

THESIS HANDBOOK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

HONORS THESIS: INTRODUCTION	1
BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS	1
SUGGESTED TIMELINE.....	3
FORMATTING YOUR THESIS PROPOSAL	3
FORMATTING YOUR COMPLETED THESIS	5
THESIS ORAL PRESENTATION.....	7
EVALUATION OF YOUR THESIS	9
FAQS	10
CHECKLIST	14

HONORS THESIS: INTRODUCTION

One of the final requirements of the Honors College is the completion of the Honors thesis. A thesis is one of the hallmarks of a quality Honors education. This graduation requirement provides an opportunity for you to design a unique project that will challenge you to reflect upon your Honors education and to present your work to a group of your faculty and peers. Your thesis will be the culmination of your undergraduate work and a bridge to your future career or academic life.

The thesis also provides a unique opportunity for undergraduate students to work closely with faculty members on campus who share similar research or creative interests. Your thesis can provide entrée to academic and professional research. It can lead to a publication and/or a conference presentation. Furthermore, faculty members who serve as thesis advisors are in a position to write very strong letters for graduate/professional schools or positions in the labor force. Prospective employers and graduate school admissions committees are impressed by the dedication and discipline required to write a thesis.

A thesis is not just another research or term paper. A thesis will thoroughly investigate previous research on a topic and will include your own insights and contributions to the topic. Many theses attempt to answer an academic question or test an hypothesis. Students in art, music, creative writing, or film studies, for example, may choose to complete a “creative project.” In this case, your written paper would be a contextual analysis of the work that you completed and would provide a lens for an audience to evaluate your work. (See “Formatting Your Thesis Proposal” and “Formatting Your Completed Thesis.”)

The information provided here will help you complete your Honors thesis and will answer basic questions about the process. The advisors in the Honors College are available to talk to you further about this requirement and to help you successfully complete it.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

The Thesis: The completion of a thesis or creative project is a requirement for graduation from the WSU Honors College. This can be one of the most rewarding challenges during your undergraduate career. The requirement is satisfied when you have completed an acceptable thesis or creative project, performed satisfactorily in an oral presentation, and provided final copies of your thesis to the Honors College. It is highly recommended that the thesis be completed by the end of the first semester of your senior year.

Who is the Thesis Advisor? Your thesis or creative project will be supervised by a thesis advisor. The advisor must be a tenure-track faculty member or senior instructor in a department. Most students choose a faculty member from their own major or discipline,

but this is not required. Because mentorship is a critical part of this experience, you should choose an advisor who is cognizant of the current scholarly literature pertinent to your topic. It is critical to the success of your thesis or project that you meet with your advisor at least every other week to discuss the progress of your research or creative project. The most successful students hold regular meetings with their thesis advisors to discuss progress of their projects and submit drafts of their papers. It is very unprofessional to enlist the help of a thesis advisor and then fail to schedule meetings on a regular basis.

What is the Thesis Proposal? In conjunction with your thesis advisor, you will develop a proposal that will be submitted to the Honors College for approval. When you submit your proposal, you will indicate which semester(s) you will register for the 3 credits of UH 450 required for the thesis. A total of 3 credits is required.

What is the relationship between my thesis and UH 398? UH 398 is the one-credit Thesis Proposal class that should be taken in the sophomore or junior year before you submit your proposal. The goal of this class is to identify an appropriate advisor, develop a research question or creative project, and prepare your proposal.

How long is the Thesis? You will submit a paper of approximately 20 double-spaced pages at the conclusion of your research. If you complete a “creative project,” such as writing a novel or a musical composition, or producing a collection of art work or a short film, you will provide a 10-12 page paper that provides a context for your work.

How do I schedule the Oral Presentation? Oral presentations of students’ theses and creative projects are held during two weeks each semester – the 7th and 11th weeks. Completed papers are due in the Honors College on the Monday preceding the week you wish to present (two weeks prior in the spring semester if the 11th week option is chosen). Your presentation time must be selected no later than Monday of Week 5 or Week 9, respectively. Exceptions to regularly scheduled thesis weeks will be considered on a case-by-case basis and require a written petition from the student and confirmation from the thesis advisor. *No thesis may be presented in the same semester in which the proposal was submitted and approved.* Summer presentations are rarely scheduled and involve an appeal process.

How will I be graded? In addition to your thesis advisor, you are asked to invite one additional faculty member, preferably someone knowledgeable about your topic, to read your thesis and attend your presentation. This faculty member will serve as an evaluator of your work. The Honors College will provide a second evaluator. The evaluators will use a rubric to critique both your written work and your oral presentation. (See the Honors Thesis website to view these rubrics.) The thesis is a pass/fail requirement.

Note: Students in the College of Engineering should check their schedules of studies to see which course satisfies the Honors College thesis requirement.

SUGGESTED TIMELINE

1. Sophomore year or first semester of the junior year: Enroll in UH 398, the one-credit "Thesis Proposal" class, which is part of the required curriculum.
2. Sophomore or Junior year: Submit a thesis proposal.
3. Junior year or first semester of senior year: Complete your written thesis or creative project.
4. First semester of the senior year: Schedule and give your oral presentation.

FORMATTING YOUR THESIS PROPOSAL

Thesis proposals are typically 3-5 pages long and are double-spaced in a 12-point font. The guidelines below indicate the sections required.

I. Introduction/Literature Review

Your introduction or literature review provides specific background information or the "body of knowledge" relevant to your Honors thesis. The literature you cite should draw on both early and current scholarly work and include primary sources, secondary sources, and perhaps academic book(s).

This section should be written such that your research question or hypothesis or creative activity flows logically from it.

II. Research Question/Creative Activity/Hypothesis

The research question/creative activity/hypothesis that forms the basis of your Honors thesis must be tied to an existing body of knowledge. This section of your thesis proposal can be as short as two sentences.

III. Methodology

All disciplines lend themselves to research; all research is conducted using some methodology. Your methodology determines the rigor and validity of your work.

This section of your thesis proposal should present all the methods (i.e., scholarly approaches) you will use in your thesis. Your advisor will be well-versed in methodologies.

Your methodology may depend on your field. For example ...

- If you plan to create original artistic work or other creative work, provide a scholarly "lens" through which an audience may perceive it (e.g., analyze the work of artists who influenced your own work and how your work differs from/is similar to theirs). Discuss any challenges to be overcome and give a timeline you will follow to complete your project. Be specific about what you plan to create.

- If you plan to conduct literature research (whether in the liberal arts and humanities, sciences, social sciences, business, or communications), indicate how you will select and examine your sources, what guidelines you will use to interpret them, and how you plan to analyze and synthesize your findings.
- If you plan to perform scientific research in a lab or the field, provide information on materials and methods including controls, replicates, and statistical analyses.
- If you plan to conduct a meta-analysis in the social sciences, indicate the criteria to be used to select the publications for your analysis as well as the statistics you will apply.
- If your research involves the use of humans, including surveys and/or questionnaires, you must obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval through the Office of Research Assurances (www.irb.wsu.edu). *This approval is absolutely necessary before you interview one person or send out a single survey to be completed.*
- If you are doing a survey or interviews, include the full survey instrument and/or the complete interview questions to the Appendix section. Further, if data collection is involved, describe how the data will be collected and analyzed and what materials will be used.

IV. Expected Results and/or Potential Conclusions

In *no more than one or two paragraphs*, describe the results you expect from your research and what those results mean in the greater context of knowledge in the field. If you complete a creative project, discuss the implications of your project in terms of a larger context of your discipline.

V. Annotated Bibliography

This is a preliminary list of the "body of knowledge" that was cited in your Introduction/Literature Review (above). Your annotated bibliography section will begin on a new sheet of paper and contain at least five annotated sources. Select recent journal articles, review articles, and scholarly books that address your topic. After each source, write an annotation, i.e., a 3- to 4-sentence statement explaining what information is included in the source and how it will be useful to your thesis. Follow the approved style for your field (i.e. APA, MLA, Chicago Style Manual, etc.).

VI. Appendix

This optional section will contain your complete survey instruments and full range of interview questions, or any other information you and your advisor deem essential for readers and reviewers.

FORMATTING YOUR COMPLETED THESIS

All Honors College theses include these sections, *arranged in the following order*:

Title Page

The title page will include the following: thesis title, your name, the semester in which you are giving your oral presentation, and your advisor's name, department, and college.

Advisor Signature Approval Page

Your advisor must sign the Advisory Signature Approval Page (available online), which should be placed directly after your Title Page.

Précis

The précis represents an informative, concise summary of your thesis that is free from jargon and written in language that an academic reader outside your discipline can understand. (Note: A précis differs from an abstract, which is written for professionals in the discipline.) The précis should be no more than two pages long, double-spaced. Develop your précis after you complete the body of your Honors thesis, and place it directly after the Advisor Signature Approval Page. Include the problem, question, or hypothesis examined, an explanation of why you decided to study this problem or issue or to pursue this creative project, the approach you took, what you discovered, and where others might go in this area in the future.

Table of Contents

Include a table of contents that guides the reader to the various sections of your paper.

List of Figures and Tables

If two or more figures or tables appear in the main body of your paper, include a list of figures/tables after the Table of Contents.

Main Body of Paper

This section of your thesis should be 20 pages long, double-spaced, with page numbers at the bottom of each page. If you have chosen a creative project, your paper may be 10-12 pages long. It should be double-spaced, have page numbers at the bottom of each page, be written in English unless specific arrangements have been made in advance, and contain no spelling or grammatical errors. In all cases, the style should be appropriate for the discipline.

For organizational purposes, you may wish to use headings and sections (see below) for the main body of your thesis as they appear in your table of contents. Discuss the organization of your thesis with your advisor and follow a format that is typical of writing in your discipline. However, your thesis must include a Title Page, Advisor Signature Approval Page, Précis, and References Cited section. In addition, the main body of your thesis must provide the reader with a logical introduction to your project (explaining how

it fits within the larger context and what your focus is), what you did for your thesis, how you conducted your work, and the significance of your work.

If you have chosen to complete a creative project, you may submit a shorter written document in which you should answer the following questions:

- What are the artistic aims of your project?
- What or who are the key influences on your work, i.e., current or historical artists with similar creative ideas?
- Is your work similar to or different from these artists?
- What methods or techniques did you use?
- Did you follow a disciplinary tradition?
- What issues and obstacles did you encounter?
- What did you learn? What are the next steps?
- What further work is needed related to your project?

Optional Headings and Sections

I. Introduction or Literature Review

This section sets the stage for your work. It gives the reader a view of the framework for your project – the particular field in which you are working – and brings the reader logically to the project at hand.

The introduction should **answer two questions**:

1. What is the larger context (body of knowledge) for your topic?
2. What is the significance of your particular topic?

The **introduction or literature review** should lead logically and clearly to your research question or hypothesis.

II. Research Question/Hypothesis/Creative Project

State your research question/hypothesis/creative project, succinctly in one or two sentences.

III. Methodology (Materials and Methods)

Describe the materials and methods you employed, and cite any relevant literature. Readers should be able to understand clearly the procedural and analytical steps you undertook.

IV. Results and Discussion

This is the real heart of your project and contains your original contribution of new knowledge in your field.

What did you discover, learn, create, or uncover? Present, interpret, and discuss the data or ideas you have collected or generated. Describe your findings in a precise and well-supported manner, as this is primarily where you can persuade your readers to adopt your perspective on the subject. Relate your work to the larger field. Cite any relevant bibliographic sources within your discussion.

The ability to view one's own work critically and objectively is essential for all fields of scholarly research, and a thorough discussion of your findings demonstrates your potential as a scholar.

Because all projects are by their very nature limited in scope, an essential part of fully analyzing your work is to understand its limits. Think about the robustness of what you have done:

- If you had collected your materials or data differently, could you still expect to replicate your findings?
- Could you have approached your project in a different way?
- Did your assumptions lead you to a certain bias that has implications for your conclusions?
- Do your findings corroborate those in the published literature?

V. Conclusions

What, briefly, did you learn or discover? What are the larger ramifications of your work?

VI. References Cited

VII. Appendix (optional)

Supplemental material such as pictures, figures, survey instruments, interview questions, and tables should be included in the Appendix.

THESIS ORAL PRESENTATION

Your oral presentation is the final step in completing the Honors Thesis requirement. Presentations are scheduled during the **7th week and 11th week of fall and spring semesters** and with rare exceptions on an ad hoc basis during summers. They are always **open to the public**. Your thesis advisor and thesis reviewer must be present, along with one Honors-chosen reviewer from the WSU academic community.

Timing

Each presentation is assigned a 1-hour time slot:

- Your **presentation should take 20 minutes**

- We allow **15-20 minutes for questions from the audience**, especially from your thesis advisor and the two reviewers who have read your thesis before the presentation. These reviewers will be prepared with questions for you.
- Expect to step outside the room for 5-10 minutes while your thesis is discussed. You will be asked to return to the room and then given a summary of comments made during the closed-door discussion. You also will be told the thesis rating given by your reviewers (i.e., excellent, pass, needs minor or major revision, fail). If your two reviewers and advisor feel your thesis and oral presentation embody exemplary work, they may nominate your thesis for a “Pass with Distinction” (below).

Trial Run

To ensure that your software is compatible with that available in the Honors College, and that your oral presentation will go smoothly, contact the Honors main office (Honors Hall 130) well before your designated time and make arrangements for a **"trial run" in advance of your scheduled presentation.**

Tips for Success

- **Dress professionally.**
- **Practice** what you are going to say and how you're going to say it.
- **Time your presentation** to take 20 minutes or less.
- **Avoid reading** your talk.
- **Maintain eye contact** with your audience.
- **Adopt a professional demeanor.** Sarcasm and jokes detract from a presentation.
- Use **terms** that your audience can understand. Use **analogies and visual aids** to explain difficult concepts.
- Prepare effective **visuals** with suitable font sizes and minimal text.
- Draw from the **Introduction and Discussion sections of your thesis** at the beginning of your presentation.
- Summarize the **major findings of your research** at the end of your talk.
- Be prepared to discuss **how your study or creative project could be improved or expanded.**
- **End on a positive note!**

- During the Q&A session, **ask for clarification** if a question is unclear. Your advisor will be present to assist you, but it is your responsibility to field the questions.

EVALUATION OF YOUR THESIS

Your thesis will be **evaluated by three people**: your thesis advisor, a thesis reviewer selected by you and your advisor, and an Honors-chosen reviewer from the WSU academic community.

The Honors-chosen reviewer may or may not be from your discipline, so critical factors for your success are a very clear précis, a well-written introduction and discussion of your work, and an oral presentation that explains to a lay, educated audience the significance of your thesis.

The reviewers will use the "Thesis Evaluation Rubric" to score your written thesis document and your oral presentation. Review the rubric and become aware of how your work will be evaluated.

NOTE: A Thesis Evaluation Rubric is available in the Forms and Examples section of this website for your information.

Grading

Your advisor and the two reviewers will evaluate your written and oral presentation. Students' work is graded as "excellent," "pass," "needs major/minor revision," or "fail." Students whose thesis is...

- judged exemplary may have their theses nominated for "Pass with Distinction" designation
- graded "needs major/minor revision" have 2-3 weeks to make all corrections, get approval of the changes, and resubmit one new copy of the thesis
- graded "fail" will need to complete the thesis to the satisfaction of the advisor and the Honors College, and submit one revised copy of the thesis

Pass With Distinction

Exemplary theses may be nominated for "Pass with Distinction."

Papers that merit "Pass with Distinction" reflect scholarly writing that is couched in the relevant literature and is analytical, synthetic, well-argued, well-written, and possibly publishable. Members of the Honors College Council make the final determination on this designation.

The thesis advisor and both reviewers must be in agreement before a thesis can receive a "Pass with Distinction" designation. The thesis advisor then formally nominates the thesis in a written letter submitted to the Honors College. The letter must state why, in specific terms, the advisor believes the work deserves this designation.

If your thesis is nominated for Pass with Distinction, you must submit one additional copy of your thesis to the Honors College.

Important Note: Only a thesis presented fall or spring semesters during weeks 7 or 11 may be nominated for Pass with Distinction.

FAQS

When do I do my thesis?

The Honors College encourages you to initiate your thesis work as soon as you can. Thesis proposals should be submitted no later than the second semester of your junior year.

Can I do a thesis while studying abroad?

Yes, a thesis can be either initiated or completed during your time studying abroad. In this case you might wish to complete your certificate of competency in a foreign language as well.

How do I find an academic advisor?

An academic advisor is chosen by you; the request to advise may be based on your positive interaction with a specific professor, the professor's expertise in the area of your research, or your interest in a professor's teaching. You and your advisor will also pick a thesis reviewer from your department or a similar field of research. Please direct your advisor to online information "For Thesis Advisors" on the Honors College website.

Does the advisor need to be from WSU?

Yes, the principal advisor needs to be a tenure-track faculty member or senior instructor at WSU, but a co-advisor from another academic institution or the world at large can be arranged with the agreement of the WSU Honors College.

How do I choose an academic question for my thesis?

Your academic question or hypothesis should reflect your interest or major field of study. The question may be one to which you have always wanted to know the answer, or it may reflect a question you identified from one of your classes or discussions with a professor. Ultimately you should have a passion or deep interest in the question you research. You may also choose to complete a creative project, such as creation of an art piece or musical composition, a short story, or a film. However, your thesis must include a relevant scholarly examination of its context as described above.

What is an academic question?

An academic question is one which asks the "how" or the "why" of some topic. It invites further research and deeper curiosity about an answer by engaging the relevant scholarly literature.

What is a thesis proposal?

A thesis proposal is a document that provides the necessary background and scholarly literature for your topic; clearly identifies the question being asked, the hypothesis being

tested, or the creative project to be completed; provides the methodology you will use to answer that question or complete the project; and notes what the expected results might be and what these results mean within the context of what is known. An annotated scholarly bibliography of five or six key references is needed. An appendix is required if you have human or animal studies approval, graphs, figures or charts of preliminary data, or rubrics that you will use for analysis, and questionnaires or interview questions you will use. Annotating a bibliography means preparing a short commentary on each reference you use in the proposal. If you complete a creative project, your proposal will describe your work, explain how you will execute your project and the time you expect it to take, and will place your effort in the larger context of others who have completed similar work. It will also have an annotated bibliography.

How long must the thesis proposal be?

Normally, the body of the proposal, including the literature review, the question being asked, the methodology and the expected results and conclusion sections, will not exceed five, double-spaced typewritten pages. The thesis proposal should be long enough to clearly explain what you wish to do, in language that an educated academic can understand, even if the proposal is not in his or her academic discipline.

When should the thesis proposal be completed and submitted to the Honors College for review and approval?

The Honors College has three deadline dates. They are: April 10 for work to begin in the summer and be completed in the following fall or later; July 10 for work to begin in the fall and be completed in the following spring or later; and November 10 for work to begin in the spring and be completed in the following fall or later.

Can the thesis proposal be submitted at any other time?

The thesis proposal can be turned in to the Honors College whenever it is ready, but must be approved by the Honors College before you begin your research, and before you can officially enroll in UH 450 (Honors Thesis or Project).

Who evaluates the proposal?

The Honors Thesis Proposal Committee will review all proposals, which are submitted by the dates noted above. The Coordinator of the Honors Thesis program will evaluate those proposals submitted out of cycle.

Are proposals accepted without alteration?

Yes, many proposals are accepted without alteration, while others may require further explanation and revision. If revision is required, the Committee will inform you of specific changes or clarifications they would like to see in the revised proposal.

Are any proposals rejected? If so, why are they rejected and what does this mean?

Yes, a proposal can be rejected, but that is very rare. It is much more likely that a proposal will be returned to a student for revision and explanation of critical points identified by the reviewers. When the student responds to those questions with cogent answers, the revised submitted proposal will be approved and the research can begin.

May I do my research in collaboration with a fellow Honors student?

Yes, but each student's contribution to the thesis must be stated in the proposal and be very clear to all reviewers of the thesis.

May I compile a journal and use that for my thesis?

Yes, you may compile a journal of your experiences, but you must ask and answer an academic question to fulfill the Honors Thesis requirement.

When is my completed thesis due in Honors?

One spiral-bound (not comb-bound) copy must be submitted to the Honors College by the Monday of Week 6 or Week 10 during fall semester and the Monday of Week 6 or Week 9 during spring semester.

When will I give my oral presentation?

Oral presentations are held during the 7th and 11th weeks of each semester. Presentation times are selected during Week 5 or Week 9 of fall semester and Week 5 or Week 8 of spring semester. Summer presentations are scheduled only in exceptional cases depending on the availability of the Honors faculty and WSU faculty who serve as evaluators.

What style and format do I use for my thesis?

The style (e.g. APA, MLA) should reflect that used by the major academic journals in your disciplinary area. You and your advisor will agree on which style you will follow. However, all theses must follow a specific format. (See "Formatting Your Completed Thesis.")

Who will attend my thesis presentation?

Anyone may attend your presentation. We encourage you to invite your family and/or friends, but that is up to you. Your thesis advisor, your thesis reviewer, one reviewer selected by the Honors College, and you are required to attend your presentation. The Honors-chosen reviewer may or may not be from your disciplinary area, so you must prepare an oral presentation that is accessible to the whole academic community.

How will I know if I have passed?

At the end of your 20-minute oral presentation, you can be asked questions by anyone present. When there are no more questions, you will be asked to step outside the room. Only an Honors representative, your thesis advisor, your thesis reviewer, and the Honors-chosen reviewer will stay to discuss your thesis. In five to ten minutes, you will be invited to return to the room and be told whether you have passed. The total time allotted for each presentation is one hour.

What if I receive a pass contingent upon making revisions?

You will have two to three weeks to make all corrections, get your thesis advisor's approval of the changes, and submit one new, corrected, spiral-bound copy to the Honors College.

What if I do not pass?

All students must complete the thesis to the satisfaction of their thesis advisor and the Honors College. A "do not pass" rating may reflect a lack of effort, content, or overall performance. Each case will be dealt with on an individual basis. A completely revised thesis must be submitted (one spiral-bound copy) to the Honors College. In the case of a satisfactorily revised thesis, another oral presentation is not required. An altogether different thesis will require a new oral presentation.

What is "Pass with Distinction?"

A "Pass with Distinction" designation is considered when the major professor and the two reviewers believe the thesis and oral presentation breaks significant new ground or represents an unusual amount of care and effort by the student. Thesis reviewers and the advisor must be unanimous in their evaluation of the thesis, and a nomination letter from the advisor is forwarded to the Honors Council for final review and determination of this award.

CHECKLIST

- 1 Sophomore year: Meet with an Honors Advisor to discuss your thesis. _____
- 2 Sophomore/Junior year: Select a faculty member who will serve as your thesis advisor during your thesis. Begin literature review. _____
- 3 Sophomore/Junior/Senior year: With your advisor, agree on a schedule of meetings to plan and discuss your progress. It is critical that you act professionally and maintain regular contact with your advisor.
- 4 Sophomore/Junior year: Complete UH 398 (Honors Thesis Proposal Seminar). _____
- 5 Junior year: Submit a written proposal to the Honors Thesis Proposal Committee by the appropriate deadline for the semester you plan to complete your work. _____
- 6 Junior/Senior year: Once proposal is approved, let the Honors College know which semester(s) to enroll you in UH 450. You need a total of three credits to complete this requirement. _____
- 7 Senior year, first semester: Be certain you will complete all your research, writing, and course requirements by the last semester of your academic program. _____
- 8 Senior year, first semester: Work with your thesis advisor to find a thesis reviewer from your discipline. _____
- 9 Senior year, first semester (preferred): Contact the Honors College and arrange a presentation time before the appropriate deadline for the semester you will be presenting. _____
- 10 Senior year: Submit one copy of your completed thesis to your thesis advisor, one copy to the thesis reviewer you selected, and one spiral-bound copy to the Honors College before the appropriate deadline for the semester in which you are presenting. _____
- 11 Senior year: If you are required to revise your thesis after you have given your oral presentation, submit one spiral-bound copy of the revised work within the deadline given to you during the discussion of your presentation. _____
- 12 Senior year: If you received "Pass with Distinction" on your thesis, please submit one additional spiral-bound copy of your thesis to the Honors College. _____