

Guidelines for Honors Thesis Advisors

Thank you for your willingness to be a thesis advisor! This is a unique opportunity to work one-on-one with an Honors student. These young scholars benefit from your mentorship, and they produce sophisticated and innovative research.

Students who complete the thesis say that it's the most rewarding experience of their academic career, but also one of the scariest. Most are well-motivated, but they have never done a major project like a thesis before. Honors students are capable of doing outstanding work, but they need help and prodding along the way. That's where you come in!

What is your role as an Honors Thesis Advisor?

- Meet with advisee on consistent basis to provide guidance throughout the thesis process
- Provide feedback about students' project conceptualization, methodology, background literature, analysis, and overall progress
- Assess students' timeline and/or suggest reasonable deadlines to facilitate quality completion of advisee's project
- Guide advisee to appropriate resources for project, including research grant opportunities. The Hinman Grant provides up to \$500 for research supplies or conference fees.
- Instruct advisee about the standards of the discipline (e.g., writing style, discipline-specific requirements for a project, citation style)
- Provide feedback on thesis drafts
- Help student create an engaging, 15 minute oral presentation designed for a general audience
- Attend thesis presentation (or, if attendance is not possible, view a recording of thesis presentation)
- Provide feedback on thesis and oral presentation to Director of Honors Program upon request.

What qualifies as a Senior Honors Thesis?

Honors thesis projects may take the form of a scholarly paper, original writing (plays, poems, short stories), artistic composition or design, science experiment, a curricular module, or other project that meets academic standards for originality in your discipline. Each discipline has its own definitions of scholarly work, and most theses are papers prepared as if they were to be submitted to a scholarly journal. As Thesis Advisor, you should make expectations clear to your advisee and help the advisee meet them. All projects include original research, primary sources, an oral presentation, and considerable dedication and time.

Some students create entirely new projects, while others build on projects they have begun in other courses or in independent research or work experiences. Students who choose to extend an existing project must add a unique component or level of depth/analysis that qualifies the Honors Thesis as a distinctive intellectual project, and they must explain this extension in detail in the Prospectus (turned into Honors Director as part of HNRS 495).

In general, thesis *papers* are between 25-50 pages and accomplish the following:

- 1) Describe a question the student is trying to answer.
- 2) Present background material relevant to this question and explain how this material can direct the student toward an answer.
- 3) Describe the methods used to retrieve and analyze the student's data.
- 4) Reveal the results and how they answer the research question.

The above description is generic and should not be construed as the structure of every thesis! That's the beauty of the Honors Thesis Seminar. An English major analyzing the historical trends in Victorian era literature would not collect data, but would analyze writing styles, context, etc. However, another thesis might examine heavy metal impacts in crabs and be more along the lines of a scientific paper. As a thesis mentor, you teach the student the appropriate rules and guidelines for your discipline.

Note that students whose final Thesis is not a traditional research paper will be expected to include a 1-2 page document explaining the thesis project; the question(s) or issue(s) it addresses; the approach taken to answer that question or explore that issue; the research conducted to help produce the final project; and citations for all referenced sources. This should be turned in when the final Thesis is submitted.

All Honors theses are due to the Honors Program at the end of the semester, after they have been approved by their Thesis Advisor.

What other expectations are there for my advisee during his/her Senior Thesis experience?

HNRS 495 Enrollment

In order to graduate from the Honors Program, students must complete HNRS 495: Honors Thesis Seminar. This course is offered in both the fall and spring semesters. Students may take it for either 1 or 3 Honors units (same class regardless). The course aims to facilitate their progress on and ultimately completion of their Thesis Project. It also provides instruction on and opportunities for public presentation of the thesis project at Creative Collaborations and the Honors Colloquium.

Oral Thesis Presentation at Honors Colloquium

Students will offer a 15 presentation on their Honors Thesis at the Colloquium. Thesis Advisors are expected to help students develop the presentation so that it is comprehensible and accessible to an general (educated but non-expert) audience comprised of Honors Program students, faculty, and guests. Students may have to spend time educating the audience on background material or the jargon of the field before discussing the heart of their research. As a Thesis Advisor, your job is to help the student prepare for this presentation and to attend the official presentation

Poster Presentation at Creative Collaborations (Spring semester only)

Students are also required to present their theses at Creative Collaborations: Undergraduate Research Conference in the Spring. This involves submitting an abstract and creating a poster or other display of their thesis. Advisors should be ready to help students construct these displays and prepare them for questions they might encounter as audience members engage with their poster. Wide-format poster costs are covered by the Office of Undergraduate Research.