

Honors Thesis Requirements and Guidelines

University Honors Program

Overview

The honors thesis provides an opportunity for University Honors Program (UHP) students to have a substantial, challenging capstone experience that encourages them to work diligently and creatively in collaboration with a faculty mentor over an extended period of time and to culminate with a written paper and presentation. Thesis projects challenge students to draw on knowledge and abilities that they have developed throughout the course of their education and to apply them to an in-depth investigation of a chosen topic. Students develop their research, critical thinking, writing, and oral presentation skills through the thesis process; which in turn prepares students for their professional career as well as for graduate school. The Honors Thesis distinction and the project title are included on the transcript.

Projects may take a wide variety of forms and culminate in a creative work, a performance or exhibit, an original scientific manuscript or report, etc. Publication and presentation in discipline-specific outlets is strongly encouraged. Regardless of the discipline(s), topic(s), or nature of the project, **all** honors theses must include the following elements:

- Each thesis project must include **original, independent research or creative scholarship**.
- Each project must result in some kind of **written paper with interpretation and analysis**, even when the main focus of the project is in a technical, creative, or performance-based discipline. The final paper should be consistent with the standards of the discipline and appropriate in length to the scope of the project.
- Each project must be supervised and evaluated by a **UI faculty member** who will serve as the student's mentor.
- Each project must begin with a **thesis proposal** and must conclude with a **thesis presentation**.

Professional Expectations

The honors thesis (proposal, research/creative activity, final paper, and presentation) must meet the professional standards of the discipline and the expectations for advanced undergraduate effort. As an example, an honors thesis might encompass four credits of honors-level coursework equivalent to approximately 180 total hours of advanced undergraduate effort. The length of the written paper will vary and depend on the discipline and the project.

The honors thesis proposal must be reviewed by a faculty mentor and 2 additional faculty; and the final paper and presentation must be evaluated by a majority of a 3-person, faculty thesis committee as “meeting or exceeding professional expectations in the discipline.” Students are encouraged to present their research and creative scholarship in public venues such as symposia, conferences, expos, forums, and the UI Research Expo, typically held in mid-April. The student must communicate with his or her mentor regularly to ensure that the project is meeting expectations and proceeding according to

schedule. If problems or concerns arise, the student and/or the faculty mentor should consult immediately with the UHP Director.

Selecting and Working With a Thesis Adviser

It is the responsibility of the student to seek out an appropriately qualified faculty mentor and obtain their consent to serve in that role. The mentor and project should be identified at least three semesters prior to graduation. Students should be aware that service in the faculty mentor role is entirely voluntary. Bearing in mind the voluntary nature of this commitment, student researchers should always be prompt, courteous, and respectful of their faculty mentor's time. Throughout the project, students should be prepared to carry out independent research, keep appointments, meet deadlines, and present well-written and carefully edited documents to their faculty mentor. Students should develop a schedule and a system of communication with the faculty mentor during the project period that will allow for an appropriate balance of mentor guidance and student independence. In many cases, regular weekly or biweekly meetings are optimal to keep the project on track.

In turn, the thesis adviser will mentor the student in developing a proposal, conducting the research or creative activity, and providing feedback on the writing and presentation. In addition, the faculty mentor will guide the student in registering for the appropriate number of departmental or honors thesis credits to be undertaken each semester. For example, one student might sign up for 4 credits of honors thesis during their last semester on campus. Another student might sign up for 1 credit of honors thesis (proposal preparation) spring semester junior year, 2 credits (research) fall semester senior year, and 1 credit (writing and presentation) spring semester senior year. Or, another student who is modifying a completed departmental capstone research project, might sign up for 1-2 honors thesis credits to complete any remaining pieces required to adapt it to meet Honors Thesis requirements.

Choosing and Developing a Thesis Topic

The honors thesis requires thoughtful and sustained collaboration between the student researcher and a faculty mentor. Students should explore possible research topics that reflect their interests and preparation, pick an interesting topic, and identify the knowledge, experience, and skills needed to complete the project. The faculty mentor may advise enrolling in an appropriate research methods course before embarking upon the project.

The student must work to define and focus the research or creative project, including developing a good proposal and a clear and reasonable timetable to assure that the project can be completed within the time frame allotted. Students are encouraged to work closely with their mentor to develop a strong proposal.

The student must consult with the faculty mentor to determine if the project requires approval from a University review committee. Projects involving research on human subjects must receive approval from the UI Institutional Review Board (IRB). Similarly, if the research will involve vertebrate animals, infectious agents, hazardous chemicals, radioactive materials, recombinant DNA, and/or patents and copyrights, the student will need to submit his/her research protocol to the appropriate University review committee for approval. In some cases, the faculty mentor may already have obtained approval for the research or creative project.

If the thesis project requires funding, options should be discussed with the adviser or the direction or scope of work may need to be adjusted. The UHP does not have funding to support honors thesis projects. For possible research funding, the student should work with the faculty mentor to explore a funding source and to develop a budget proposal, showing estimated research expenses for books, materials, equipment, and student travel. For undergraduate research conducted at locations outside the Moscow area, the faculty mentor may need to help identify the resources that will be available at the location of the research, including specific individuals who can guide the student.

Thesis Steps and Timeline

The required steps to complete the thesis and suggested timeline with due dates are outlined below. Please note that timelines and the number of course credits can vary from student to student and also from project to project.

Student Responsibilities

Thesis Initiation (typically completed during junior year)

- Select a faculty member who is willing to mentor the thesis project.
- Research potential topics, discuss topic options with the mentor, and select a thesis topic.

Proposal Development

- Develop a thesis proposal with a detailed calendar including goals and target completion dates, submit it to the faculty mentor for review and feedback, and receive verbal approval to proceed.
- Submit the proposal to two additional faculty members who have agreed to review and provide written and/or oral feedback. Then, in collaboration with the mentor, decide how to incorporate their feedback and provide a written response to each reviewer.
- Submit a paper copy and an electronic copy of the proposal along with the Honors Thesis Proposal Approval Form (see p. 8 of this document) to the UHP Director (honors@uidaho.edu). The preferred timetable for submission is typically during the junior year, but *no later than October 1* for spring graduation and no later than **April 1** for fall graduation.

Paper and Presentation

- Conduct work on the thesis project or creative activity
- Develop a draft thesis, by the agreed upon due date, and submit it to the faculty mentor for review and feedback
- Make revisions and then get oral approval from the mentor to proceed with scheduling the presentation.
- Schedule the thesis presentation during the Honors Program Research Forum to be held the second week of November or the first week of April each semester. The presentations are open to all students and invited guests.
- Present the thesis in the biannual Honors Program Research and Creative Activity Forum to include a committee composed of the mentor and two members of the Honors Program Committee (coordinated by the Honors Program). If preferred, two faculty members approved by the faculty mentor may serve as committee members in lieu of members of the Honors Program Committee. The presentation will be approximately 30 minutes with 3 printed copies of the thesis available for review by the committee and the attendees. At the end of the presentation, the committee (led by the faculty mentor) will excuse the attendees and discuss

the thesis. The majority of the committee must approve the thesis as “meeting or exceeding professional expectations.” If the student fails to meet thesis expectations, then the faculty mentor and thesis committee will define what additional effort is needed, which could include substantial editing of the thesis and possibly a second presentation.

- Submit a paper copy and an electronic copy of the thesis along with the Honors Thesis Approval Form (see p. 9 of this document) to the UHP Director at honors@uidaho.edu. Final papers must follow the Formatting Guidelines for the Honors Thesis (see p. 10 of this document). The **submission deadline** is the last Friday prior to exam week in the semester of your graduation from the UI. Approved electronic theses will be archived in a searchable data base within the UI Library.

Outline for Honors Thesis Proposal and Final Paper

The headings and organizational outline for the Thesis Proposal and for the Final Thesis Manuscript may vary according to discipline, but must meet the expectations of the faculty mentor and follow the Formatting Guidelines for the UHP Honors Thesis. The outlines below are only examples.

Thesis Proposal Outline

- Title page
- Abstract
- Brief background on the project
- Research objectives, questions and hypotheses (as appropriate) or description of the original research component or creative scholarship of your project
- Research, data analysis methodology, and relevance to society, if pertinent
- A detailed calendar with goals and target completion dates
- Literature/references

Final Thesis Outline

- Title page
- Abstract
- Acknowledgements (optional)
- Introduction and background
- Objectives/questions/hypotheses
- Materials and Methods
- Results
- Conclusion
- References

Alternative Approaches to Completing an Honors Thesis

Many UHP students typically complete a required senior capstone course/project, departmental thesis, Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU), or another type of research or creative activity over a summer or several semesters. With approval by a faculty mentor and the UHP Director, capstone projects and other research or creative experiences may be modified and used in partial fulfillment of the honors thesis requirement. Students must still complete all of the required components for an honors thesis and make a presentation at the Honors Program Research Forum. As a first step, the

student should discuss their ideas to adapt a capstone project, REU, departmental research, departmental thesis, or other experience with a faculty mentor. Then, the student should submit an Honors Thesis Proposal Approval Form to the UHP Director, outlining the proposed project, describing their role in the project as a researcher, writer, and presenter, and with signature approval by the faculty mentor. The UHP Director may meet with the student and mentor to discuss the modified thesis.

Example 1 is for a student who completed a formal 8-10 week summer Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) experience which entailed writing a proposal, conducting research, writing a final report, and presenting a final poster. The student would meet with their thesis mentor to discuss how the REU experience might be adapted to meet the honors thesis requirements. The faculty adviser would then approve the adaptation confirming that parts of the REU experience met the expectations of the Honors thesis. If there were missing components, the student might sign up for 1-2 credits of honors thesis research and possibly re-write the paper to meet Honors thesis requirements and then present it at the Honors Program Research Forum and receive committee approval.

Example 2 is for a student who completed a senior engineering group capstone project which entailed designing a research project, conducting research, writing a culminating group paper, and making a group presentation. The student would meet with their faculty mentor to discuss how the capstone experience might be adapted to meet the honors thesis requirements. The faculty adviser would then need to approve the adaptation confirming that parts of the engineering capstone experience met the expectations of the honors thesis. If there were missing components, the student might sign up for 1-3 credits of honors thesis research, complete additional independent research or literature work, re-write the paper to meet honors thesis requirements, and then present it at an Honors Program Research Forum and receive committee approval.

The Role of the Faculty Mentor

Every senior thesis/project requires thoughtful and sustained collaboration between the student and a faculty mentor. It is the responsibility of the student to seek out an appropriately qualified faculty mentor and obtain their written consent to serve in that role. We strongly encourage faculty members to mentor no more than two undergraduate research or creative projects per semester, to ensure that individual students receive sufficient guidance and supervision for their research. The essential responsibilities of the faculty mentor are outlined below.

Eligibility

All tenured and tenure-track UI faculty members are eligible to serve as faculty mentors for honors theses. Non-tenure-track faculty and affiliate faculty may become mentors with the approval of their department chair. Faculty members at other institutions and individuals who are not faculty members but who hold appropriate academic credentials and have special knowledge or expertise appropriate to the proposed project may become faculty mentors with the approval of an appropriate department chair and UHP Director prior to developing the proposal.

Responsibilities of the Faculty Adviser/Mentor:

Thesis Initiation

- Help the student explore possible topics that reflect the student's interests and preparation.
- Help the student define and focus the project and develop a schedule to assure that the project is completed within the time frame allotted.
- Identify the knowledge, experience, and skills the student needs to complete the project. The faculty mentor may advise the student to enroll in an appropriate research methods course before embarking upon the project.
- Help the student determine if his/her project will require approval from a University review committee. Any projects involving research on human subjects must receive approval from the UI Institutional Review Board (IRB). Similarly, if the research will involve vertebrate animals, infectious agents, hazardous chemicals, radioactive materials, recombinant DNA, and/or patents and copyrights, the student will need to submit his/her research protocol to the appropriate University review committee for approval. In some cases, the faculty mentor may already have obtained approval for the research project.
- If the student is conducting research away from UI-Moscow, discuss and identify the resources that will be available at the location of the research, including specific individuals to whom the student can turn for guidance.
- Develop a time frame and a method of communication with the student during the project period that will allow for an appropriate balance of mentor guidance and student independence. Weekly or every other week meetings or check-ins could help the student stay on schedule.
- Communicate with the UHP Director if you note problems with the student's work or fear an inability to complete the thesis in the scheduled time frame.
- Mentor the student through the thesis project.
- Guide the student in registering for the appropriate number of departmental or honors thesis credits to be undertaken each semester.
- Encourage the student to stay on schedule and to be accountable.
- Maintain standards expected for an honors student (an advanced undergraduate, but not a graduate student) in your discipline.

Research Proposal

- Discuss the features of an excellent proposal, to include guidance on content, quality, format, and length of the final paper.
- If the thesis requires funding, discuss options for finding funding or redefine the direction or scope of work. Unfortunately, the UHP does not have funding to support honors theses.
- Review and provide timely feedback on the student's proposal. Approve the proposal prior to review by two additional faculty members. Then, assist the student in considering the additional feedback from the two faculty and how to respond to their comments. Keep in mind that the proposal should be understandable to faculty from widely ranging fields.
- Approve and sign the Honors Thesis Proposal Approval Form to be submitted to the UHP Director.

Final Paper and Presentation

- Mentor the student in the research, creative activity and writing phases.
- Review and provide feedback on the student's final paper.

- Give oral approval to proceed with scheduling the presentation during the biannual Honors Program Research and Creative Activity Forum
- Coordinate the thesis presentation with the thesis committee, composed of the mentor and two members of the Honors Program Committee (coordinated by the Honors Program). If preferred, two faculty members approved by the faculty mentor may serve as committee members in lieu of members of the Honors Program Committee. The presentation will be approximately 30 minutes with 3 printed copies of the thesis available for review by attendees. At the end of the presentation, the committee (led by the faculty mentor) will excuse the attendees and discuss the thesis. The majority of the committee must approve the thesis as “meeting or exceeding professional expectations.” If the student fails to meet thesis expectations, then the faculty mentor and thesis committee should define what additional effort is needed, which could include substantial editing of the thesis and possibly a second presentation.
- Complete pertinent segments of the Honors Thesis Approval Form.
- Assist the student in identifying possible and appropriate publication outlets and presentation forums. The College of Science Student Research Expo held in October and the UI Research Expo held in mid-April are excellent options for presentations and posters.
- Assist the student with any final edits prior to submission to the UHP Director. The paper must follow the formatting and submission guidelines for the UHP Honors Thesis (see p.10 of this document).

Parts of this document were adapted with permission from the Davidson Honors College, “Senior Honors Research Project,” University of Montana, Missoula, Montana and from the Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology, “Senior Thesis Syllabus and Survival Guide,” University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho.

Honors Thesis Proposal Approval Form

Must be completed before beginning Honors Thesis

Submission deadlines: No later than October 1 or April 1 for spring or fall graduation

Student Name: _____ **UI email:** _____

Attach a copy of your Honors Thesis Proposal which must meet the expectations described in the "Requirements and Guidelines for the Honors Thesis."

Honors Thesis Title:

Faculty Mentor name: _____ **Faculty Department:** _____

Faculty Mentor Signature (indicating willingness to mentor the student and approval of the proposal):

_____ **Date:** _____

Tenure Track:

Non-tenure track:

Non-UI faculty:

A department chair's approval and signature is required for non-tenure track or non-UI faculty:

Department Chair Signature (if needed): _____ **Date:** _____

Names of faculty who reviewed the proposal (signature not required): Attach a summary copy of all faculty review comments and how those comments were addressed.

Faculty 1: _____

Faculty 2: _____

Faculty Mentor: Briefly specify anticipated thesis outcomes, length and format of written paper, and any other specific requirements that should be documented for completion of the Honors Thesis.

Faculty Mentor: Please indicate the department, course number(s), and anticipated number of credits that will be required to complete the Honors Thesis. After approval by the Honors Program Director, the department may open the specified course(s) with the HON designation. Example courses could be departmental undergraduate "research," "directed study," "special topics" etc.

UHP Director's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Honors Thesis Approval Form

To be submitted after completing Honors Thesis Project and Presentation

Student Name: _____ **UI email:** _____

Attach a copy of your Honors Thesis which must meet the written and formatting expectations described in the "Requirements and Guidelines for the Honors Thesis." In addition, send an electronic copy to honors@uidaho.edu.

Honors Thesis Title and Date of Presentation:

Faculty evaluation based on the Honors Thesis presentation and a brief review of the written paper shared at the presentation:

- Faculty Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____
_____ Meets professional expectations in the discipline
_____ Exceeds professional expectations in the discipline (Thesis with Distinction)
_____ Does not meet professional expectations in the discipline

- Faculty Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____
_____ Meets professional expectations in the discipline
_____ Exceeds professional expectations in the discipline (Thesis with Distinction)
_____ Does not meet professional expectations in the discipline

Faculty mentor evaluation based on the project or creative activity, written paper, and presentation.

- Mentor Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____
_____ Meets professional expectations in the discipline
_____ Exceeds professional expectations in the discipline (Thesis with Distinction)
_____ Does not meet professional expectations in the discipline

General comments by the faculty mentor on the Honors Thesis and presentation.

UHP Director's signature of approval: _____ Date: _____

Honors Thesis Formatting and Submission Guidelines

All Honors Thesis submissions must include a **title page** and an **abstract** in the format described below. The UHP recommends Times New Roman, Calibri, or Arial font, 12-point. You may wish to use **section headings or chapter titles** to structure the content of your paper. You should include a **bibliography** or list of **works cited** at the end of your paper, using the citation style that is appropriate for your discipline. You may also wish to include **acknowledgements** and a **table of contents**, especially for longer papers. Consult with your faculty mentor relative to the appropriate format for your Honors Thesis.

First page:

TITLE [ALL CAPS AND DOUBLE SPACED]

By

FULL LEGAL NAME [ALL CAPS, INCLUDING FIRST, MIDDLE, AND LAST NAME]

Undergraduate Honors Thesis

University Honors Program

University of Idaho

Moscow, ID

Official Graduation Date (**Example:** May 2015, August 2015 or December 2015)

Approved by:

Faculty Mentor Name

Faculty Mentor Department

Second page:

ABSTRACT

Last Name, First Name, Degree, Major, Graduation Month and Year
[Example: Sample, Sally, B.A., Anthropology, May 2014]

Faculty Mentor: Faculty Mentor Name
[Example: John R. Lloyd]

Title [using caps]

[Abstract – Single spaced, one page, 0.5 inch paragraph indent, no more than 350 words.

Third page:

Title [using caps]

Body of honor thesis. Indent the first line of each paragraph by 0.5 inches. Use 1.5 line spacing throughout the main body of the document. Do not add extra spaces between paragraphs.

Adapted with permission from the Davidson Honors College, University of Montana, Missoula Montana.