

## General Guide to the HONORS PROJECT THESIS

*NOTE: This handout is addressed to the Honors College student but is also meant to be read by the student's department head and committee members. Besides this handout, the student will need copies of the Project Thesis Prospectus and the Manuscript Guide. All forms and guides are available at the HC office.*

**What is it?** The Honors Project Thesis is an independent project by an Honors College student (junior or senior). It is typically done for no-credit, but can earn departmental credit if approved. The project is overseen by a three-person committee, including a committee chair and two other committee members. It is preceded by a formal Prospectus, and its results are documented by a paper and perhaps by other means (videotape, slides, printouts, etc.).

**Where do I get ideas for it?** Talk to your department head or your favorite professor in your field. If you've been a lab assistant or hung around the active researchers in your department, you may have ideas already. To see what's been done by previous Honors students, come by the HC office and browse our collection of old Honors Capstones. Feel free to talk to the HC associate dean, Dr. Jason Morris. Whether you have several ideas or none, come see him for advice and encouragement.

### **What help from Honors is available for me?**

The Honors College will hold a short Project Thesis Seminar at least once a year (most likely every semester) for students who want mentoring and planning assistance in this process. If you wish to take the Seminar, make sure you enroll in it at least a semester before your Project Thesis is due. No students will be allowed to take the Seminar during their last semester. This Seminar will ALSO provide you with an extra upper level unit towards Honors Graduation.

**Can my project draw on an Honors contract, lab work, research-assistant work, field work, an internship, or summer travel I've already done?** Yes—all the above. Starting from blank ignorance is not a requirement!

**Can it combine with another project?** Sure—as long as it fulfills HC purposes, which may mean we ask for an added component. Suppose your department requires a senior research project, or you are a McNair Scholar or a Jack Pope Fellow, which also require research projects. If you prefer to do two separate research projects, you can. But the same project (and the same credit) can count for both.

**Does my main product have to be a paper?** Not necessarily. Your documentation must include a paper even if it's not your main product. If you're in computer science, your product may be a software program; your paper would only document it. If you're in drama, your product might be a dramatic production; your paper would only document it. If you're a science or psychology major, your main effort might be research, and the paper would be the documentation of that research. If you do an internship, the major part of your Project Thesis would be the hours and work you put in, but we would still need your paper to document your work. But if you're in English, or history, or political science, your paper may be your product as well as the record of your project.

**What's the paper like?** Its length depends on the project. For a scientific project, months of research may boil down to 8 pages of results. For an artistic project where the main documentation is a video or a set of slides, the paper might run only 10 to 12 pages. For a humanities or business project, the paper could run 25 pages or longer. See the Manuscript Guide for instructions on title page, signature page, copyright notice, and so on.

**Who has to approve the project before I start?** Formal approval takes place whenever your Prospectus is signed by all three committee members and your department head, then approved by the Honors College dean.

**What's the time frame? What are the deadlines?** You can do the project any time your junior or senior year. The deadline for filing your prospectus for all graduates is Dead Day of the semester before you write your Project Thesis. If you want recognition in the commencement program, you must have your Project Thesis completed and three signed copies sitting in the HC office before the graduation program goes to the printers at the end of Week 12 of your graduation semester. The Project Thesis can take at least the same effort as a regular course, so plan your time accordingly.

**If my senior year gets hectic, can I turn in my project late?** You can turn in your Project Thesis as late as the end of Week 15 and still wear the gold stole at graduation. However, after Week 12, your Project Thesis will not be mentioned in the commencement program. After Week 15, your Project Thesis will not be accepted. You will graduate as an Honors Graduate instead of an Honors Scholar. So give yourself enough leeway that if something unexpected happens, you will still be through on time.

#### **What are my responsibilities?**

- \* To give your advisor early notice that you will do an Honors Project Thesis
- \* To prepare the Prospectus to your committee's satisfaction, collect signatures, and turn it in by Dead Day of the semester **before** you graduate.
- \* To start work early enough to let you cope with unforeseen delays (computer failure, low return on a questionnaire, professor out of town)
- \* To get your paper (or sections of it) to your committee early enough for critiques and rewrites; to plan on writing several drafts of your paper and to budget the time and enthusiasm to do a good job on rewrites (If your main product isn't a paper, the advice still holds--get your initial research data or your initial printouts or your preliminary sketches or whatever to your committee early.)
- \* To get three copies on archival paper (one of them bound), all signed and in the Honors office by the end of Week 12 before graduation. An electronic copy must also be turned in at this time.

#### **What are my committee chair's responsibilities?**

- \* To help you choose a feasible, stimulating project
- \* To help you select and invite the other committee members (Expertise is what counts. Committee members can come from outside the faculty.)
- \* To help you polish your prospectus
- \* To help you around obstacles (e.g., problems with facilities and materials)
- \* To be available as coach, critic, and exhorter, administering either sweet praise or a swift kick, whichever you need at the time
- \* To sign off on the final product, verifying the legitimacy and quality of the work

#### **What are the other committee members' responsibilities?**

- \* To help the chair, as needed, in carrying out any of the responsibilities just listed
- \* To sign off on the final product, verifying the legitimacy and quality of the work