

## THE HONORS THESIS: AN OVERVIEW

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As is the case in all Honors programs in the country, a requirement for graduation from OSU's University Honors College is completion of a senior thesis or project. The senior thesis is both a culmination and a stepping-stone; it will be one of the most rewarding achievements of your time at OSU. This thesis requirement will be considered complete when the student has defended an acceptable thesis or project, has performed satisfactorily in an oral examination based on the thesis or project, and has provided a suitably bound copy to the UHC by **Friday of "dead week"** of the term he/she plans to graduate. A digital copy is required at the same time, as is a signed release form as all UHC theses are catalogued in the Valley Library. (Summer deadlines are indexed to 1-week session.)

All Honors students must enroll in HC 403 (1 credit P/N) Introduction to Thesis course, normally not later than their junior year. To pass the class, a signed Thesis Proposal must be received during finals week. Thereafter, the student bears responsibility not only for their own progress but also for maintaining regularly scheduled progress reports and meetings with their mentor. **Your relationship with your mentor is crucial.**

The thesis/project will be conducted under the supervision of a mentor selected by the student and with two other experts. The mentor and at least one other member of the committee will be a tenure-track faculty member or senior instructor in the department of the student's major. **Because the mentorship is a critical part of the student's UHC experience, the mentor should be chosen carefully.** Interdisciplinary projects are acceptable, but one faculty member must agree to act as a mentor (co-mentors are acceptable). The two-thirds rule is that two of the three members of the committee must be senior instructor or tenure-track and the third may be any expert agreed to by the mentor. There are no guidelines beyond their expertise and they represent the field, the community or the research area.

No later than the first part of their senior year, the student will register for and be graded in four to six credits of 401 (research), or 403 (thesis) in their major academic department, (*an HC designator may be used as a default if no departmental designator is appropriate*). For interdisciplinary theses, consult your mentor for the appropriate designator. The credit is to allow you time for the research and will be counted toward UHC requirement. Departments may also count research credits toward their requirements and they may accept more than six credits, check with your mentor.

Some departments already have a thesis/project as a graduation requirement. In such cases, the department and the UHC will coordinate their requirements so that the student is NOT required to do two such projects. Ask if you face two such prospects.

The thesis is normally a significant written effort in a style appropriate to the discipline under the supervision of the mentor. It is based on the research project undertaken by the student. The student's grade in the 401 or 403 course will be based in part on the thesis (either A – F or Pass – No Pass). The thesis will be suitably bound and will become a permanent part of the UHC and catalogued in the Valley Library. The deadline is firm.

The project may be a laboratory experiment, an engineering construction, artistic creation, musical composition, or other acceptable scholarly project. Original or secondary research is acceptable. If the nature of the project is such that it cannot become a permanent part of the UHC collection, the student must prepare an appropriate permanent written record of the project (may include photographs or a video/audio tape) that explains the project, its background and significance; this written material, suitably bound, need not have the organization or structure of a full thesis, but will accompany the record of the project in the UHC archives.

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Group projects are acceptable, however each Honors student in the group must submit an individual written report or thesis and sit for an individualized examination.

An oral presentation and examination will be required for each thesis and project. The examining committee will consist of the three members: The mentor, another faculty member from the major department (or an allied department, in the case of interdisciplinary projects), and a third member acceptable to the mentor, are the “committee” referred to in this and other documents. The exam shall consist of an oral presentation, usually in a public setting to which other faculty and students are invited, followed by a closed session in which the student is questioned about the thesis or project by the examining committee. The “examination copy” of the thesis must be given to all committee members in advance (10-14 days is optimal, any less is risky).

The examining committee may recommend: (a) pass (b) fail, or (c) recess the examination until a later date. The committee may recommend a conditional pass if relatively minor modifications to the thesis or project are necessary.

It is impossible to anticipate all the variation of senior theses or projects that may be acceptable for UHC students. These guidelines can be modified to suit individual projects with the prior approval of the UHC Dean.

Please share this document with the three members of your committee and retain for future reference. Mentor Guidelines are available in the UHC that you should share with your mentor as you seek his/her cooperation.

As you move through your coursework, keep an eye out for potential thesis projects, and to the extent that it is feasible, begin to collect materials as early as you have some idea of your focus.

The thesis seeks to discover new information, data or insight and the process assumes considerable individual responsibility.

A small reimbursement stipend is available from the **Honors Excellence Fund** to help defray the cost of your work. As the Excellence Fund relies on private contributions, the amount of the stipend will be limited until the Excellence Fund is fully endowed. The application process is simple, but is based on a reimbursement principle for expenses incurred and requires the mentor’s signature.

All thesis documents are available online at: <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/honors/students/thesis/>