

Lewis Honors College Honors Thesis Handbook Fall 2020 (v1.0)

About the Honors Thesis

Goals of an Honors Thesis

The Honors thesis provides a culmination to an Honors student's academic career. The Honors thesis should be an outgrowth of the student's academic work, rooted in their chosen discipline, in most cases in the student's major or minor. In cases where a student has multiple majors, minors, or interdisciplinary interests that are not captured in a major or minor, the student should work with their Honors academic advisor to identify an area that is supported by their academic work and direct them to relevant faculty.

The Honors thesis offers an opportunity - along with the responsibility - for a student to work with a faculty member on a research or creative project that integrates and expands on previous work. The Honors thesis will incorporate relevant, current research/previous work and demonstrate experience with design, execution, analysis, and presentation. An Honors thesis proposal must be submitted and approved by the faculty member advising the project and by the Lewis Honors College (proposals and the finished work needs to be submitted to your Honors academic advisor). *Students with specific questions are asked to contact their Honors advisor.*

The Honors thesis may take different forms based on the student's field of study. The product/output of the Honors thesis may take the form of a paper developed out of independent research done in a lab, a creative project with research into an artistic movement or period, an engineering design report outlining an original solution to a significant problem, or another similarly academic, discipline-specific project.

A major goal of an Honors thesis is for the student to demonstrate a command of the relevant research/discipline/creative area and to document their own personal contributions to the area in a discipline appropriate manner. Typically, the product/output of the Honors thesis is a written report and a public presentation, where the length and level of detail will vary depending on the discipline. For example, in fine arts the final performance or artwork would serve as the presentation and the written document would provide an explanation of or reflection on the creative process followed, demonstrating the information literacy of the student. With a full recital, the written document could be program notes, while a lecture recital would require a more extended paper.

Who approves an Honors Thesis?

The Honors thesis proposal must be approved by the faculty member advising the project, verifying that the length and scope of this project is appropriate for an Honors thesis from their discipline. The Lewis Honors College will certify completion of the thesis based on whether the student follows proposal directions in terms of completeness, requirements, and professionalism.

The Honors thesis final artifacts (written and oral) are also approved by the faculty member advising the project. The Lewis Honors College confirms the approval of the faculty advisor and that the final formatting of the written product is suitable for submission to [UKnowledge](#).

Students are expected to submit the Honors thesis product to [UKnowledge](#). In some cases, exceptions may be made for other considerations (e.g., confidentiality or future publication).

What requirements do all Honors Theses have in common?

An Honors thesis will consist of a written document and a public presentation and must be associated with a graded, 3 credit course, such as HON 491 or a departmental equivalent. (Referred to as the “Thesis Course” for the purpose of this Handbook.) Students are asked to reach out to their Honors academic advisor to find out if their major has a departmental equivalent or a suggested path for completing an Honors thesis in that major.

What are the departmental equivalent courses?

Some departments have courses that require a significant individual project, including both a written component and an oral presentation (e.g., BIO 398). With departmental or faculty approval, the product of this course may fulfill the Honors thesis requirement. All departments are encouraged to create their own courses to meet this requirement. The relevant thesis forms and the final product of this course must still be submitted to the Honors College as well as the department. Honors Academic Advisors can assist students in choosing the most optimal thesis plan.

Timeline and forms

The Honors thesis is generally expected to be completed in a student’s final year of undergraduate study. Copies of the necessary forms can be found below, on the Honors website and Academic Canvas page.

- In order to ensure fulfillment, students are required to submit the [Honors thesis agreement form](#) to their Honors Advisor one full year before graduation (ex. A student graduating in May 2022 should submit the form by the last day of the Spring 2021 semester). This form signifies an agreement between the Lewis Honors College, the student, and the faculty advisor to fulfill the mentorship, research, and creation responsibilities the thesis requires.
- An [Honors Proposal](#) is due to the LHC via your Honors Academic Advisor within two weeks of the start of your thesis course. Before submission the proposal should be reviewed and approved by your faculty advisor and will be archived within the Lewis Honors College.
- Final drafts of thesis are due in appropriate format, along with any necessary supplemental materials to the Lewis Honors College on the last day of the semester. The first page of your written document should follow the format found below. Occasionally, deadline extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis but will not be lengthened past the date of graduation.

Additional Resources

Additional resources can be found on the Honors website: <https://www.uky.edu/honors/honors-thesis>.

Suggested Four-Year Honors Thesis Plan

Below is a *recommended* schedule that will help a student plan for the successful completion of their Honors thesis. This schedule is focused on concrete action items; however students should keep in mind their academic, personal, and professional goals and work with their faculty and academic advisors to integrate them into their thesis plan.

FIRST YEAR

1. Acclimate to college, find extra-curriculars
2. Begin keeping thesis lists;
 - Questions, topics, thoughts that are interesting, gathered from classwork, social interactions, office hours, etc.
 - Faculty you respect, have had supportive interactions with, or are well recommended

SOPHOMORE YEAR

1. Begin informational interviews with potential faculty advisors
2. Start to look into funding opportunities, summer plans, and research process (e.g., how to complete the IRB process and proposal, how to transfer internship skills and knowledge into thesis work, etc.)

JUNIOR YEAR

1. Narrow thesis options down to approximately three topics
2. Meet with your Honors advisor in the spring semester to review thesis ideas and review the proposal process
3. Meet with potential faculty advisor(s)
4. Complete initial research into potential thesis topics to evaluate if there is enough existing material to complete thesis, maybe several brief annotated bibliographies

5. Submit an [Honors Thesis Agreement form](#) before the last day of the semester (one year before the expected graduation date)

SENIOR YEAR

1. Finalize any tasks needed to create your final thesis product
 - a. Complete research/data collection/creative project
 - b. Complete data analysis/reflection, make recommendations, draw conclusions
2. Take your Honors thesis course in the Fall or Spring semester
 - a. Complete and submit to your Honors advisor your [Honors Thesis Proposal](#), due within the first two weeks of the Honors thesis course.
 - b. Complete rough draft for review by faculty, following UKnowledge formatting requirements
 - c. Complete your final Honors thesis written product and oral presentation
3. Turn in the written output, including a cover page with the correct formatting to your advisor before the last week of classes in the semester you are graduating
4. Celebrate! You did it!

Honors Thesis Proposal

The majority of Honors Thesis Proposals should, in general, include the headings below, which are shown with potential corresponding section headings for your thesis. Please note, the actual headings in your Thesis will depend on the types of headings used in a thesis from your discipline. Please work closely with your faculty advisor to select the most appropriate headings. If you have completed, or are completing a similar proposal for another requirement, feel welcome to use as much shared language as fits these requirements. For example, because the third, fourth, and fifth sections of this proposal align with the three questions posed in the BIO 398 learning contract, a BIO 398 student could use the same answers for the learning contract and this thesis proposal.

Proposal	Thesis
Thesis Proposal Summary (250 words) – Provide an overview of the thesis project.	Abstract/Executive Summary (250 words) – Provide a summary of the entire thesis.
Introduction/Background – Explain the context and background necessary for a general reader, including your motivation and/or statement of intent.	Introduction/Background – Explain the context and background necessary for a general reader, including your motivation and/or statement of intent.
Objectives/Goals/Hypothesis – Clearly state what you hope to accomplish.	Objectives/Goals/Hypothesis – Clearly state what you hope to accomplish.
Methods/Procedure/Creative Approach – Detail the proposed method for carrying out this project. How will data be collected and analyzed? Is IRB required? What is the creative focus (for arts and humanities)?	Methods/Procedure/Creative Approach – Explain all of the materials and methods used.
Expected Results – What might the results of your research/creative work be? How could these results contribute to knowledge in the field? In other words, consider the question: Why does this work matter?	Results/Creative Output – Present the results of your thesis project.
Process/Timeline – What are the major components of your work and what is the expected timeline for completing each stage. Include details about how grades will be distributed and weighted.	Discussion/Reflection – Discuss the results of your project, whether it is a discussion about the results from a scientific study or a critical reflection on a creative project.
Conclusions – Offer concluding remarks to your thesis proposal.	Conclusions/Recommendations – To close your thesis, provide a conclusion and/or recommendation based on your thesis work.
Bibliography – List 8-10 sources in MLA, APA, or Chicago format that will support your research.	Bibliography – List 12+ sources in MLA, APA, or Chicago format that will support your research.

Student Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of the Honors thesis a student will be able to:

1. Clearly identify a project goal and/or problem and articulate a subsequent research question/hypothesis or creative objective.
2. Discover and evaluate existing research/previous work relevant to a project of interest.
3. Formulate a plan to achieve desired research or creative goals, while identifying opportunities to make improvements throughout the process.
4. Recognize the importance of meeting established goals and/or deadlines.
5. Demonstrate a command of relevant scholarship/creativity and offer a rationale for the work's contributions to a discipline in an appropriate manner in the form of a written and an oral component.

Honors Thesis FAQs

Q: Can my major capstone count toward this? Or how can I build off of my major capstone to complete this requirement?

A: You can use a departmental course to fulfill your thesis requirement, instead of taking HON 491. You will need to submit an Honors Thesis Proposal and indicate on the form which departmental course you plan to use. The experience must still be approved by a faculty member before you take the course with the Honors Agreement Form.

Q: Does your thesis have to be completed in your major, or can it be in a minor or a completely separate interest?

A: The Honors thesis should be an outgrowth of the student's academic work, rooted in their chosen discipline, in most cases in the student's major or minor. In cases where a student has multiple majors, minors, or interdisciplinary interests that are not captured in a major or minor, the student should work with their Honors academic advisor to identify a topic that is supported by their academic work.

Q: How do we approach faculty members?

A: The Honors Academic Canvas page supplies plenty of resources for finding potential faculty advisors. Your Honors Academic advisor can also help you narrow down options or find faculty who specialize in particular areas. Students are also encouraged to meet with faculty during office hours and visit the Office of Undergraduate research for further support.

Q: How do I find out what a thesis would be like for my major, especially when I'm interested in the HON 491 option?

A: The faculty in your major department should be able to help with what a thesis will look like from their discipline. Your Honors Advising Canvas page also has resources to help you find a suitable topic. [UKnowledge](#) has a database of the latest Masters Theses

for the various disciplines. An Honors thesis would not be the same length or depth as a Masters Theses, but you can get ideas about what the possibilities could be.

Q: A student approached me to supervise their Honors thesis. How can I be sure that their proposed project is appropriate for an Honors thesis?

A: Since the scope of a thesis project varies across disciplines, we encourage faculty to discuss with others in their department, including their Director of Undergraduate Studies.

Q: What if I want to take two semesters to complete my thesis?

A: Your Honors thesis project can be completed with as few as 3 credits and as many as 6 credits. These credits can be taken over as many semesters as necessary. It depends on the size and scope of your project.

Q: Is there scholarship money if I want to travel to do research for my thesis?

A: The Honors College does have limited funds to help offset the costs of undergraduate research. Check out: <https://www.uky.edu/honors/grants-and-awards>.

Q: Does my thesis have to be published?

A: Your Honors thesis must be publishable but does not need to be published. We would like for your Honors Thesis to align with the formatting requirements for UKnowledge, however; there can be instances where you or your faculty advisor prefers the material to remain unpublished by UK. You should discuss publication possibilities early in the process with your faculty. UKnowledge offers embargo options to delay publication if content would be better suited for academic journals.

Q: What if I want to publish my thesis as an article?

A: Honors highly recommends students submit their thesis, or a version of it as an academic journal article. Work with your faculty to discuss publication options and/or any alterations in form that may be advisable.

Q: I'm in a Fine Arts major. How will my Honors thesis look different?

A: In fine arts the final performance or artwork would serve as the presentation and the written document would provide an explanation of or reflection on the creative process followed, demonstrating the information literacy of the student. With a full recital, the written document could take the form of program notes, while a lecture recital would require a more extended paper. Fine Arts students should plan to take their senior recital course (TA 490, A-S 490, etc.) and the three-credit hour HON 491 course in the same semester.

Q: Can research be conducted through/at another institution for my UK thesis?

A: The research must take place at UK with a UK faculty mentor. Research may be completed off campus, but it must be directed by a UK faculty member.

Forms



Honors Thesis Agreement

Student Name: _____ Student ID #: _____

Student Email: _____ Major(s): _____

Expected Graduation Semester: _____

Honors Thesis Course*: _____ Semester to be enrolled in the course: _____
* HON 491 or departmental equivalent

General topic area: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Faculty Advisor: _____ Department: _____

Faculty Email: _____ Faculty Phone: _____

For Faculty

____ I have met with the student and discussed this topic with the student. It is my intent to support the student as described in the subsequent Honors thesis Course.

____ I realize that after the proposal has been completed, I will be asked to verify that the length and scope of this project is appropriate for an Honors thesis from my discipline/department.

____ I understand that I will be asked to grade this project and confirm completion of the oral presentation.

Faculty Signature: _____ Date: _____

Fillable PDF can be found at: <https://www.uky.edu/honors/honors-thesis>



Honors Thesis Proposal Cover Page

The Honors Proposal should also be turned in with this cover page.

Student Name: _____ Student ID #: _____

Student Email: _____ Major(s): _____

Expected Graduation Semester: _____

Honors Thesis Course*: _____ Semester to be enrolled in the course: _____
* HON 491 or departmental equivalent

Working Title of Honors Thesis: _____

Thesis Proposal Summary (250 words):

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Faculty Advisor: _____ Department: _____

Faculty Email: _____ Faculty Phone: _____

For Faculty

- ____ I have read the proposal, approve of this project, and agree to support the student as described in the proposal.
- ____ I can verify that the length and scope of this project is appropriate for an Honors thesis from my discipline.
- ____ I understand that I will be asked to grade this project and confirm completion of the oral presentation.

Faculty Signature: _____ Date: _____

Fillable PDF can be found at: <https://www.uky.edu/honors/honors-thesis>

All thesis submissions should include the following cover page:

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

LEWIS HONORS COLLEGE

[Title]

by

[STUDENT NAME]

AN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DISTINCTION OF UNIVERSITY HONORS

[Subject]

APPROVED,

[FACULTY ADVISOR NAME], Faculty Advisor
[Official Title], [Departmental Administrative
Position (if appropriate)]

[LHC DUS], Lewis Honors College Director of
Undergraduate Studies
[Official Title], [Departmental Administrative
Position (if appropriate)]

[Second Faculty Advisor, if applicable] Faculty
Advisor
[Official Title], [Departmental Administrative
Position (if appropriate)]

LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY

[Publish Date]