

Procedures for Faculty Serving on Honors Thesis or Project Committees

THE HONORS PROGRAM THESIS OR PROJECT	1
WHO SHOULD BE ON A COMMITTEE?	1
THE FIRST HALF OF THESIS/PROJECT: HONR 400R: HONORS CAPSTONE	2
THE SECOND HALF OF THESIS/PROJECT: HONR 498R/499R.....	2
ROLE OF THE CHAIR	2
ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS/READERS	3
PROGRESS REPORTS AND GRADES	3
<i>Students earning an A grade</i>	3
<i>Students earning a B grade</i>	4
ORAL DEFENSE	5
STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES	5

The Honors Program Thesis or Project

The Honors Program senior thesis or project is the capstone to the student's undergraduate experience in the Honors Program.

- The *thesis* is a more traditional two-semester project, which results in 40-50 pages of writing that results from in-depth research and analysis on a topic approved by the student's Committee.
- The *project* is a significant research or creative endeavor: an experiential, artistic, data-driven, or laboratory project with a public component, e.g., a performance, conference presentation, seminar or class presentation, exhibition, workshop, poster session, publication in an academic or creative journal, etc. on a topic approved by the student's Committee.

In other words, it is less substantial than a Master's thesis, but more so than a final project in an undergraduate course. It may be a publishable project, but it is not required that it reach that level of sophistication. It may be scientific or social science research, technical products, creative endeavors, major service or humanitarian contributions, or intensive analysis of historical, literary, or philosophical events, texts, or ideas. A thesis or project should be the student's choice but it should be the most developed effort of their undergraduate years.

Who Should Be on A Committee?

The student is free to select **two or three professors or mentors** from any department who they feel will best guide the research/planning and writing/presentation on their topic. The Chair should hold **any full-time faculty or staff position** and we recommend the chair hold a terminal degree in their discipline. Other committee members have more flexible requirements, but students are discouraged from asking part-time/adjunct faculty to serve on Honors committees due to their inability to guarantee their employment at UVU during consecutive semesters. It is also acceptable for students to recruit business leaders, community members, or other experts to serve on their committee, but the chair should be a full-time faculty member.

Frequently, the Honors Program student proposes interdisciplinary theses or projects, which bring together several areas of interest and which might not encompass a specific program. For these

interdisciplinary topics, the student is encouraged to find Committee members whose field of expertise complements that of the Faculty Chair.

The First Half of Thesis/Project: HONR 400R: Honors Capstone

During the first semester, the student:

- Begins the research or formulates a thesis or project plan
- Selects a committee of appropriate faculty or staff members, business or artistic leaders, or community members
- Devises the thesis or project question, laboratory research, survey, community engagement plan, or presentation plans, including Institutional Review Board applications (if needed).
- Obtains committee approval for the thesis or project from committee members
- Creates an annotated bibliography
- Creates a formal proposal that is reviewed by the Honors Director and the committee
- Completes a detailed outline and timeline

For an Honors Thesis, the proposal and outline should be detailed enough to indicate the student is ready to begin the writing/project process. The outline should provide a strong sense of the arguments the thesis will make and begin to grapple with the evidence, theory, or contexts used to support those arguments, as well as discuss the methodology that the student will use.

For an Honors Project, the student should develop a clear outline or task sequence and should include a detailed timeline, including aspects such as a laboratory, rehearsal, or creation schedule, supplies, space needs, and other logistics.

The Second Half of Thesis/Project: HONR 498R/499R

During the second semester, the student:

- Revises drafts of the thesis and or/ completion and presentation of the project
- Works with chair and faculty committee members to revise and shape according to feedback
- Submits a complete version to the committee at least one weeks prior to the Oral Defense
- Present the thesis or project work via an Oral Defense
 - Project students also publicly present the work through performance, exhibition, workshop, paper session, poster session or similar undertaking, although this presentation may occur after the semester concludes
- The student's Committee Members and the Honors Director (or designate) attend the Defense, both to support the student and to evaluate the student in comparison to other Honors students.

Role of the Chair

The primary responsibility of the Chair is to play an active role in guiding the student toward appropriate sources, methods and approaches to the topic. ***It is a sustained mentoring task.*** By signing the electronic Committee Agreement, the faculty member agrees to

- Meet with the student regularly during both semesters for mentoring purposes
- Advise the student on appropriate research directions or presentation parameters
- Provide timely feedback on written work (bibliography, proposal, outlines, drafts)
- Suggest revisions which should be incorporated into the final version or presentation
- Sign any Progress Report forms
- Participate in the final Oral Defense (see following sections for additional details)
- Sign the signature/approval page of the completed thesis or project summary

- **The Chair will earn an Honorarium of \$500, to be paid by Honors after the student's Oral Defense**, as well as a formal letter of acknowledgement.

For many students, it is helpful if the Chair and student set a detailed schedule of due dates throughout the course of the semester, rather than the single deadline for a completed draft.

The Honors Thesis or Project is obviously not a Masters level undertaking and typically the student has not completed a research project of this scope before. While the research or creation may come easily to the student, turning that into a well-organized 40+ page thesis, a significant investigation or data collection project, or polished artistic or applied presentation is often more of a challenge and can require multiple drafts or iterations.

Role of the Committee Members/Readers

Though the Committee members may play a substantially smaller role than the Chair in guiding the thesis or project, the student is still expected to seek the input of all Committee members and keep them apprised of the research, planning, and completion status throughout the two-semester span. The guidance Committee members can offer includes:

- Monthly meetings (recommended, though these can take place more or less often at the discretion of each Committee Member)
- Offer comments and feedback for revisions and progress
- Sign the Progress Report form(s)
- Participate in the final Oral Defense (see following sections for additional details)
- Consult with the Chair in the assignment of grades
- Sign the signature page of the completed thesis or project
- Committee Members receive a formal letter of acknowledgment that details the scope of the mentoring task they have completed.

Under no circumstances is a Committee Member obligated to sign off on a thesis or project that he or she has not been given the opportunity to read/see and comment on prior to its final version.

Progress Reports and Grades

In the first semester (HONR 400R), *the student will ask the Chair to sign a Progress Report indicating the student has submitted the thesis/project work* (annotated bibliography/proposal/outline or detailed plan); and has been meeting with the Chair and Committee Members on a regular basis.

At the end of the first semester, the Honors Director assigns a letter grade for the Capstone course (HONR 400R) based on the student's level of achievement, timely submission of work, and other measures. The full range of grades, from A to E, is available.

At the end of the second semester, the final grade is based on assessment of the completed thesis or project and is negotiated by the Honors Director, the Chair, and the Committee member(s) at the Oral Defense. The signatures of the Chair and Committee are required on the signature page of the final version.

Earning an A grade

To earn an "A" on their Honors Thesis or Project, a student should have

- A strong record of **commitment to developing research/technical/artistic skills** and knowledge as part of their Honors Thesis/Project

- Strong **evidence of initiative, independence, and critical thinking**
- The work must be excellent. In general, the faculty sentiment about the work will be “This is high quality throughout and clearly represents *work above what is expected of a typical undergraduate* in this major.”
- The final version of the written portion of the work must be **well-written, well-organized, and properly documented.**
 - ***For research theses/projects:***
 - Clearly conveys importance of topic or question
 - Uses strong methodological or theoretical choices and sources
 - Reveals critical analysis of the subject matter, findings, as well as description of ideas or data
 - Shows clear quality of analysis and interpretation of results
 - Impresses readers with overall quality of finished product
 - ***For applied/creative projects:***
 - Clearly conveys importance of topic/subject matter
 - Shows originality, innovation, and/or unusual creativity
 - Displays clear quality of execution
 - Contributes meaningfully to the student’s field/community/discipline
 - Reveals strong understanding of applied or creative processes for this discipline
 - Impresses readers/audiences with overall quality of finished product

A student who truly excels at earning the A grade should be nominated by their chair or committee members for the ***Honors Program Outstanding Thesis/Project Award, an annual award of \$250.*** Faculty on committees will receive an email invitation to nominate students when a defense is scheduled.

Students earning a B grade

- A record of **commitment to developing research/technical/artistic skills** and knowledge as part of their Honors Thesis/Project
- **Evidence of initiative and growing field-related knowledge**
- The completed work must be solid and competent
- The final version of the written portion of the work must be generally **well-written, well-organized, and properly documented.**
 - ***For research theses/projects:***
 - Conveys importance of topic or question
 - Uses solid methodological or theoretical choices and sources
 - Reveals some critical analysis of the subject matter, findings, as well as description of ideas or data
 - Shows some quality of analysis and interpretation of results
 - Reveals overall good quality of finished product
 - ***For applied/creative projects:***
 - Conveys importance of topic/subject matter
 - Shows some originality and innovation
 - Displays quality of execution
 - Contributes to the student’s field/community/discipline
 - Reveals understanding of applied or creative processes for this discipline

- Readers/audiences perceive overall quality of finished product

Oral Defense

The conclusion of the thesis or project is a 30-60 minute oral defense with the student, Chair, Committee members, and Honors Program Director (or designate) in attendance. Guests may also attend. The defense should take place after all Committee members have read the Defense Draft (a version of the thesis/project that is complete pending small revisions). The last possible date for defenses is generally the last day of finals week.

The oral defense provides the student an opportunity to present the thesis or reflect on the project, entering into a scholarly dialogue. The defense often takes the form of a discussion of the ideas in the thesis or project, but it may also incorporate material from the student's related course work. This event provides the student a chance to explain the approach to the thesis or project and to consider the success of the findings or results. The student is responsible for turning in a completed signature page and printed final version of the thesis or project to the Honors Program within a week after the Oral Defense.

Student Responsibilities

The student's responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Maintain good communication with the Chair, Committee members, and Honors Director
- Attend thesis/project course meetings (in home department or in Honors, as needed)
- Submit drafts and plans to both the Chair and Committee members on or before the agreed upon deadlines
- Obtain signatures on the progress report
- Turn in required forms and completed documents (the Final Version) to Honors on or before posted deadlines.
- Schedule the final Oral Defense with all Committee members and Honors Director
- Obtain signatures of the Chair and Committee members prior to the final deadline