Table of Contents:

Beginning the Thesis:
- What should mentors and students discuss at the beginning of the thesis project?
- What constitutes an Honors Thesis?
- What is my time commitment?
- What if I do not have time to support my student as much as is needed?
- How does a student turn a group project into an Honors Thesis?

Making Progress on the Thesis:
- What does good progress on the Honors Thesis look like?
- What form does an Honors Thesis take? What elements are required and what citation style should be used?
- How do thesis credits work and how should I assign a grade?
- Who can serve on an Honors Thesis Committee?

Preparing for the Defense:
- How does the honors thesis defense work?
- Does a UHC representative need to be present for the defense?
- What is the thesis poster?
- What is the process for submitting the final thesis?
Mentor FAQs for beginning the thesis:

What should mentors and students discuss at the beginning of the thesis project?
Ensure you and your student have reviewed the agreement and timeline included within the submitted thesis proposal. Knowing your student’s desired thesis completion date and expectations will help you guide the student to timely completion. Keep in mind these firm deadlines:
- The examination copy of the thesis must be distributed to thesis committee members at least ten days before the scheduled defense.
- The final version of the thesis (bound, signed, and conforming to the formatting guidelines) must be submitted to the UHC office no later than 5pm on Friday of Week 10 in order for the student to graduate that term.

What constitutes an Honors Thesis?
The goal is to engage honors students in a direct and participatory learning experience. The Honors Thesis is a baccalaureate-level thesis, not merely an extended term paper. Think of it as similar in process to a Master’s project but at a level appropriate to undergraduates. Similar components are required (e.g., scholarly contribution grounded in current literature, preparation of a written thesis, defense of the thesis, participation of a thesis committee). The depth and extent, however, are not as great as one would expect for a Master’s thesis. The projects may be traditional research projects, a creative project, or a service-oriented exercise that is conceptually grounded in key concepts of a body of knowledge. The projects may be within a discipline or interdisciplinary. Team projects are acceptable though individual theses are required. Most students do a research/literature review appropriate in their discipline, and offer a recommendation/thesis statement in part based on that knowledge. We encourage students to understand the expectations of research in their discipline before beginning their project and to shape the project accordingly.

What is my time commitment?
It is difficult to give a precise answer to this question, as it will always depend on the nature of the project, your style, and the needs of the student. Thesis projects typically progress through 2-3 terms. You and your student may choose to meet weekly, or more or less frequently depending on the stage of the project and your needs. As the defense nears, you will need to make time to provide guidance on the written document itself, including some editing as needed.

What if I do not have time to support my student as much as is needed?
The UHC provides thesis courses, writing workshops, poster workshops, and other opportunities to help with general concerns, but the mentor is the primary resource for the student’s specific thesis project. Is there someone else you know and trust who can help out—perhaps a research assistant, graduate student, post doc, or another professor? Ultimately, if you cannot help your student as much as needed, you need to have that conversation with your student and establish an alternative path forward. In some cases, that might mean finding a new mentor.

How does a student turn a group project into an Honors Thesis?
In some areas, like many Engineering disciplines, group projects are common and perfectly acceptable by UHC standards, provided that the UHC student is integral and provides the unique contributions necessary for a thesis project and if that contribution can be written as an individual thesis. If the thesis has had multiple contributors, the student must identify their contributions within the written document. While the student may have a cooperative or even published project as their Honors Thesis, the proper format and bound product is still required in an acceptable thesis format.
Mentor FAQs for making progress on the thesis:

What does good progress on the Honors Thesis look like?
Recognizing that there are many pathways to successful completion of the thesis, you may find it helpful to consider the following progress indicators:

1. Literature research. By now, a student will typically have done a fair amount of the literature research necessary to provide the context for their project.
2. Methods/approach. Students should have mastered the methods necessary to complete the project. Research compliance issues should be resolved (see http://oregonstate.edu/research/ori/). Access to data sets, field plots, recording facilities, equipment, etc. should be resolved.
3. Data collection. For those projects that require data collection (from experiments, interviews, etc.), students should be making good progress and either be finished or expect to finish soon in order to allow plenty of time for data analysis and writing of the thesis.

The required thesis proposal, agreement, and timeline that you and your student completed at the beginning of the process outlines expectations. If you haven’t seen any work from your thesis student, this is the perfect opportunity to contact them and request a meeting. If you need assistance locating or communicating with your student please contact a UHC advisor at uhcadvisor@oregonstate.edu or 541-737-6400.

What form does an Honors Thesis take? What elements are required and what citation style should be used?
The most common elements include an introduction to the question and why it is relevant, an analysis of information, and a discussion of the analysis. However, the UHC relies solely on the thesis mentor and committee members to determine what elements are required in a thesis/project relevant to the discipline. Style and citation should follow the disciplinary standard (e.g., APA, IEEE, MLA, etc.). The UHC provides students with resources that outline the specific pre-text pages, approval, binding, and paper requirements of the thesis.

If the nature of the thesis is such that it cannot become a permanent part of the UHC collection (e.g. a musical performance or work of art) the student must prepare an appropriate written record including photographs or audio/video tape of the product, as appropriate. The supporting written material should explain the project, its background and significance. This written material, suitably bound, does not have to be structured like a full thesis, but will accompany the record of the project in the UHC archives.

How do thesis credits work and how should I assign a grade?
Students are required to complete a minimum of 3-6 credit hours towards their thesis (the equivalent of 1-2 courses). For one credit, a student should expect to spend a total of 3 hours/week on the project.

We prefer that students sign up for undergraduate research credits (usually under the course number 401, 402, 403, or 406) in your department so that the department will get credit for the student credit hours that are generated, and so the student’s transcript will show the discipline of their work. As mentor, you simply need to assign a grade and the UHC will confer (or withhold) Honors credit. If research credits are not available in your department, your student can sign up for Honors Thesis credit (HC 401 or HC 403).

You should expect to grade the effort at the end of each term. Research can be graded either P/N or A-F (the latter is the default for HC 401 and HC 403). In assigning a grade, you can consider the level of effort, the quality of the work, the initiative and originality, progress, and other factors that are relevant to completion of the thesis.

Who can serve on an Honors Thesis Committee?
If you and your student have not yet identified the other two members of the committee, this would be a good time to get the remaining members on board. A three-person committee is required (larger committees are optional); it consists of a mentor (major professor) and two others. The UHC has what we refer to as the “2/3s rule.” The mentor and one other committee member must be at the rank of tenured or tenure-track faculty or senior instructor, while the third member may be anyone the mentor considers an expert (e.g., post doc, research associate, clinical professor, or community-based expert such as a physician or practitioner of a profession). The mentor has approval responsibility for the third committee member; the UHC will not be involved in deciding whether they meet any set of criteria. Should the third person be a faculty member at another institution or otherwise be located away from campus, they must still participate in the thesis defense in person or via video/telephone conference connections--whatever mechanism works and does not impose undue expense on the student. Unfortunately, the UHC does not have funds available to help facilitate full committee participation.
Mentor FAQs for preparing for the defense:

How does the Honors Thesis defense work?
The Honors Thesis defense is typically scheduled in two-hour blocks, with the defense itself taking about 90 minutes. Students usually take the lead in finding a time and location that works for all committee members. Students are also responsible for notifying the UHC when the defense has been scheduled and bringing the necessary paperwork to the defense (approval page, thesis assessment forms, etc.).

The thesis defense is comparable in process to a Master’s defense although the substance and expectations are clearly at an undergraduate level. The presentation portion is open to any interested parties; the examination portion should be in “executive session” and the student is excused during committee deliberations.

A typical defense proceeds as follows:
1) The mentor calls the room to order and introduces the student to those in attendance
2) The student presents a summary of the thesis in no more than 30 minutes
3) The mentor invites the public to ask questions (for an open defense)
4) The mentor dismisses all but the committee members and student
5) The committee asks the student questions
6) The student is then excused while the committee confers
7) The student is invited to return to the room and is told of the committee’s decision and provided with necessary changes, corrections, and feedback

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

Does a UHC representative need to be present for the defense?
No, a UHC representative does not need to be present at the defense. Our advisors do their best to be in the audience during the open presentation but may not be available due to scheduling conflicts.

What is the thesis poster?
All students are required to create a poster presenting their thesis work. This poster is displayed at the UHC Thesis Poster Fair each May. Students have access to an online video tutorial to assist them in designing the poster and Student Multimedia Services provides free poster printing.

What is the process for submitting the final thesis?
After revisions have been made, students will prepare the thesis to be bound. Students must follow all the formatting requirements of the pre-text pages (title page, abstract, copyright, and approval page) as outlined on the UHC thesis website. It is important to note that signatures must be obtained before the copy is delivered to the UHC for the Dean’s signature. Students are also required to upload the final document to the OSU Scholar Archive.