committee:

### Working Thesis Title

- Please check which document you have attached to this form:
  - Departmental Honors in the Discipline proposal
  - Completed Independent Study application
  - This is a Provisional Thesis Contract with a completed departmental proposal to follow by (date)
  - Honors 301 Thesis-Preparation final proposal
  - Other __________________________

### Required Signatures

- Primary Thesis Advisor/Director
  - Printed name
  - Signature
  - Date

- Secondary Thesis Advisor
  - Printed name
  - Signature
  - Date

- Department Chair
  - Printed name
  - Signature
  - Date

- Student
  - Printed name
  - Signature
  - Date

- Honors Director
  - Printed name
  - Kyle C. Kopko
  - Date
  - Signature

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