



HONORS THESIS GUIDELINES FOR FACULTY DIRECTORS

Honors theses/creative project work offers students the opportunity to explore new ground and to integrate their course work by focusing in-depth on a special research question or a creative project. It offers students the chance to communicate results of research or creative activity in an appropriate form. The Honors College Dean, Associate Dean and staff appreciate your willingness to direct an Honors student in this work. These guidelines outline the procedures and expectations of the Honors College. If there is any way we can assist you during the semesters you are involved in independent study, please call don't hesitate to ask.

WHAT IS HONORS RESEARCH?

Honors students may choose to do research culminating in a thesis or project in their major field or in two compatible fields. In exceptional cases, the student may choose to do this research in a field outside the major. Junior or senior honors students who have completed at least 3 upper division classes in the proposed area(s) are eligible to be involved. The readings or research for the thesis or creative project (art objects, a musical or dramatic composition or performance, or production of a literary form, and so forth) occur under course number 4870. The writing of the thesis or the execution of the project takes place under course number 4880. Under specific circumstances, a student may do readings only, producing a significant paper but not a design from which a thesis would be written. These courses of study may extend beyond two semesters, but students may receive a maximum of 6 hours of course credit for their readings and written thesis (3 hours each).

BEGINNING THE STUDY

Several steps are taken before you, as faculty director, and the Honors student begin to formally work together.

- The student develops an idea for research and consults with you and, where appropriate, the department chair, as to the worth and potential of the idea as well as your willingness to work with the student.
- The student presents this idea in a written proposal to the Honors College Associate Dean. The Honors College Approval Form, submitted with the proposal, must be signed by both you and the department chair.
- Upon the Honors Associate Dean's approval of the project, both you and your student will be notified.
- The Honors College approves only the first semester of research. **For the student to continue work on the thesis/project, he or she must be making satisfactory progress. Please notify the Honors College Associate Dean as soon as possible if you do not support the continuation of the Thesis project into the second semester.**

If in the opinion of the Honors Associate Dean the student's initial proposal is too exploratory or general, or if there are other issues, there may be recommendations for the student to revise the proposal. In rare cases, work on the thesis may have to be postponed one semester.

When you and the student first consider the initial proposal together, please note that the following items must be included in the proposal:

- the purpose of the study with respect to the student's educational goals;
- a description of the problem or project;
- the methodology to be used;
- a bibliography; and
- specific types of assessment (written as well as oral) of the student's work.

Please discuss with the student the scope of the proposal, various deadlines that you want to set, and whether the writing of the research will require more than one semester to complete. The course for readings and thesis research, CRN 4870, as well as the writing course, CRN 4880, may be taken only once and for three credit hours each, but the initial research may take the student longer than one semester. If this is so, please advise the student that you will authorize him or her to register for 4880 only when that work is completed. The proposal that you accept at this stage is not binding on either you or the student; it is simply your best judgment, at the outset of the semester, of the shape and content of the study. By the end of the semester, this should have produced a design for the student's writing of a thesis or for producing a creative project.

Sometimes the student's proposal is interdisciplinary and requires a second or third director or reader. In such cases, it is important that faculty members and the student together organize the research to be done and designate the responsibilities of all. Whenever several faculty members are involved in a thesis/project, it is the policy of the Honors College to accept the Honors thesis/project only after all the faculty members have agreed on and jointly recorded a grade.

N.B.: Use of Human Subjects: If the thesis uses human subjects in any way—e.g. through surveys, questionnaires, experiments, etc.—approval of Institutional Review Board must be obtained prior to beginning the research. Please consult www.gsu.edu/research/human_subjects.html for details.

THE RESEARCH SEMESTER

Frequent and regular meetings between you and the student and your assessment of her/his work will allow you to give the student the most effective feedback. If a student does not attend regular meetings which the two of you have arranged, please inform the Honors College Associate Dean. It is also important that you inform the student of any department requirements related to the thesis project, e.g., the number of credit hours to be accepted for the major, oral presentation of the thesis, etc.

All Honors thesis courses are graded. The student should be producing certain items for evaluation agreed upon by the two of you such as an annotated bibliography, critical analyses of readings (oral or written), laboratory reports, test designs, quizzes, an outline of the thesis, and so forth. Evaluation of these items should be arranged so that the student is apprised of her/his progress throughout the semester. If you think that the student's progress is not sufficient to warrant continuation of this study beyond this first phase, please convey this information to the Honors College Associate Dean.

THE WRITING/PRODUCTION SEMESTER

Both you and the student should give the same attention to goals and deadlines during the semester(s) devoted to writing the thesis or producing the project as in the research semester. Set dates when the drafts of the thesis or parts of the project should be completed. Determine the deadline by which the final draft should be submitted to a typist, if necessary. **The thesis/project is to be delivered to the Honors College Office no later than the last day of classes in the semester in which the student is to receive credit for completing it.**

As primary director and evaluator of the Honors thesis/project, please convey to the student whether progress toward final revision is sufficient. If progress at any point does not seem to warrant completion of the work, please arrange a conference that includes you, the student, and, if appropriate, the Honors College Associate Dean.

While it is not necessary that an undergraduate student produce a piece of original work which will serve as a contribution to the profession, it is hoped that the research reported in an Honors thesis will be of publishable quality.

A creative project should be of such quality that it can be presented to an audience of peers. It can be an original story, a chapter in a projected novel, a drama, a poem or poems, a portfolio of art objects or a musical performance. These creative productions are to be set in the context of the appropriate discipline by means of a short essay/preface that becomes part of the final project to be evaluated. At the beginning of work on the creative project, you and the student should have a clear understanding of the criteria of evaluation. If you have any questions, consult with the Honors College Associate Dean. You can also examine previous Honors projects that are shelved in the Honors office, or confer with previous faculty directors of creative Honors projects.

If you are directing an Honors thesis/project in the student's last semester before graduation, you and the student face a deadline by which the thesis/project must be signed and graded by you in order that the requirements for awarding of an Honors Recognition on the diploma can be met (not all graduating students are working toward a recognition). **Normally the Honors College office must have this completed thesis/project in hand no later than the last day of classes.** On the basis of the grade assigned by you and your recommendation that the thesis/project merits Honors College recognition, the Honors College Associate Dean has the responsibility to determine if the thesis/project fits the requirements for recognition by the Honors College.

The student will receive from the Honors College office instructions for uploading the completed and approved thesis to the GSU Digital Archive. The University Library administers the Archive to collect, organize, disseminate, and preserve the digital scholarly output of Georgia State University faculty, students and staff.

Honors thesis/project work is a unique opportunity for the development of the superior student. Generally those students who have undertaken it have found it to be a very valuable experience, and faculty directors of Honors theses have reported that they, too, have found this endeavor to be highly rewarding. Your support of the Honors College and of a superior student is a contribution to the pursuit of excellence by the university.