

Guidelines for the Honors Senior Thesis

Purpose

The purpose of the Honors Senior Thesis is to provide a meaningful capstone project for an Arkansas State University senior's undergraduate education. The thesis will represent a significant effort beyond what is normally expected in a student's undergraduate program. The thesis should exemplify the goal of the Honors College experience as stated in the Undergraduate Bulletin, to "develop multiple intelligences, enhance their analytical skills, and augment their knowledge and abilities in their chosen fields."

Eligibility

Honors students in good academic standing in the Honors College may undertake thesis study in their major field of study or their declared minor. A student must have senior Honors standing to apply to undertake an Honors senior thesis. In addition, the course of thesis study should be planned so that the thesis is finished during the same semester that the student graduates, or the previous semester in the case of students who have professional experiences during their final semester.

Grading System

The thesis will be graded on the standard of Credit (CR) or No Credit (NC). The grade will be assigned by the student's thesis committee, the decision of which must be unanimous, and recorded by the thesis chair. The Grading process is detailed at the end of this document.

Credit Hours

Honors senior thesis credit is available for 3 or 6 credit hours. The amount of credit which is appropriately sought is a function of the scope of the proposed project. A student may enroll in an Honors Independent Study as preparation for the senior thesis (see the following "Planning" section for more details) and if so, will only be allowed to enroll in 3 hours of thesis credit. While it is anticipated that most senior theses will be deserving of 3 credits, a student may elect to undertake a thesis for 6 credit hours. If the 6 hour option is selected, it is recommended that 6 hour theses be spread over two terms, 3 thesis hours per term. The thesis committee must be able to justify what extra/additional information is provided beyond what would be acceptable for 3 hours of credit.

Preparation

Before submitting a proposal, the student must assemble a committee of three full-time faculty members to serve as the Honors Senior Thesis Committee. The committee members will serve as advisors to the student during their thesis study. At least two of the committee members will be selected from the discipline of the proposed research.

One of the faculty members on the committee will serve as the thesis chair/mentor; it will be this individual who bears primary responsibility for interacting with the student directly and guiding the student during their thesis experience.

Planning

It is recommended that the student begin preparing for thesis study no later than the end of their junior year or the semester prior to enrolling in Honors senior thesis credit hours, whichever comes first. One may prepare by registering for an Honors Independent Study under the professor who will presumably become their thesis chair/mentor. This independent study will be undertaken with the goal of deciding a suitable topic for thesis study and will most often limit the number of thesis hours taken to 3. If this option is used, the student is *strongly encouraged* to talk with prospective committee members as to the topic under study so they will have the opportunity to give input as the thesis idea is formulated.

Application

A completed Honors Senior Thesis application must be approved by the Director of the Honors College no later than the first day of senior classes for the A-State Scholar or 30 days before the first day of classes of the first semester of thesis study.

Before the prospectus can be approved by the Director of the Honors College, the student must conduct a thesis prospectus meeting at which time the student and their three committee members will review the prospectus and agree on the proposed course of study. It is recommended that the prospectus meeting occur in April/May of the junior year or over the summer between the junior and senior year.

Prospectus

The written thesis prospectus constitutes the standard against which the completed thesis will be judged. If, at the time of the prospectus meeting, it is determined that changes should be made to the original prospectus, such changes must be approved unanimously by the committee. In approving the prospectus, committee members agree that the program of work proposed by the student is feasible for the number of credit hours sought. Once the student has begun work on the thesis project, any changes to the initial prospectus will require the unanimous approval of the thesis committee and the Director of the Honors College.

The prospectus will provide the following information:

1. Description of the thesis, including the number of credit hours sought and the number of semesters that will be required to complete the thesis.
2. Outline of the goals for the thesis and the methods by which they will be accomplished.
3. Proposed time line for the work and the expected outcome(s).
4. A bibliography and a list of equipment, materials, and software as appropriate.
5. Description of the physical record of work that will be produced through this thesis study.

Progress

The progress of the student's thesis work is the sole responsibility of the student and their thesis committee. The student and the thesis committee are encouraged to work out a system by which the student's progress is regularly monitored and the quality of their work evaluated, but the details of these arrangements are left to the discretion of the student and their committee.

Defense

The student must schedule a defense at which the student presents the results of their thesis work to the members of the thesis committee in a public oral presentation. Many students present their thesis findings at Create@State, A-State's symposium of research and creative work. Four working days prior to the defense, the student is responsible for supplying all members of the thesis committee with copies of the written portion of the thesis. The defense shall take place no later than the study day before the beginning of finals week. Final approval of all changes to the written portion of the thesis must be secured no later than two days before commencement proceedings by which time the original and a copy of the thesis, both with signatures, must be delivered to the Honors College office.

Product Style and Format

While the style and format of the completed thesis will depend on the type of thesis prepared, (e.g. *research project. musical performance. art exhibition. or dance*), every thesis will include a written document which is to be submitted in duplicate. For the written document. there are these stipulations:

1. Theses must be reproduced on 8-1/2 x 11 inch, unlined paper with at least 25% rag or cotton content and at least twenty-pound weight so as to allow the thesis to withstand use in the library. For convenience in binding, the student must also include two blank sheets of paper for each of the two copies (one at the front and one at the end of the document). Copies of CDs used in the defense (if applicable) should be included with each thesis copy.
2. Copies of theses which are to be bound should be on the same quality paper as the original.
3. The margins should be 1-1/2 inches on the left margin and 1 inch on the rest.
4. Tables, illustrations, graphs, and photographs may be handled in one of two ways. They may be inserted according to the style manual of the discipline involved, or they may be inserted in a separate appendix. If such materials are included. they should not be taped or glued in place; spray adhesive or adhesive paper should be used for longevity. Photocopies of photographs are unacceptable unless they are from a color photocopier.
5. Permission should be sought for the use of substantial quotations of copyrighted material, and the thesis should reflect authorized approvals.
6. Aesthetic concerns such as typeface, paper color, spacing, and choice of style manual are left to the discretion of the student and his or her committee.
7. Each thesis will include a cover page which closely abides by the following example and an acknowledgements page.

If thesis study consists of non-written outputs, such as a performance or exhibition, a permanent record (consisting of an audio or video tape, photographs, slides, blueprints of designs, or other suitable forms) should also be submitted.

Grading System

The thesis will be graded on the standard of Credit (CR) or No Credit (NC). The grade will be assigned by the student's thesis committee, the decision of which must be unanimous. The grade will be recorded in the usual manner by the thesis chair/mentor. If the student is unable to complete the thesis, the grade of NC will be assigned by the committee and recorded by the chair. An NC should also be assigned for the first semester of a two-semester thesis. Once the student successfully completes both semesters, the chair must complete a Change of Grade Form (*which should be processed through the Honors College*) to change the first semester grade of NC to CR. The second semester grade should be recorded as CR in the usual manner once the thesis is complete and accepted by the Honors College.