

UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM  
THESIS HANDBOOK

6.18.13

The Honors Thesis is the culmination of a student's experience in the University Honors Program. It is an opportunity to work closely with a member of the faculty on an independent research or creative project that brings to a conclusion the student's undergraduate academic career. The thesis provides the student with an opportunity to pursue a topic of interest, usually within one's major. It allows each student to bring together the information, ideas and research of his or her major or minor. It provides excellent preparation for graduate work and is a solid career credential as well. (SUNY-Buffalo)

### **What is an Honors Thesis?**

An Honors thesis is a piece of written work that presents a particular argument, hypothesis, or creative idea using the tools of the student's major discipline. It is a more substantial piece of work in terms of effort and length than a typical in-course research paper, but something less than a Master's thesis. It can be successfully completed in two to three semesters as part of a normal undergraduate course load.

### **What if I am a major in the Performing or Creative Arts?**

Students in majors such as music, art, theater, cinema, photography or English may have as a basis of their thesis a work in a creative medium. Although such a project can form the basis of a thesis, it is not a thesis in and of itself. To be acceptable as a thesis, a creative work must be accompanied by a written explanation of the work and its cultural and historical context which includes (but is not limited to) an evaluation of the performance/exhibition/story, etc., addressing such questions as why the student took the approach he or she did, why s/he selected the particular work or works to be performed, what s/he would do differently the next time, and so on. Final submissions of a creative thesis must include an appropriate hard copy record of the project, such as a portfolio, audio, video, or manuscript.

### **How long should the Thesis be?**

There is no standard length for the thesis. This is determined by what is appropriate for the particular subject. Length is not the real test of a thesis, but rather adequately and appropriately answering the research question.

### **How do I begin?**

Some students already know the focus of their thesis based on previous research experience. Other students may not have a topic but a particular professor in mind with whom they would like to work. Either way, begin by selecting your topic and advisor.

## **Selecting a Topic**

The primary consideration is that the subject be one that will sustain the student's interest through the completion of the project. Nothing will hamper a student's progress more than working on a thesis that does not interest him or her. Topics can include something learned in an earlier course, or something students have read or researched. Then, consult faculty members of relevant departments to secure an advisor. It is recommended that the UHP receive the Thesis Proposal by the end of the junior year.

## **Role of the Advisor**

The thesis advisor must be a full-time faculty member. This person is available to guide, support and encourage students throughout the entire thesis process. The student should meet with the advisor on a regular basis. The advisor reads drafts of the thesis, monitors the student's progress, and provides detailed feedback. The thesis advisor will then enter a grade for UHON 499 at the completion of the thesis.

## **Thesis Proposal**

The UHP has three proposal deadlines. They are: April 10 for work to begin in the summer, July 10 for work to begin in the fall, and November 10 for work to begin in the spring. Exceptions must be approved by the Director. Once the proposal is approved, the student registers for UHON 499-Honors Thesis.

## **Proposal Guidelines**

The University Honors thesis project involves substantive, in-depth study/creative activity under close supervision of a faculty mentor. There is no specific required format or length for your honors project, however, likely options are a formal research paper (e.g. a thesis) or a creative activity/production (e.g., a work/works of fine or performing art; a media production; literary, musical or dramatic composition/s). You will negotiate the specific format and expectations of this project with the faculty advisor/mentor you select to work with you. However, one common feature of all honors projects is that they must involve some form of public presentation appropriate to your discipline (e.g., to peers in your discipline or the honors program, to a class, at a conference, as a recital or opening).

As the first step to beginning your honors project, you must submit a proposal to the Honors Program Director by the end of your junior year that has been signed and approved by your faculty advisor/mentor. The proposal should be approximately 750-1250 words (3-5 double spaced pages) and should cover the following areas:

1. Project Title – List a preliminary title for your project (this may be tentative at the proposal stage and can be refined when you finish the project).
2. Project Overview and Goals – Provide a brief description of the project you are proposing, the research questions you are exploring (if appropriate), and the desired outcomes of your work. This overview should be written in clear language accessible to readers outside of your discipline.
3. Methods and Time Line – Explain the methods/techniques you will use in completing this project, as well as the specific steps and anticipated time line for your efforts.
4. Resources/Literature – Describe the literature you will consult in completing this project or the resources you will be drawing upon as inspiration for your work.
5. Description of Final Project – Explain the format of your final project, how you will present it and to whom. (e.g. conference, departmental colloquium, exhibit, performance, etc.)
6. Significance and Contribution – Describe the significance of your project and the contribution it will make to your field.
7. Difference between your Project and the Capstone Project in your Discipline – If your major requires a final, senior or capstone project, explain how your proposed honors project differs from this already required experience.
8. Signature of Student and Faculty Advisor/Mentor – Your honors project proposal is like a contract between you and your faculty advisor/mentor. The last page of the proposal should be signed and dated by both you and your advisor/mentor and then submitted for approval to the Honors Program Director by the end of your junior year.

Collaborative projects of an interdisciplinary nature are strongly encouraged. Students who wish to pursue such a project should individual submit proposals.

The thesis proposal should be attached to the UHON 499 Thesis form.

## **Thesis Format**

All theses must have the following cover page:

**THESIS TITLE**  
**Student Name**

A thesis submitted to the University Honors Program  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Honors Degree

Southern Illinois University  
Date

## **Documentation**

The thesis must be the student's own work. To take data, knowledge, interpretations, or phraseology from another without full acknowledgement is common theft and a punishable act of plagiarism. All ideas and data that are not common knowledge must be cited appropriately. Students may use whatever forms of bibliographic and footnote/endnote citation is required by their discipline.

## **Public Presentation of Thesis Research**

An important part of engaging in scholarly and creative activity is sharing it with others. In addition to completing the Honors thesis, all students are required to present their thesis research to faculty, students, and staff. The presentation, which may be in a form appropriate to the student's discipline, typically lasts 15-20 minutes and can be done in any academic setting where a faculty or staff member is present to witness the presentation. Set aside another 20-30 minutes for questions from the audience. Students may present in one of their classes, a department meeting, a conference, an academic student organization, or Undergraduate Research Day.

## Open SIUC

OpenSIUC is an institutional repository that stores, preserves, manages and makes publicly available the research produced at SIUC. This allows the student, at no cost, to make his or her work available to a wide audience.

All Honors theses must be submitted to Open SIUC. Non-textual works are excluded from this requirement. While all theses must be submitted to Open SIUC by the end of the semester in which they are submitted to the Honors Program Office, authors may request an embargo of six or twelve months, or request a waiver from this requirement. Requests for embargos or waivers must be sent to the UHP Director.

To submit your thesis to Open SIUC:

- Sign a permission form available at the UHP office
- Create an account at <http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu>
- Go to [http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/uhp\\_theses](http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/uhp_theses)
- Click on “Submit Research”
- Fill out the form
- Upload your file
- Click submit
- Email Director Lori Merrill-Fink when completed [lomerfi@siu.edu](mailto:lomerfi@siu.edu).

The source of the majority of this information is taken from *University Honors Program Senior Thesis Handbook*, SUNY-Buffalo