

SUNY-ESF

The Honors Program



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The Honors Thesis/Project

The Honors Thesis/Project is the hallmark of the Honors Program at the College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF). Honors thesis/projects are expected to be high-quality work completed by serious and talented undergraduates that go well beyond typical coursework. The thesis/project is required to meet five standards:

- The topic or subject should be of interest to the student;
- The subject or topic must be in the student's major and tie together significant parts of the student's undergraduate experience;
- The investigation and thesis/project must demonstrate a venture that extends substantially beyond an undergraduate course;
- The thesis/project must represent independent student work; AND
- The subject/topic must involve of serious academic exploration and worthy of 1-5 credit hours.

An ***honors thesis*** is envisioned and executed as a written piece of work. An honors thesis is not a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation. It is not expected, therefore, to make an original contribution to the knowledge base of a discipline, although some honors theses do. It is expected, however, to be more substantial than a typical term paper and result in a product that is of publication quality.

An ***honors project*** might be undertaken by students in majors such as landscape architecture, or engineering, in a medium appropriate for their major. It is expected to be more substantial than a typical course project and result in a product that is of professional quality. These honors projects should be accompanied by a (written) explanatory essay.

ESF Honors Thesis/Project Advisor

Any member of the ESF faculty may be a thesis/project advisor. Occasionally, under *extraordinary* circumstances, part-time or adjunct faculty members may serve as thesis/project advisors with the approval of the Director of the Honors Program.

Students should select their advisors as carefully as the topic of the research, taking into consideration faculty members' expertise and the necessity of close academic relationships. One of the most rewarding experiences of the Honors program is the mentoring process that occurs between the honors advisor and the honors student. This mentoring process is often key to the success of the thesis or project. Students identify their honors advisors during the semester they are enrolled in ESF 309 - Honors Exploration Seminar. They typically ask a faculty member whose class has been of special interest to them, or whose research expertise is in a specific area, or whose area of specialization fits with those of the honors student. Students should feel free to contact faculty members to discuss possible advising opportunities.

Once the thesis/project topic has been identified, the thesis project advisor should meet on a regular basis (at least twice a month) with the honors student until the work is complete. The final months of the project typically involve meetings between advisor and advisee on a more frequent basis - perhaps weekly. The purpose of these meetings is for the advisor to provide guidance and encouragement - *especially encouragement* - and for the student to ask questions and clarify and issues of uncertainty. In most cases, the topic of the thesis project is formalized during the first semester of the junior year (as required in ESF 309), planned and researched in the second semester of the junior year and the first semester of the senior year, and written in the second semester of the senior year. In between the first semester of the junior year and the final semester of the senior year, ESF honors students enroll in and complete the two courses required by the Honors program. These courses are identified during the Honors Exploration Seminar and should augment the students' honors experience.

The honors advisor assists the student in identifying and refining ideas and interests into a thesis/project to maximize the probability of success. Similar to the graduate thesis or dissertation experience, critical tasks for the advisor are to:

- a. Take ideas that may be unfocused and make them clear;
- b. Gather stray thoughts and interconnect relevant concepts;
- c. Encourage students to take risks where appropriate; and
- d. Harness a broad topic into a project that will fit within the confines of an undergraduate honors thesis project.

This activity might be accomplished by a faculty advisor who is able to 'carve out' a portion of research into a suitable undertaking. In other instances, it may mean convincing a student that a project is too big and would better serve the student's needs as significant project, but on a much smaller scale.

The advisor reads drafts or reviews progress on the thesis/project and provides detailed feedback via meetings, electronic communications, synchronized exchanges of sections of work, or any other appropriate means. It is expected and necessary for honors theses/projects to undergo a series of reviews and iterations. For each revision, the student is expected to give the advisor ample time to read and review submitted work, and to provide thoughtful comments.

Second Reader

Each thesis/project requires the skills of a second reader who is selected by the student and advisor. The second reader typically enters the thesis/project just prior to the beginning of the final semester of the senior year, after the conceptualization and research has been completed. However, some students and advisor may wish to include the second reader earlier in the process. In either instance, students must submit the name of the second reader no later than the end of the first semester of the senior year. Although the second reader's responsibility is not as great as the honors advisor, the reader should have ample opportunity to read and review the document and provide comments on the final stages of the student's work.

Honors Exploration Seminar (ESF 309)

Because of the nature of the more advanced independent work that culminates in the thesis/project, it is imperative that all students begin thinking early about their thesis/projects and suitable advisors. The one-credit Honors Exploration Seminar (ESF 309) – also called the Junior Honors Seminar - is required of all ESF Honors students and is designed to guide this process. In this seminar, students develop an understand of what a thesis/project is and the personal resources (time, energy, motivation, etc.) necessary for successful completion, clarify a topic, find a faculty thesis/project advisor, develop an academic plan, and create a timeline for completion of the thesis/project. Students are encouraged to take this seminar in the first semester of their junior year. Because the seminar prepares students for work that will usually take the entire senior year to complete, the seminar should be taken no later than second semester of the junior year.

Coursework Requirements

Students must carefully select at least two courses: a) 400 or above in a related area and not required of other students in the same major, or b) enhanced versions of upper division courses that contribute directly to their thesis/project, or c) one of each type. Students admitted to the ESF Honors Program are eligible (by petition) to enroll in appropriate courses numbered 500 to 699. A request to enhance an upper division course (H-3), including signatures of the student and the professor of the course, must be submitted for approval no later than the end of the second week of classes for the class that is being enhanced.

Forms, forms, forms

ESF Honors students should complete the following forms in the sequence and timeline indicated:

What and How?	Why?	When?
Request to Appoint Thesis/Project Advisor (H-1)	To appoint an Honors Advisor	During ESF 309 and preferably before early registration for the semester after ESF 309
Academic Plan Form (H-2)	To develop a timeline to complete the program requirements and to identify the topic of the Honors Thesis/Project	After appointment of Honors Advisor, during ESF 309
Course Proposal and Justification Form (H-3)	To identify the courses to fulfill the Honors Coursework requirements	After appointment of Honors Advisor, during ESF 309
Request to Appoint Second Reader for Thesis/Project (H-4)	To appoint the "Second Reader" for the Honors Thesis/Project	No later than the beginning of the final semester

Confirmation of Honors Thesis/Project Completion (H-5)

To verify that the Honors Advisor and Reader have approved the Thesis/Project before submission to the Honors Director

By the deadline for completion of honors requirements

Two copies of the signed, final thesis/project, with appropriate Title Page

To fulfill final requirement for graduation "with Honors"

By the deadline for completion of honors requirements

Where?

Submit all forms and requests to the ESF Honors Program, 227 Bray Hall

Honors Thesis/Project (ESF 499)

ESF Honors students are required to complete at least four credits of ESF 499 - Honors Thesis. (Chemistry students are required to complete five credits of ESF 499 to meet the senior synthesis requirement). An optimal strategy to complete credits of ESF 499:

- One credit during the semester following ESF 309, to develop the research problem and conduct literature review;
- One credit in the first semester of the senior year to conduct research and write the Research Statement, Literature Review and Methodology sections of the thesis;
- 2-3 credits in the final semester to complete the thesis and make the presentation at the Spotlight on Student Research or individual seminar.

To register for ESF 499, honors advisors sign the SCORE (registration) form and Dr. Jabbour requests a section of ESF 499 created with the honors advisor as the instructor of record. In the event that a student is unable to complete the thesis project, the credits may be converted to and graded by the advisor -- via petition -- as a non-thesis project independent study (usually XXX 498).

Parts of an Honors Thesis/Project

The thesis project itself includes the following:

- Title page (no page numbers)
- Abstract (lower case Roman numerals)
- Table of contents
- List of Figures
- List of Tables
- Glossary of Terms (if appropriate)

- Preface: an essay in which students reflect on the experience of producing an Honors Thesis/Project.
- Advice to Future Honors Students
- Acknowledgments
- Body of the Thesis (First numbered page)
 - Introduction
 - Methods
 - Results
 - Discussion
 - Conclusions
- Bibliography or Works Cited
- Appendices

Advisor and Second Reader's Approvals

Every thesis/project must be approved before final submission by both the advisor and second reader. To facilitate this process, the student should keep both the advisor and second reader current with plans for and progress on the thesis/project. The final version of the thesis/project should be given to the advisor and second reader by March 1 for May graduates (October 15 for December graduates). March 1 - 31 (October 15 - November 15) should be used to confer with the advisor and second reader to agree on and make necessary revisions. April 1 - 14 (November 15 - 30) should be used to prepare the final thesis/project for submission to the Honors Program.

Submission of the Thesis Project to the ESF Honors Program

Students must provide two copies of the thesis/project in its final form to the Director of the ESF Honors program for review and approval by the semester deadlines. The Director may require revisions or further work on any thesis project. In order to allow time for a thorough examination of the thesis/project, it must be submitted to the Director of the ESF Honors Program (227 Bray Hall) **at least ten days before the deadline for completion of program requirements.**

Thesis Project Presentation

Honors students are required to present their thesis/projects either at the Spotlight on Student Research (usually held in mid-April) or at an individual presentation. The honors advisor and second reader should view the poster at Spotlight. If the presentation requirement is completed via an individual presentation, the presentation -- which may be made in a form appropriate to the student's discipline -- should last no longer than an hour, with the student's introductory

remarks and explanation typically last approximately twenty minutes and the remainder questions and discussion. The honors advisor, second reader, and at least one representative of the Honors Program must be present at the presentation. When a thesis/project is in an area of the creative arts, the student and her or his advisor should make appropriate arrangements to exhibit the work.

Final Approval

The thesis/project is required to be in final form by the end of semester deadline. The title page of the thesis/project is usually signed after the document has received approval from the Honors Program Director. Students who produce projects that are not suitable for submission in their entirety are required to submit tapes, photographs, or other permanent records of their original work in addition to their essays. Thesis/projects and all accompanying materials are kept in the Honors Program Office (227 Bray) and are publicly available for reading/viewing.

Grading Policies

A single letter grade is assigned to the thesis/project by the honors thesis advisor following the submission of the document to the Honors Program office for binding. If a student is unable to complete the thesis/project, registration may be changed -- via petition --to a non-thesis independent study (XXX 498).

Recognition of Honors Work

Students who successfully complete ESF 309, two approved courses contributing directly to the thesis/project, at least four credits of the Honors thesis/project (ESF 499) with a grade of B or better, the honors thesis/project presentation, and who have earned a cumulative grade point average of 3.400 in all upper division courses will receive designation in their diploma as having earned a degree in their major "with Honors." Students are also recognized at the annual Honors Convocation preceding graduation, where they receive honors medals that are worn to college convocation and commencement.

Important Dates for Honors Seniors 2007-2008

October 15	Final draft due to thesis/project advisor for December graduation
November 1-15	Confer with Advisor and Second Reader
November 16 - 23	Prepare final thesis/project for Submissions to the Honors Program
December 1	Last day to submit finished thesis/projects and make thesis/project presentations for December graduates
First Friday of December	ESF Convocation

<u>March 1</u>	<u>Final draft due to thesis/project advisor for May graduation</u>
<u>March 4-18</u>	<u>Confer with Advisor and Second Reader</u>
<u>March 28 -April 15</u>	<u>Prepare final thesis/project for Submissions to the Honors Program</u>
Mid- April	Spotlight on Student Research
<u>April 25</u>	<u>Last day to submit finished thesis/projects</u>
First Friday in <u>May</u>	<u>Deadline for completion of honors program requirements</u>
Second weekend in <u>May</u>	<u>ESF Convocation</u>

Appendices

Form	Title on form
H-1	Request to Appoint Thesis/Project Advisor
H-2	Academic Plan Form
H-3	Course Proposal and Justification Form
H-4	Request to Appoint Second Reader for Thesis/Project
H-5	Confirmation of Honors Thesis/Project Completion

Thesis Guidelines and Title Page Format

All forms are available on the Honors Website at: <http://www.ef.edu/honors>