

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 will often 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 serious academic exploration and be worthy of 3-5 hours of academic credit.

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 necessarily expected 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. What makes for an Honors Thesis in any discipline is determined by the Faculty mentor with the honors student.

ESF Honors Thesis/Project Advisor

Any member of the ESF/SU faculty may be a thesis/project advisor. Occasionally, part-time or adjunct ESF faculty members may serve as thesis/project advisors with the approval of a Director of the Honors Program. Professors at other institutions can also act as mentors as long as the second reader is a member of the ESF/SU community.

Students should select their advisors as carefully as they select 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. 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 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 any issues or uncertainty. In most cases, the topic of the thesis project is formalized during the first semester of the junior year (or earlier), 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.

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

- a. Take ideas that may be unfocussed and help make them clearer;
- 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 their 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 a 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 in concert. 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. 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.

Coursework Requirements

Students must 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 to their thesis/project, or c) one of each type. Students admitted to the ESF Honors Program are eligible to enroll in appropriate courses numbered 500 to 699.

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	Any time from 2 nd to senior year
Confirmation of Honors Thesis/Project Completion (H-2)	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
One PDF copy of the final thesis/project , with the signed 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 or to an Honors Director	

Honors Thesis/Project (ESF 499)

ESF Honors students are required to complete at least 3-5 credits of ESF 499 - Honors Thesis. (Chemistry students are required to complete five credits of ESF 499 to meet the senior synthesis requirement).

To register for ESF 499, honors advisors sign the SCORE (registration) form and the Honors Director requests a section of ESF 499 to be 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 as a non-thesis project independent study (usually a 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)
- 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 April 1 for May graduates (October 30 for December graduates). March 1 – 31 and (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 an electronic version (PDF) of the thesis/project in its final form to the Director of the ESF Honors program by the semester deadlines. The Director may require

revisions or further work on any thesis project. 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 6 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 and second reader are expected to 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 an 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. Thesis/projects and all accompanying materials are kept in the Honors Program Office (227 Bray) or Moon Library 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 two approved courses contributing to the thesis/project, at least 3 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 3.000 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

October 30	Final draft due to thesis/project advisor for December graduation
November 1-15	Confer with Advisor and Second Reader
December 1	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
April 1	Final draft due to thesis/project advisor for May graduation
April 2-15	Confer with Advisor and Second Reader
March 28 -April 30	Prepare final thesis/project for Submission to the Honors Program
Mid- April	Spotlight on Student Research
April 30	Last day to submit finished thesis/projects
First Friday in May	Deadline for completion of honors program requirements
Second weekend in May	ESF Convocation

Appendices

Form	Title on form
H-1	Request to Appoint Thesis/Project Advisor
H-2	Confirmation of Honors Thesis/Project Completion
	Title Page and Format Advice