



## HONORS THESIS GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

Honors theses provide the opportunity for you to develop a topic or a project that grows out of your own interests, employ the scholarly or creative principles and methods of your discipline, and to express the results of your research or creative efforts in an appropriate format. “Thesis” is a term to be interpreted broadly. Thesis projects may include traditional scholarly writings, but may also include musical compositions, films, substantive creative works of art, and other projects appropriate to the various academic fields within the university.

### Course Work Involved in Thesis/Project

Honors thesis/project study includes a one-semester research or readings (CRN 4870) as well as a one-semester writing/ project preparation course (CRN 4880). Students can earn a maximum of 6 hours of credit. Both 4870 and 4880 carry up to 3 hours of credit. Students may receive credit for the research semester (4870) without completing the thesis (4880).

### Subject Matter and Prerequisites

Typically Honors students do thesis/project work in their own majors, but interdisciplinary projects or projects outside the major are possible. Honors students proposing a thesis/project need to have completed at least **three** upper division courses in the subject area(s) in which the project will be done; please consult with your department for recommended courses.

### Length

While there are no arbitrary minimums, Honors theses are substantial projects and are subject to the approval of the Associate Dean of the Honors College for suitability in length and substance. As a general rule, traditional scholarly/analytical theses in the humanities and social sciences might average 30-50 pages, unless there is significant information presented in visual form (e.g., charts, tables, graphs, etc), in which case they may be shorter. Projects in the mathematical and computational sciences may consist more heavily of such graphic presentation of data and be relatively brief, but care must still be taken to introduce the problem to a general reader and provide adequate discussion of the significance of the results.

### Planning

Start planning your project as early as possible, certainly no later than the semester prior to the research course. **The completed proposal is due by the last day of classes of the semester before you wish to begin your project.** You'll need to talk to your thesis advisor before completing your proposal form; feel free to consult an Honors College advisor about topics and advisors. Also, we encourage you to consult the Honors librarian about the availability of research in your topic area.

## Proposal

Proposal forms are available in the Honors Office and on the Honors College [website](#) and should include:

- Description of the research problem or question, or creative concept to be explored in the thesis. Think of this as an extended thesis statement or précis of the project. It should be about 300 words;
- Statement of the method of study, theoretical approach, or creative media to be used;
- Bibliography of the principal primary and secondary works relevant to the topic, cited in a format appropriate to the discipline (e.g., APA, MLA, etc.). You need not have read all these works at the time of the proposal.
- Method of assessment of your work by the faculty director who will be working with you; specify how often and in what form assessment will take place—e.g., weekly meetings, progress reports, outlines, annotated bibliography, lab reports, drafts, etc.
- How your study will fit into your major's requirements and your overall degree requirements.

The proposal is not binding; it is an initial outline of the project (in consultation with your director), which can (and probably will) be modified as your research develops.

The thesis should deal with subject matter or experimental question(s) of substance and significance. While it is not required that the thesis results in a scholarly article or presentation, these often result and students should aim to produce a work of that quality. Students working on theses should be aware of the opportunity to present a version of their research at the annual Georgia State Undergraduate Research Conference (GSURC).

A creative project should be sufficiently polished that it can be presented publicly. It could be, for example, an original story of some length, a chapter in a projected novel, a play, a series of poems, an independent film, a screenplay, a portfolio of art objects, or a musical composition. Creative projects are to be set in the context of the appropriate discipline by means of a short essay or preface that becomes a part of the final project to be evaluated.

If your thesis/project involves more than one discipline, show clearly in your initial proposal how you perceive the interactions of these disciplines in relation to your thesis/project. The Honors College as well as the departments involved can advise you about appropriate faculty advisors.

**The completed proposal (including the signed Approval Form) must be submitted to the Honors College by the last day of classes for the semester prior to the beginning of your research.**

<b>Projects beginning in the Spring 2016 semester</b>	<b>December 7, 2015</b>
<b>Projects beginning in the Summer 2016 semester</b>	<b>April 25, 2016</b>
<b>Projects beginning in the Fall 2016 semester</b>	<b>July 25, 2016</b>

The Associate Dean of the Honors College, in consultation with your advisor, may suggest revisions.

**N.B.: Use of Human Subjects:** If your thesis uses human subjects in any way—e.g. through surveys, questionnaires, experiments, etc.—you must get approval prior to beginning your research from the Institutional Review Board at GSU. Consult your advisor about this process, and see [www.gsu.edu/research/human\\_subjects.html](http://www.gsu.edu/research/human_subjects.html).

### The Research Semester

Make sure you are registered for the appropriate 4870 course, normally for 3 credit hours. (Note: 4870 is a variable credit hour course **that defaults to 1 credit hour** unless you specify the number)! No later than the first week of classes you should meet with your advisor to organize the general outlines of your study, set the deadlines for each step of work during the semester, and come to a specific understanding of how your work will be evaluated. If your study is interdisciplinary, organize all of the above items with both (or all) professors involved. Whatever the nature of your project, regular contact with and feedback from your advisor is key to the successful completion of the thesis.

Be sure to discuss with your advisor what kinds of tasks/assignments will count for your grade. Examples are an annotated bibliography, critical analysis of readings (written as well as oral), laboratory reports, test designs, models, quizzes, an outline of the thesis, and so forth. Evaluation of these items should be arranged so that you know your progress throughout the semester. At the end of this semester, your faculty director will determine whether your progress is sufficient to warrant a continuation of study beyond this first phase. He or she will confer with you about this and report the decision to the Honors College office no later than a week before the end of classes in the semester. Your advisor will assign you a grade for 4870.

### The Writing/Production Semester

When your faculty director indicates that you are ready to proceed with the production of your thesis/project, you will be authorized by the Honors College Office to enroll in 4880. During this semester both you and your faculty director should give the same attention as in the first semester to goals and deadlines. You will need to set dates when drafts of the thesis or parts of the project should be completed. Continue to seek feedback about how you are progressing in the thesis semester(s). If insufficient progress is being made, your advisor may, in consultation with the Honors College, withdraw you from 4880. It is important, therefore, that both of you understand how your progress and final achievement are being measured.

#### Deadline:

**The thesis/project, approved by the faculty director, is to be delivered to the Honors College Director no later than the last day of classes in the semester you wish to complete your thesis/project. The completed thesis project is due by the last day of classes of the writing semester. A hard copy of your thesis is due to the Honors College. Scholarworks submissions instructions will be sent after project approval.**

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### Formatting the thesis:

Honors theses must conform to the same formatting guidelines as graduate theses/dissertations within your college. Your thesis must have a title page with spaces for the signatures of your thesis advisor, the Honors College Dean, and the date. If you have questions about format, consult your advisor or the Honors College office.

If you or your director has questions about the project/thesis, consult with the Honors College Associate Dean. You are welcome to examine previous Honors theses/ projects that are shelved in the Honors College office, and you may wish to confer with Honors students who have completed theses or projects.

### Grading and Recognition:

If you are taking the last three hours of thesis/project credit in your semester of graduation and you are working toward an Honors recognition, you and your faculty director face a deadline by which the thesis/project must be graded and signed in order that the requirements for awarding an Honors citation on the diploma can be met. Again, the Honors College office must have this completed thesis/project **in hand no later than the last day of classes**.

Your thesis/project will be judged satisfactory or unsatisfactory according to your department's standards of Honors recognition; your director will grade you in accordance with his or her assessment of the quality of the work that you have actually accomplished. After this fulfillment of the department's requirements and after the grade is assigned, the Honors College Associate Dean has the responsibility to determine if the thesis/project is acceptable for recognition by the Honors College.

Research Honors is granted and noted on the diploma to students who successfully complete the requirements for Advanced Honors (12 credit hours of upper-level Honors courses and two Honors colloquia or forums) plus the 6 hours of thesis credit. Students may choose to write an honors thesis without completing the Advanced Honors requirements, but in this case there is no designation of Research Honors on the diploma.

These guidelines are presented to assist you in making thesis/project study a rewarding experience. Please feel free to ask questions in the Honors College office on any aspect of this project. We hope this experience will be both challenging and rewarding.

### Additional Sources

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. Seventh ed. New York: MLA, 2009.

Lipson, Charles. *How to Write a BA Thesis: A Practical Guide from Your First Ideas to Your Finished Paper*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Turabian, Kate. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Seventh ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.