GUIDE FOR
HONORS THESIS ADVISORS &
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

AY 2019-2020

I. What is an Honors Thesis? 1
II. The Honors Thesis Process 1
III. Expectations of Honors Thesis Advisor 2
IV. Expectations of Honors Committee Members 2
V. Honors Reading List 2
VI. Thesis Defense and Guidelines for Evaluation 3
VII. Grading the Honors Thesis Courses 5
VIII. Support for Honors Thesis Work 5
IX. Contacting the Honors College 6
X. Appendices
A. Thesis Forms (7 pages) TF
B. Thesis Rubrics (6 pages) TR
C. Creative Thesis & Disquisition Guidelines (1 page) CTD
D. Student Thesis Handbook Part 1 (8 pages) TH1
E. Student Thesis Handbook Part 2 (16 pages) TH2

For more information, please go to:
https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/
I. What is an Honors Thesis?
The majority of Honors Theses are academic works, though a thesis is not just another research paper, not even a very, very long research paper. In addition to being more substantial, a thesis will thoroughly investigate the previous research on a topic, and it will also include your advisee’s own contributions to the topic, an outgrowth of their critical engagement in the process.

Other theses take a “creative” (of course, all theses are creative!) approach and may result in a less traditional product. Students in art, music, new media, theatre, dance, and creative writing might find this more in line with their interests and aptitudes. Students completing a creative thesis must also produce a Disquisition, or a formal inquiry into, or discussion of a subject in the form of an essay – see the Guideline document in appendix C for more details.

Yet other theses involve, to a great extent, a product which might be a disciplinary conference, a new periodical, an invention, or something we might not even be able to imagine; the options are almost endless!

In all of these cases, we ask that your advisee provide a written statement or prospectus which contextualizes the work and describes its scholarly content. You will need to sign and approve this prospectus (using Form 1) after your advisee completes it before they can submit it to the Honors College. Form 1 also outlines the responsibilities and expectations of both advisee and advisor.

II. The Honors Thesis Process
The Honors thesis at the University of Maine encompasses a yearlong project through the two-semester sequence of independent study courses, Honors 498 & 499 (3 credits each). For most majors, the thesis can take the place of the capstone. In some majors the capstone course is not waived if a student does a thesis and, most notably in pre-professional programs like nursing, engineering, and education, the goals of the capstone are sufficiently different from the Honors thesis that both may be required. However, in all cases, we have experience in making the thesis process work for the student. Please encourage your advisee to touch base if there are apparent conflicts or difficulties in making it all fit together. The following bullets summarize important elements of the process:

• Student should have thesis project outline and scope of work outlined in the semester before HON 498 is taken.
• The student’s thesis committee is to be composed of 5 faculty members, including the advisor and a member of the Honors faculty. The other three members are typically chosen by the student in consultation with the advisor in order to meet departmental requirements and to provide additional technical expertise and advice.
• In addition to the thesis research and written thesis, Honors students are required to prepare a Reading List of works that represent their growth as a scholar and as a person through the college/honors experience.
• The student will prepare for an oral defense of the thesis and the reading list in time for graduation.
The Honors thesis process is monitored through a series of forms (1-6) and well-defined timeline. Thesis Forms are given in Appendix A. Please see the updated calendar on the Honors thesis website (link shown on cover page of this document). The content of the thesis is developed with the advice of the advisor and committee members who also serve as evaluators of the thesis and defense and award a level of honors to the student.

III. Expectations of Honors Thesis Advisor
As a thesis advisor, I am agreeing to:

• Work with the student to refine and focus the student’s interests into a suitable thesis project;
• Provide clear expectations for the thesis/project, addressing length, assessment, and other aspects germane to scholarship in the particular discipline;
• Help identify appropriate thesis committee members;
• Help the student to convene a committee meeting, no later than eight weeks into the Honors 498 semester, in which the student will present the thesis proposal and receive feedback. See specific guidelines for this thesis proposal and meeting in appendix E (near end of Student Handbook Part II).
• Be prepared to meet with the student regularly (at least biweekly, but we encourage weekly meetings) throughout the duration of the project;
• Read and comment on drafts of the thesis as it develops;
• Chair the student’s thesis & reading list defense;
• Chair the thesis committee’s deliberation on the level of honors to be awarded;
• Grade the student in HON 498 and HON 499; and
• Participate in the year-end Honors Celebration if possible.

Remember: Your ADVISEE is responsible for the timely and successful completion of their thesis. It is this independence and commitment that separates thesis work from normal coursework.

IV. Expectations of Honors Committee Members
As an Honors Committee member, I am agreeing to:

• Work within the committee structure to help the student to refine the scope of the project;
• Provide appropriate entries into the literature relevant to the project;
• Read and comment on the final thesis; and
• Attend the thesis and reading list and contribute to the evaluation of the project.

V. Honors Reading List
The student will also complete an annotated reading list of books and, sometimes, a few “texts” such as movies, artwork, musical selections, or even a significant experience like study-abroad. The reading list is intended to represent the breadth of experience of the student in college and in Honors. The main goal of the annotation or narrative is to relate the texts to the growth of the student as a scholar and as a person through college and their Honors journey. Thus the texts (broadly construed) should be works that are meaningful to the student, and that meaning and
impact should be the focus of the written text that provided to the committee (rather than an extensive summary).

The annotation may take either a traditional annotative system or a narrative structure. The importance is its annotation, rather than its format. This is one of the key areas where the Honors Thesis process differs from a graduate thesis. As described by one former Honors College Associate, “[the] reading list should draw a picture of [your advisee] as an undergraduate.”

At most three texts may be drawn from the Honors Civilizations sequence. Typically the Honors member of the thesis committee is consulted about the reading list along with the advisor.

VI. Thesis Defense and Guidelines for Evaluation
At the end of the Honors thesis defense, the committee meets to evaluate the student’s work and award a level of Honors: No Honors, Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors. The Honors College recognizes both the autonomy of thesis committees formed under its auspices and the subjective nature of any evaluation process. The intent of the principles described here is to aid each committee as it endeavors to fulfill its role in coming to an appropriate Honors decision based upon commonly held values within the discipline, the Honors College, and the University.

Elements to be evaluated
The decision on the level (No Honors, Honors, High Honors, and Highest Honors) to be awarded to the Honors candidate should include assessments of the following components:

1. The thesis or project
2. The presentation of the thesis/project
3. The discussion with the committee of the thesis/project
4. The reading list
5. The discussion with the committee of the reading list

Without question, the actual thesis work or project should carry the most weight, as it is the physical evidence presented by the candidate to represent the entirety of the thesis experience. However, each of the other facets is crucial to a successful final Honors exercise, and the components may reinforce or explicate each other. For example, the student’s command of the material occasionally becomes more evident through the presentation and discussion at the defense than it was in the written project.

Moreover, as the mission of the Honors College is to both broaden and deepen the student’s education, a reading list and subsequent discussion that speak to the breadth of the candidate’s undergraduate experience is of paramount importance. A fundamental goal of Honors education is for students to think seriously about a wide range of subjects and ideas and to speak cogently about them.

The Evaluation and Thesis Rubrics
The evaluation of the thesis/project should include assessment of originality of thought evidenced in the process and the product, independence and self-direction of the student,
creativity, command of the material and the subject, understanding of the importance and context of the work, appropriateness of the methodologies employed, and written and oral expression. Individual thesis work may involve other significant facets as well, related to the discipline or particular project.

Evaluation of the reading list and discussion should focus on breadth of ideas and works, clear expression of the influence of the texts on the student and her/his education, ability to make connections among the texts and to other areas of discourse, depth of analysis, and ability to engage in thoughtful dialogue.

A set of rubrics has been developed to help committees deliberate effectively and help normalize decisions across the wide range of disciplines and kinds of theses. These rubrics are provided in the appendix B of this document.

**The Deliberation**

Determining the Honors level is often challenging. Thesis committees are charged with rewarding the thesis students for their hard work and commitment while ensuring the continuing integrity of the individual decisions. Disciplinary differences preclude standardization of specifics indicating Honors levels; the intent of having a broadly based thesis committee, with experience both in the discipline and in Honors education, is to provide a basis for deliberations that will yield an appropriate result.

There are four possible outcomes: No Honors, Honors, High Honors, and Highest Honors. A student who completes the project, as laid out by the advisor and student, in a competent and complete manner is awarded (at least) Honors. The Honors College encourages advisors to be honest with Honors students if this seems to be an unlikely conclusion, understanding that the student may still elect to bring the thesis to the full committee. A decision of No Honors does not necessarily mean that the student has not fulfilled the capstone requirement. This is a departmental decision, usually depending on the advisor’s assessment of the work completed.

High Honors and Highest Honors are awarded to students who perform, in all or most of the facets discussed above, at an unusual or outstanding level; all components should play a role in this assessment. A student whose work is unusually strong in all the components will often receive High Honors as will one whose work is outstanding in a few of them.

Highest Honors should be reserved for the small percentage of Honors students whose work is exceptional, indicated by an outstanding performance in all of the components. Various benchmarks are occasionally used, e.g. favorable comparison to Master’s work in the discipline, publishable research, a mastery of subject and context far exceeding all expectations coupled with exceptional presentation of both thesis and reading list.

The committee may determine that a level of Honors will be granted only after the candidate completes specific revisions (more extensive than are typically required for final submission of a thesis) or additions. They may assign evaluation of this additional work to the thesis advisor, or they may ask that they see the final version either individually or as a group.
N.B. It is customary for committees to try to reach consensus during their deliberations. To this end, members of the committee may first sequentially express their analyses of the thesis defense. Due to the primacy of the advisor’s position, both in terms of working with the student and, typically, expertise in the subject area, we recommend that the advisor presents her/his comments after the other members of the committee have done so. We recognize that often the advisor can provide important insight to set the thesis work in context within the discipline or sub-discipline. After these initial expressions, it is common for deliberations to continue in an informal manner working toward the final decision. However, if the committee believes a vote is the best way to determine the outcome, that is acceptable.

VII. Grading the Honors Thesis Courses
While the evaluation of the Honors thesis, reading list, and their presentation by the student is the province of the thesis committee, the Honors 498 and 499 courses are to be graded by the thesis advisor as instructor of record. Some guidance is outlined below.

Grading HON 498
The following deadlines and guidelines are designed to help students succeed in a process which takes them out of the comfortable world of well-defined course assignments to the self-paced arena of independent, but guided, study. HON 498 should be graded with traditional letter grades (A, B, C, D, F, I, L) as it allows the student to receive clear assessment of progress. The guidelines and expectations should be discussed with the advisee at the outset of HON 498. Please consult with the HC Associate Dean before using an incomplete grade (I) or a non-participation grade (L).

The Honors faculty has discussed and approved the following guidelines for thinking about the grade of HON 498; the responsibility for determining the grade rests with the Honors thesis advisor who is the instructor of record. C is the minimum grade required to enroll in HON 499.

Required deadlines and suggested guidelines for HON 498

1. Thesis Form 1 has been submitted the semester prior to taking HON 498.

2. Thesis proposal, approved by the advisor, is sent to committee for review one week before the first committee meeting. See Appendix E for more details and guidelines.

3. First committee meeting must take place by Friday of week 8 of HON 498. Signatures of committee members are collected on Form 2 at the meeting. The form is then directly handed in to Honors office, 146 Estabrooke Hall.

4. Student must schedule and attend all meetings with advisor, the minimum being bi-monthly.

5. Attendance at these meetings is required and will be taken into consideration in the final grade.

6. Student has met goals set by student and advisor.
7. A working draft of the reading list must be submitted by the end of the HON 498 semester.

A possible way to weigh the elements above in awarding a grade
A= successful completion of 1-7.
C= successful completion of 1-3.

Grading HON 499
HON 499 should not be assigned a grade until AFTER the thesis defense as recorded in Form 5 AND the final thesis is submitted with Form 6. Guidelines for grading HON 499 are under review and will be shared later. Students cannot graduate without grades in HON 498/499, so please review these at the end of the process.

VIII. Support for Honors Thesis Work
The Honors College can help support student research work and thesis work through some fellowships in particular disciplines and through the Slavin Research Fund which provides support for materials and supplies. Other sources of support include the Center for Undergraduate Research (CUGR), CLAS, and individual investigator or research center grants and contracts. See https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/honors-fellowship-opportunities/

IX. Contacting the Honors College
If you have any questions, please contact the Honors College staff, and we will do our best to help!

François G. Amar, Dean (145 Estabrooke Hall)
581-3262 amar@maine.edu

Melissa Ladenheim, Associate Dean (148 Estabrooke Hall)
581-3264 melissa.ladenheim@maine.edu

Kristin Beebe, Administrative Specialist (146 Estabrooke Hall)
581-3263 kristin.beebe@maine.edu

Cara Doiron ’18, Honors College Associate (145.1 Estabrooke Hall)
581-3285 cara.doiron@maine.edu

Kim Crowley ’19, Honors College Associate (145.1 Estabrooke Hall)
581-3201 kimberly.crowley@maine.edu

Katie Kurz, Personnel and Finance Manager (143 Estabrooke Hall)
581-3308 kkurz@maine.edu
I. STUDENT INFO
Name: ____________________________ Local Address: ____________________________
Phone: ____________________________ E-Mail Address: ____________________________
College: __________________________ Major Department: __________________________
Graduation Date (Month/Year): ______________ Student ID# _______________________

II. THESIS INFO (Please attach a Thesis Proposal of 250 or fewer words to this form.)
Working Thesis Title: ____________________________________________________________

When are you taking HON 498? ____________ When are you taking HON 499? ____________
Please check the box if you are using Co-Advisors: □
Thesis Advisor(s): _____________________________________________________________
Thesis Advisor(s) preferred email address(es): ______________________________________
Check the box if this thesis is: □ a collaborative thesis □ part of a group project
If yes, please refer to the corresponding sections of the Thesis Handbook for further information.
(You are required to discuss your plans with the Honors College Dean before proceeding.)

III. HONORS REQUIREMENTS CHECKLIST (Check if completed, or enrolled currently)
□ HON 111  □ HON 112  □ HON 211  □ HON 212  □ HON 170  □ HON 180
□ HON 3XX (Tutorial or Alternative) Current GPA: ________________

IV. CONFIRMATION
By signing below, the student and advisor(s) agree to undertake this thesis experience based on the
expectations found on the back of this form. Additionally, if the thesis changes substantially from
what is described on the attachment, they agree to communicate that to the Dean of the Honors
College. If the thesis fulfills a capstone requirement, they also agree to communicate those changes
to the academic head of the student’s major.

Student ____________________________ ID # ______________ Date __________
Advisor ____________________________ ID # ______________ Date __________
Co-Advisor (if applicable) ______________ ID # ______________ Date __________
Student’s home College Chair/Director/Associate Dean

1 Required if thesis is to satisfy student’s capstone experience

For office use only: ____________________________ Date __________

Honors Dean __________________________ Date __________
HONORS THESIS PROCESS EXPECTATIONS:

The thesis advisor agrees to:
- work with the student to refine and focus the student’s interests into a suitable thesis project
- provide, for each semester of thesis work, a clear expectation for the thesis/project, addressing benchmarks, length, assessment, and other aspects germane to scholarship in the particular discipline
- help the student identify appropriate thesis committee members
- help convene a meeting, no later than week 8 of the HON 498 semester with the full thesis committee to describe progress made and to address the expectations for the thesis
- be prepared to meet with the student regularly (at least biweekly, but we encourage weekly meetings) throughout the duration of the project
- inform the Dean or Associate Dean of the Honors College if there appear to be indications that the thesis project is not on track for completion
- read and comment on drafts of the thesis as it develops
- chair the student’s thesis & reading list defense and determine, with the thesis committee, the level of honors to be awarded
- grade the student for Honors 498 and Honors 499
- participate in the year-end Honors Celebration, if possible

Grading the Thesis:
- Hon 498 and 499 are set up with individual sections for each student. The advisor is given access to the section once Form 1 is submitted to the Honors office. The course should then show up on the Faculty Center on MaineStreet.
- A letter grade should be given for Honors 498.
- For students with fewer than 12 additional graded credits in the 498 semester, awarding a TH can affect the student’s eligibility for the Dean’s list irrespective of semester GPA. Please check with your advisee on this matter.
- Honors 499 should not be graded with a letter grade until after the thesis defense and completion of all requirements including final post-defense edits and submission of Form 6 and electronic thesis. If needed the TH grade maybe used as a place holder for 499 until completion of the project.

The thesis student agrees to:
- turn in all thesis forms on time and completed to the Honors College office
- organize and schedule the thesis committee meeting no later than week 8 of the HON 498 semester with the full thesis committee to describe progress made and to address the expectations for the thesis
- attend and be prepared for regular (we encourage weekly) meetings with her/his advisor – if a meeting must be cancelled, provide plenty of notice
- secure, with the advisor’s assistance, any necessary special approval for the research
- keep all committee members informed as to the progress of the thesis project
- inform the Dean or Associate Dean of the Honors College if there are concerns with the process or indications that the thesis project is not on track for completion
- participate in CUGR Showcase if possible
- attend the Honors Celebration

TF-1a
I. INFORMATION (PLEASE PRINT NAMES AND TITLE CLEARLY)

Student Name: ________________________ Student ID# ________________________

Thesis Advisor(s): ____________________ ____________________ ____________________

Thesis Title: ____________________________ ____________________________

Date of Committee Meeting: ______________

II. ADDITIONAL THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- There must be five faculty members on your committee
- There must be one member of the committee from outside the discipline
- There must be one member who is a current or recent preceptor in the Civilizations sequence
- If the thesis fulfills capstone requirements and the advisor is not from the student’s academic unit, there must be a faculty member from that unit on the committee

Thesis Advisor:

Print Name ___________________________ Signature ___________________________ Date ______________

Co-Advisor or Committee Member Print Name ___________________________ Signature ___________________________ Date ______________ Department ______________

Committee Member Print Name ___________________________ Signature ___________________________ Date ______________ Department ______________

Committee Member Print Name ___________________________ Signature ___________________________ Date ______________ Department ______________

Committee Member Print Name ___________________________ Signature ___________________________ Date ______________ Department ______________

Thesis committee members agree to
- provide informed guidance to the thesis student where appropriate
- be willing to meet occasionally with the student
- attend a committee meeting to address the expectations for the thesis
- read and comment on drafts of the thesis in later stages of its development where appropriate
- participate in the student’s thesis & reading list defense and the determination of the degree of honors awarded

...........................................For office use only..........................................................
I. INFORMATION (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

Student Name: _______________________________ Student ID# __________________

Thesis Title: ____________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

II. READING LIST (Please attach reading list with annotations.)

Advisor ________________________________ Date _________

*Co-Advisor ______________________________ Date _________

What is the reading list?

The reading list, while assessed by your committee during the second hour of your thesis defense, is completely distinct from your thesis work. The reading list should be an annotated list of texts that describes your development during your college years. Your reading list should be made up of some twelve to fifteen titles which have played a significant role in your academic development. Your reading list should include titles that are reflective of your undergraduate years: from Honors courses, from other courses, or from your private experience.

Choose books and other texts that you are passionate about and that you can easily discuss. Do not try to impress your thesis committee with a long list of so-called "classics" or "great books," but do choose books that have made a significant impact on your undergraduate experience. You may choose one or two texts you read prior to college, but only if they contributed greatly to who you are today.

Your reading list must be annotated. In addition to the title of the work and the author/director, you should provide brief paragraphs describing each work and perhaps some evaluation. Alternatively, a two- to three-page essay describing the works through a narrative form would serve the same purpose. Regardless of format, the annotation need not be lengthy but should provide an entrée into the works for your committee.

Your advisor, the dean of the Honors College, or the Honors College member of your thesis committee often can help you with your reading list. More information about the reading list is in the Thesis Handbook, online at www.honors.umaine.edu/academics/thesis/thesis-handbook/ or in hard copy at the Honors College office in Colvin Hall. Sample reading lists can be found at www.honors.umaine.edu/academics/thesis/reading-lists/

For office use only

Dean ________________________________ Date _______________

---- TF-3 ----
I. STUDENT INFORMATION (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Local Address: __________________________________________________________________________

Local Phone: ___________________ Student ID# ________________________________

E-Mail Address: __________________________________________________________________________

Major Department: __________________________ College: ________________________

II. THESIS INFORMATION

Thesis Title: __________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Thesis Advisor(s): ___________________________ ________________________________

III. DEFENSE INFORMATION

Date: ___________________________ Time: ________________________________

(You must schedule at least 2.5 hours for the defense)

Place (Room/Building): __________________________________________________________________

Advisor signature ___________________________________________ Date ______________

*Co-Advisor ___________________________ Date ______________

Signing this form indicates an affirmation that the student should be ready to defend her/his thesis on the proposed date.

……………………………… For office use only………………………………………..

Dean _________________________________ Date ______________
I. INFORMATION

Name: ___________________________ Student ID# ______________________ Date: __________

Thesis Advisor(s): ________________________________ _____________________________

Full Thesis Title: __________________________________________________________________

II. HONORS RECOMMENDATION

Based on the thesis, the reading list, and the oral defense, we recommend awarding…

No Honors                    Honors                    High Honors                    Highest Honors

to the candidate.

Advisor Print Name ___________________________ Signature ___________________________

Co-Advisor/Committee Member Print Name ___________________________ Signature

Committee Member Print Name ___________________________ Signature ______________________

Committee Member Print Name ___________________________ Signature ______________________

Committee Member Print Name ___________________________ Signature ______________________

Notes: ...............................................................................................................................
I. INFORMATION
Name: ___________________________________________ Student ID# ____________________

Thesis Advisor(s): ________________________________________________________________

Full Thesis Title: _________________________________________________________________

II. STUDENT AGREEMENT

Intellectual Property
I hereby grant to the University of Maine and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive and make accessible, under the conditions specified below, my honors thesis, in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known. I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

Copyrights and Ownership
I hereby certify that, if appropriate, I have obtained and attached hereto a written permission statement from the owner(s) of each third party copyrighted matter to be included in my thesis, dissertation, or project report, allowing distribution as specified below.

Institutional Repository
The above-mentioned document may be placed in the Digital Commons repository. (http://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/) Please check one:

I agree I do NOT agree

Student ___________________________ Date ____________

If you would like the tracking history of thesis downloads/hits sent to you by email, please give an email address that will persist beyond graduation: ________________________________

Thesis key words: ________________________________________________________________

III. FINAL THESIS ACCEPTANCE

I have received the final version of the thesis and accept it as fulfilling the requirements of the Honors College at the University of Maine.

I confirm that the level of Honors received by this student is:

                      Honors           High Honors         Highest Honors

Advisor ___________________________ Date ____________

..............................................For Office Use Only..............................................

Dean ______________________________ Date ____________
Providing brief comments will give additional feedback to the student as well as inform the post-defense deliberation among committee members.

A student who attains *honors* will typically receive a rating of at least *satisfactory* (4) on each of the dimensions below and on the rubrics connected with other facets of the thesis and defense. This is not an inviolable rule. The post-defense discussion should carefully consider the range and pattern of ratings, the rationale behind each committee member’s ratings, and the relative importance of each dimension. Likewise, the ratings of a student who receives *highest honors* are almost always all *outstanding* (6).

### 1. Relationship with the advisor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Assesses own knowledge, skills, and abilities accurately
- Perseveres toward attaining mutually agreed upon goals
- Displays high standards of attendance and punctuality
- Responds thoughtfully to feedback
- Sets, reflects upon and adjusts priorities in order to balance professionalism

Comments:

### 2. Relationship with the project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Clearly understands the big picture while attending to the details of the specific project
- Works independently; is a consistent “self-starter”
- Reliably recognizes the existence of a problem, identifies potential causes, and implements possible solutions
- Seeks and evaluates information using multiple criteria for topics/issues under consideration

Comments:

---

1 Adapted, with permission, from the rubric of the Washington State University Honors College.
3. Assessment of the thesis project

- **Originality of thesis**
  Was the thesis idea developed by the student?
  Does the work done for the thesis represent an original perspective?

- **Contribution of thesis to disciplinary or interdisciplinary scholarship**
  Does the thesis introduce new knowledge or analysis?
  Will the thesis serve to stimulate other research or scholarship?

- **Publishability of thesis**
  Is the thesis likely to result in a peer-reviewed journal article?
  Is the thesis likely to result in a presentation at a professional meeting?
  Is the thesis suitable for publication in a student journal or presentation at a student session?

- **Comparison of thesis work to master’s level work in field**
  Does the thesis work compare favorably to masters thesis work in the field?
  Does the thesis work compare favorably to first-year master’s student work in the field?
Providing brief comments will give additional feedback to the student as well as inform the post-defense deliberation among committee members.

A student who attains honors will typically receive a rating of at least satisfactory (4) on each of the dimensions below and on the rubrics connected with other facets of the thesis and defense. This is not an inviolable rule. The post-defense discussion should carefully consider the range and pattern of ratings, the rationale behind each committee member’s ratings, and the relative importance of each dimension. Likewise, the ratings of a student who receives highest honors are almost always all outstanding (6).

**THESIS**

1. **Presentation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Introduction is interesting and engaging
- Speech is clear and articulate
- Presentation is well-organized and easy to follow
- Media and format are appropriate for content
- Presentation appropriately represents the thesis project

Comments:

2. **Discussion with Committee**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Questions are answered well and with reference to thesis student’s own work
- Demonstrates knowledge of the subject
- Comfortably engages committee
- Demonstrates understanding of and facility with the content of the thesis
- Demonstrates understanding of and facility with the disciplinary context and implications of the thesis
- Findings central to the thesis are extended to questions external to the discipline

Comments:

---

1 Adapted, with permission, from the rubric of the Washington State University Honors College.
# READING LIST

## 1. List and Annotations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Works demonstrate a breadth of interests and education as well as intellectual depth
- Reading list primarily reflects undergraduate experience
- Annotations provide insight into the works and the student
- Annotations open doors for engaging conversation

Comments:

## 2. Conversation with Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Student recognizes connections among works
- Student expands upon annotations in a thoughtful and meaningful way
- Student is comfortable responding to questions from committee
- Student is able to explore threads tangential to the works
- Texts are clearly demonstrated to have played a significant role in the student's academic development

Comments:
Providing brief comments will give additional feedback to the student as well as inform the post-defense deliberation among committee members.

A student who attains *honors* will typically receive a rating of at least *satisfactory* (4) on each of the dimensions below and on the rubrics connected with other facets of the thesis and defense. This is not an inviolable rule. The post-defense discussion should carefully consider the range and pattern of ratings, the rationale behind each committee member’s ratings, and the relative importance of each dimension. Likewise, the ratings of a student who receives *highest honors* are almost always all *outstanding* (6).

1. **Research question or creative challenge**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Unique research question/issue/creative challenge identified
- Goals/objectives/hypotheses are explicit
- Historical and contemporary contexts, assumptions/biases, or ethical considerations are identified
- Thesis presented is within an academic framework

Comments:

2. **Methodology/approach: development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Methodology/approach is appropriate to disciplinary/interdisciplinary focus
- Topic is contextualized among sources and materials cited
- Multiple perspectives are considered
- Demonstrates understanding of the content, tools, and structures in the field

Comments:

---

1 Adapted, with permission, from the rubric of the Washington State University Honors College.
3. Methodology/approach: implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Quantitative and/or symbolic tools are utilized effectively
- Evidence is sufficient to address the research question and is well utilized
- Accuracy and relevance of evidence are appropriately questioned; possible biases are identified
- Evaluates, analyzes, and synthesizes information
- Demonstrates understanding of professional standards

Comments:

4. Conclusions, implications, and consequences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Conclusions, qualifications, and consequences, including value of thesis, are presented
- Significance of what was discovered, learned, or created is demonstrated
- Assertions are qualified and well supported
- Demonstrates independent and critical thought

Comments:

5. Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Marginal</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Language clearly and effectively communicates ideas
- Any errors in grammar, spelling, mechanics, and/or punctuation are minimal
- Organization is clear and effective
- Sources and citations are used correctly

Comments:
1. A creative thesis is not just a stand-alone creative work.

2. A creative thesis must be accompanied by a disquisition.

3. A disquisition is a formal inquiry into or a discussion of a subject in the form of an essay.

4. As a guideline, the disquisition should be approximately 15 pages.

5. The remainder of the thesis will consist of the creative work and will vary according to its genre.

6. The disquisition should include:
   a. A discussion describing how you came to decide on your particular creative thesis.
   b. A claim, i.e. what you are trying to accomplish through both the process and product.
   c. A literature review in which you discuss texts that are relevant to your discipline and contribute to your understanding of your topic.
   d. A discussion of methodology describing your creative process.
   e. An analysis in which you engage critically with your work within the broader context of the genre/form and extant literature.
   f. A conclusion in which you summarize what you have learned through the process and the broader implications of your work.
   g. A bibliography in the format consistent with your discipline.
Honors Thesis Handbook Part 1 -
Getting Started: What, Why, and Who

Table of Contents

Overview of the Honors Thesis process.................................................................2
Benefits of the Thesis Process: .................................................................2
More About the Honors Thesis .................................................................3
Requirements of the Honors Thesis Process.........................................................4
The Thesis Advisor ..................................................................................................5
The Thesis Defense ..................................................................................................5
Thesis Forms ..........................................................................................................6
More About the Honors Reading List .................................................................6
Special Considerations ..........................................................................................6
Overview of the Honors Thesis Process

Broadly, the Honors thesis is an independent undertaking involving research or creative work that represents the culmination of your academic and personal endeavors as an undergraduate. This project includes three key components: 1) a written Honors thesis—a body of work which demonstrates a deep understanding of a research or creative topic, 2) a written Honors reading list which illustrates the breadth of your academic and personal development in college, 3) and an oral defense where you are asked to discuss both your Honors thesis and reading list. This work is accomplished in HON 498 and HON 499.

1) Written Thesis: Your thesis end goal is a written document where the thesis question is discussed based on your research and analysis. In the case of creative theses, this document includes information on the creative process. In both types of thesis, the student is expected to include a thesis question, relevant literature, methodology, and analysis.

Often, the Honors thesis can replace your major’s capstone requirement (see Honors website for lists of covered majors at https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/capstone/). If your major does not accept the Honors thesis as a capstone replacement, significant expansion of a capstone project or development of a topic based on an academic minor or other significant interest can be used as a thesis.

2) Reading List: Your reading list end goal is a written document where you reflect on your time as an undergraduate student. This “list” is a selection of 12-15 “texts” that demonstrate your personal and intellectual growth. These “texts” are mostly books, but can also be articles, movies, artwork, music, TV shows, or other media that illustrate your intellectual journey, and experiences that provide a holistic understanding of you as an individual and critical thinker. The goal of the annotation or narrative is to relate the texts to your growth as a student and as a person through college and in your Honors journey. Thus the texts (broadly construed) should be works that are meaningful to you, and that meaning and impact should be the focus of the written text that you provide the committee (rather than an extensive summary).

3) Oral Defense: Your oral defense end goal is a 2.5 hour thesis defense where your written thesis and reading list is discussed in front of your committee. About an hour is allotted for the written thesis as well as the reading list, and a half hour is devoted to deliberation on the level of honors you will receive.

Benefits of the Thesis Process

Deciding to undertake the thesis process is a commitment to a significant amount of work, but there are important benefits to consider:

- Being one of a select group of students graduating from the University of Maine Honors College. Only around 5% of graduating seniors each year complete a degree with honors.
● An opportunity to explore, research, and create something that particularly interests you.
● Gaining/honing a particular knowledge and/or skill set.
● Confidence in your public presentation and speaking abilities.
● The chance to reflect on and synthesize four years of intellectual and personal growth.
● Developing professional relationships with advisors and mentors.
● Demonstrate academic motivation and intellectual specialization through a well-written document to showcase to graduate programs or employers.
● Strong sense of accomplishment on having completed a major, independent research or creative project.
● Distinction of honors will be recorded on both your diploma and your transcript.

More About the Honors Thesis

Determining a Thesis Topic: Theses are academic works. They present a hypothesis or assertion that is then tested, analyzed, evaluated, and defended according to the methods of the discipline. A thesis is not just another research paper—not even a very, very long research paper. A thesis will investigate the previous research on a topic, and, importantly, it will also include your own insights and contributions to the topic, synthesized from your critical engagement in the process.

In some disciplines, a creative approach can result in a different form of thesis. Students in art, music, new media, theatre, dance, or creative writing might find this more in line with their interests, aptitudes, and the expectations of their disciplines. Honors students have created paintings, composed music, written novels, made clothing, directed plays, and engaged in many other creative endeavors to fulfill the thesis requirement. Other theses might center on a new periodical, an invention, or something we might not even be able to imagine!

All creative theses include a written piece accompanying the creative work, known as the disquisition. The disquisition contextualizes one’s creative work, discusses related research, and describes its scholarly content. Further details may be found here: https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#disquisition. We strongly encourage students considering the creative option to come in and talk with the Honors Associates and/or the Honors College Associate Dean or Dean, so we can give you more specific guidance.

The people best able to help you figure out a thesis topic are faculty members in those disciplines. It would be a great idea to ask faculty members in your academic department for ideas as you begin to consider thesis topics.

Thesis Archives: Another way to find out what projects have been done in your discipline is to look at the Honors College thesis archive. We have hard copies of theses from 1937 to the
present in Colvin and in Estabrooke, and you can search this database on our website; (https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/search/).

You will notice that theses range in length, and there is no definitive answer to “how long does a thesis have to be?” The best way to find what would be appropriate in your field is to find examples of previous theses or ask a faculty member in your department.

The Timeline for Honors and the Thesis Process
Creating and sticking to a realistic timeline is the critical first step for successfully completing your Honors thesis. Here are the required classes for the thesis process:

- HON 391 (Usually taken in third year, mandatory for Class of 2022 and after)
- HON 498 (Usually in the Fall of final year)
- HON 499 (Usually in the Spring of final year)

The thesis writing calendar (available on the Honors College website) details the deadlines within HON 498 and 499:
https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#calendar

Requirements of the Honors Thesis Process

A. HON 391--Introduction to Thesis Research. Typically in the third year, your goal will be to identify a thesis topic and produce thesis prospectus.

B. Thesis Form 1, which lists your thesis title, advisor, and includes a brief description of the topic is due at the end of the semester before you take HON 498.

C. Enroll in HON 498, an “independent study” worth three credits.

D. Enroll in HON 499, an “independent study” worth three credits.

E. Your responsibilities in taking these classes include: arranging meetings (weekly, bi-weekly…) with your thesis advisor, meeting Honors College deadlines (see thesis Writing Calendar at https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#calendar), and making steady progress in your research, creative work, and thesis writing to receive a grade in both HON 498 and 499. The goal of HON 498 and 499 is a final honors thesis and reading list document--one defended, edited, and submitted before graduation.

HON 498 and HON 499 are real classes even though there are no set times or class meetings in an independent study. The student works independently with an advisor and spends ~10 hours/week on the research and writing for your project, equivalent to a regular 3-credit course. The advisor grades the course.

Above all, YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TIMELY AND SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF YOUR thesis. It is this independence and commitment that separates thesis work from normal coursework.
The Thesis Advisor
A thesis advisor is an individual YOU work closely with on your thesis research and writing. Your advisor is typically a UMaine faculty member. Your advisor is your project mentor, and also grades HON 498 and 499. Co-advisors are possible--talk with the honors staff if you are thinking about co-advisors.

Finding a Thesis Advisor: Typically, students find an advisor by asking a faculty member if he or she is available to work with them on their thesis topic. The faculty member may be someone who you are already working with in a lab or on a research project, someone you had a class with, or someone with expertise in your field of interest. We recommend you start thinking about this well before you begin your thesis. If you have trouble finding an advisor, contact the Honors College’s associate dean or dean.

Building the Thesis Committee: In consultation with your thesis advisor, you will choose committee members who have some expertise to offer on your thesis topic. The committee must be comprised of:

1. Five total members, including the advisor
2. One designated Honors College representative (a faculty member that has recently taught in the Civilizations sequence or a tutorial)
3. One member that is NOT within the discipline of your study*

*The honors member can serve as both the honors representative AND member outside of your discipline.

The Thesis Defense
The thesis defense is the presentation and discussion of your Honors thesis and reading list. It typically involves a presentation of the research (c. 20 min.), and time for questions from your committee about the work. Both creative and research theses must follow the basic three-part defense structure:

- Honors thesis presentation with Q&A for one hour
- Honors reading list conversation with committee for one hour
- Committee deliberation for up to 30 minutes

Your defense is a presentation and discussion with your thesis committee--people YOU have selected, and who have been helping with your project! Remember, you will have spent lots of time working on both the thesis and the reading list, and therefore will have PLENTY to talk about!
**Thesis Forms**

Thesis forms provide deadlines to keep you on track and allows us to measure the progress of thesis students.

**It is YOUR responsibility to turn in these forms by the Honors College deadlines.**

There are six thesis forms to complete in your thesis process, the first of which is due **before the end of your third year** (or the semester before enrolling in HON 498). thesis forms can be found on the Honors College website:

[https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#forms](https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#forms)

Please read ALL directions closely on each form before submitting them to the Honors administrative office (146 Estabrooke).

---

**More About the Honors Reading List**

All Reading Lists are different, depending on the writer and texts chosen, but we have some examples of good ones on our website:

[https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/reading-lists/](https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/reading-lists/)

The Reading List can be written in one of two formats: narrative or annotated (see the examples on our website). Both serve the same purpose in describing your experiences, thinking, and intellectual growth after four years as a member of the Honors College at University of Maine.

---

**A Preceptor’s Take on the Reading List**

"I generally describe the goal of the reading list as an opportunity to explore who you are as a thinking, feeling, acting human, how you fit within the various communities in your life, and how what is most important to you as you leave the College will move you to act in those communities in the coming years... I stress the word “most” a lot - that most of the text should be traditional book-like things, most of them should come from your University years, most of them should be things that weren't assigned to you in class, but that they should work within those suggestions to produce something that is authentic and that they're proud to share as a statement (or set of questions) about who they are at this moment in their world and how these texts and experiences interacted with each other to shape that person into being.”  

- Jordan LaBouff, CLAS-Honors Preceptor of Psychology

---

**Special Considerations**

**What if I want to use human/animal subjects in my thesis research?**

If you have a thesis idea that would involve human subject research, you may have to complete an IRB (Institutional Review Board) application before any research begins. This process is routinely done by many faculty and Honors students. Contact the Honors staff for more information and review the IRB page:  [https://umaine.edu/research-compliance/human-subjects/](https://umaine.edu/research-compliance/human-subjects/)
What if I want to use my group capstone project as my thesis?
The Honors thesis process is an individual project, however here are the guidelines for acceptance of such a thesis:

- There is a strong rationale for the thesis to be related to a group project.
- The student, the advisor and the dean of the Honors College meet prior to the start of the thesis work to discuss the structure of the project.
- It must be clear, in writing and from the outset, what part of the work is the thesis student's responsibility and what is the group's responsibility.
- The thesis student, after the completion of the thesis but before the defense, produces a reflection on the nature of the endeavor with the group: how it worked and what was valuable. This reflection should be included as the last appendix to the thesis.
- The student produces a thesis in which there may be some shared text/material, but which also includes the student's individual contributions to the project. Work done by the group should be appropriately cited.

The dean of the Honors College will make the final determination as to the acceptability of the thesis proposal.

What if I want to write a collaborative thesis?
The Honors College is open to exploring options for joint thesis work by pairs of honors students. The Honors College will accept proposals for collaborative theses under the following policies:

- There is a strong rationale for the thesis to be collaborative.
- There are two collaborators; both are Honors students.
- The two students have the same thesis advisor (they may and probably should have some different thesis committee members).
- The students, the advisor, and the dean of the Honors College meet prior to the start of the thesis work to discuss the structure of the project.
- It must be clear, in writing and from the outset, who is responsible for what part(s) of the work.
- Every attempt should be made to have a joint meeting of all members of both thesis committees as per the requirements for individual theses.
- Each student, after the completion of the thesis but before the defense, produces a reflection on the nature of the collaboration: how it worked and what was valuable. This reflection should be included as the last appendix to the thesis.
- The students produce two theses in which there may be some shared text/material, but which also includes their individual contributions to the project. Work done by the collaborating student is appropriately cited.
- The students and the committees can opt for either 1. One three-hour joint defense with both students and both committees 2. Two individual, standard defenses. In either case, the discussion of the reading lists should be separate.
- Level of honors and grades for HON 498 and 499 is determined separately for each student.
The dean of the Honors College makes the final determination as to the acceptability of the collaborative thesis proposal.

**Next Steps**
Hopefully this document has been useful in your decision to undertake the Honors Thesis. **If you still have questions, please come see the Honors Associates, Associate Dean, and/or the Dean!** We are here to help you.

## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honors Thesis Classes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Forms</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HON 391</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Advisor</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HON 498</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HON 499</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Defense</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of the Thesis, Reading List, and Defense</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submitting the Final Thesis</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A - Template Emails</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B - Template Meeting Agenda</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C - Formatting</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formatting Guide Checklist</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Meeting Proposal Guidelines</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Checklist</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This document is a guide for students undertaking an Honors thesis.

**When to take the Honors Thesis Classes (HON 391, HON 498 and HON 499)**

Here are five common examples of thesis class schedules for May graduates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>3rd Year</th>
<th>4th Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semester</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan 1</td>
<td>HON 391</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>HON 391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan 3</td>
<td>HON 391</td>
<td>HON 498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>HON 391</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alternative Plan

If your academic plan would conflict with these sample timelines, or you intend on graduating in August or December, see the Honors staff to create a plan that will fit your schedule.

**Thesis Classes Meeting Times:**

HON 391 - Once a week for 1.5 hours with the Honors Dean and Honors Associates
HON 498 - NO REGULAR MEETINGS. YOU arrange to meet with your thesis advisor.
HON 499 - NO REGULAR MEETINGS. YOU arrange to meet with your thesis advisor.

---

**Thesis Forms**

Use the Honors College website link for all form downloads:
https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#forms

**Submitting Thesis Forms:** Paper copies can be dropped off at the Honors College Administrative Office, 146 Estabrooke, or you may email digital copies ONLY IF cc'ed to the Dean, Associate Dean, and Honors Associates.

Thesis Form 1 - Due week 13 of the semester prior to taking HON 498
Thesis proposal submission: Identifies thesis advisor and describes project

Thesis Form 2 - Due in week 8 of the HON 498 semester.
Committee meeting: review of detailed thesis proposal; approval of thesis
HON 391
HON 391 is a 1-credit introduction to the Honors thesis process, taught by the Dean and Honors Associates. It gives you a full semester to understand the thesis process and to develop a thesis topic. At the end of HON 391 students submit a thesis prospectus which is the basis for thesis form 1 (which includes both a thesis description and a confirmed thesis advisor) as the final assignment, and formally begin work on the thesis and reading list. This course is graded Pass/Low Pass/Fail.

Finding a Thesis Advisor
Finding an advisor is one of the most important steps in the thesis process. For students working on a project in a lab, it is common to ask the professor in charge to be your advisor. Students with an independently developed thesis idea should research UMaine department faculty and their respective academic interests/specialties to identify potential advisors. Start by exploring your college/department websites:
https://umaine.edu/colleges/

Please note that some departments require the student to have an advisor from that department. Check with your academic advisor or your college’s associate dean if this is true of your department before seeking out potential thesis advisors.

Having trouble locating contact info for a specific faculty member? Use the faculty directory search to find office locations, email, and office phone numbers:
https://peoplesearch.maine.edu/

If you would like to work with an advisor that is not a UMaine faculty member, please see the Honors Dean for approval.

Asking Someone to be my Advisor: The sample email in Appendix A may give you some ideas on how to approach a possible thesis advisor, especially if you have not met before, or have not had a class with this person recently. Whether or not you use the sample email, be
The email does not explicitly ask the faculty member to be the advisor, as it would be most effective for both parties to discuss the project first. Finding a match for your interests AND your work style are critical in successfully completing the Honors thesis, so meeting in person with a potential advisor allows for you to ask more questions and determine if they are willing and/or able to take on the project.

If the potential advisor takes you on as an advisee, work together to create a more detailed thesis proposal. This description will be attached to thesis form 1, with the advisor’s signature and the signature of your departmental chair or college’s associate dean. The Honors Dean will review form 1 and sign off on the project if everything is in order.

**IRB (Institutional Review Board) Application:** If your thesis involves human or animal subjects research (surveys, interviews, testing, etc.), you must complete the IRB application BEFORE any research, surveys, interviews, tests, etc. take place. Work with your advisor to complete an IRB application and the required trainings before or very early in the HON 498 semester. Review of applications can take up to a month, so it is critical to complete this step as early as possible. Information and faculty contacts for the IRB can be found online at [https://umaine.edu/research-compliance/human-subjects/](https://umaine.edu/research-compliance/human-subjects/), and if you have any questions, please see the Honors Dean.

---

**HON 498**

When registering for HON 498 in MaineStreet, there will be roughly 100 different sections. Select the next available open section, as each thesis student is in their own section. Once you have submitted thesis form 1, which is due at the end of the semester before you enroll in HON 498, your advisor will be assigned to your section as the instructor for purposes of grading. As there are no regular meeting times for this “independent study,” arranging to meet with your thesis advisor weekly is your responsibility.

**Goals for HON 498:** This is typically considered the “research” semester of the thesis process. Use this semester to review background literature, conduct experiments, gather data, or to begin the creative process. Writing can also begin now. Review the thesis rubrics from the Honors College with your advisor. Thesis Rubrics can be found here: [https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#rubrics](https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#rubrics)

**Goals for the Honors Reading List:** Create a list of possible texts to review with the Honors member of your committee. Draft the reading list for review and editing.

**Obligations for HON 498:**

- Submitted thesis form 1 by week 13 of the semester prior to taking HON 498
- Form a thesis committee
- Hold a committee meeting and submit thesis form 2 by the 8th week of the semester (see deadlines for each form in thesis calendar, available at https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#calendar
- Note thesis form 2 is to be signed at the committee meeting. It is NOT designed for you to gather signatures individually.

**Grading for HON 498:** Your thesis advisor grades HON 498 based on your progress in the course. Guidelines for grading are shared with advisors and available on the HC website. Read more about Thesis Course Grading here: https://honors.umaine.edu/resource/thesis-course-grading-guidelines/

**Forming a Thesis Committee:** Begin by discussing with your thesis advisor faculty who may be helpful in serving on the committee. DO NOT ask potential members to serve without consulting your advisor. The sample email in Appendix A may give you some ideas on how to approach a possible committee member.

Your thesis committee is composed of **5 faculty members:** your advisor (or co-advisors), who chair(s) the committee, and four (three, if using co-advisors) additional members, including one member outside of your discipline and one member in Honors. For a list of current or recent Honors faculty, see: honors.umaine.edu/home/people/honors-preceptors/). Individuals may fill more than one of these roles (the Honors representative is often outside the thesis field, and therefore can act as Honors representative AND outside representative).

These members suggest research sources, provide guidance, may help with specific research or analytical tasks, offer different perspectives, or serve as additional readers for your thesis. Clarify roles and expectations of your committee members at your first committee meeting. The committee determines the level of honors you will receive at the defense.

**Holding a Committee Meeting:** A committee meeting is **required by week 8** in your HON 498 semester. Allot one hour for this meeting and keep in mind the following objectives:

- Bring committee members up to speed on project goals and developments by giving a short presentation on your thesis proposal (see Honors Thesis Proposal for Committee Meeting guidelines – pg. 15)
- **BE PREPARED!** This is your committee’s first impression of your project and you as a thesis scholar.
- Collect feedback on your project from the committee as a whole and debrief with your advisor.
- Set expectations for yourself and your committee members. Some committee members bring specific skills to the project and you will want to discuss how best to work with them, while other members will only want to read the finished product before the defense.
● Discuss a timeline for the project, including anticipated date of defense.
● Have committee members sign thesis form 2.

**You are responsible for arranging the committee meeting and the meeting space.** Honors classrooms are available to use for your meeting, but you must reserve them through the Honors College staff (Administrative Specialist, 146 Estabrooke Hall, or Honors Associates, 145.1 Estabrooke). If you would rather use a classroom space or conference room in your departmental building, see the administrative assistant for the department or building to reserve the space.

Arranging a time for five committee members to meet can be a challenge. We recommend using an online meeting scheduler such as Doodle to determine availabilities. All 5 members need to be present at this meeting. If you have trouble finding a time, let us know and we can help.

In Appendix B, you will find a sample agenda for a committee meeting.

Your committee members will give feedback on your project, but it is up to you and your advisor to use those considerations in adapting the thesis. While the Honors thesis only requires one committee meeting, a second meeting in the HON 499 semester is recommended to discuss your progress. Semi-regular emails to the committee with information about the project progress can also be useful. However, commitments of the committee will vary greatly with each project, so it is important for the student work this out with the committee.

---

**HON 499**

To be eligible to sign up for HON 499, **YOU MUST SUBMIT THESIS FORM 2.** You must also have a C or better in HON 498 When registering for HON 499 in MaineStreet, there will be roughly 100 different sections. Select the next available open section, as each thesis student enrolls in an individual section. As there are no regular meeting times for this “independent study,” arranging to meet with your thesis advisor weekly is your responsibility.

**Goals for the Honors Thesis:** This is typically considered the “writing” semester of the thesis process. Use this semester to finalize data analysis, write the thesis, and defend. You should expect to turn in **multiple** thesis drafts and revise them based on your advisor’s comments. It is helpful save each draft iteration as separate documents (Example: Last Name, First Name, thesis DRAFT #1).

For those pursuing a creative thesis: all creative theses include a written piece accompanying the creative work, known as the **disquisition.** The disquisition contextualizes one’s creative work, discusses related research, and describes its scholarly content. Further details may be found here: [https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#disquisition](https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#disquisition)
Formatting the Thesis: Thesis documents are typically done in Microsoft Word. ALL UMAINE STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO DOWNLOAD MICROSOFT OFFICE 2016 FOR FREE at https://umaine.edu/it/software/office/

**Manuscripts that do not fully comply with the guidelines will NOT be accepted.**

Although many students will write in Google Docs, there are required formatting elements that ARE NOT supported in Google Docs, and we cannot accept a Google Doc as a final version. Use this opportunity to learn Microsoft Word if you are unfamiliar with the application, and please follow the **formatting table in Appendix C**. Videos outlining formatting steps will be provided by the Honors staff in workshop sessions, and a full formatting guide is available - see Appendix C for links.

Work with your advisor to make sure all of your sources are properly cited. Remember figures/graphs/tables/photos need their own citations/captions. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense: if sources are not present or improperly cited, disciplinary action may ensue.

Goals for the Honors Reading List: Working with your advisor and/ or the Honors member of your thesis committee, write the annotated or narrative version of the reading list. You will also write multiple drafts for revision. Thesis Form 3 (Reading List) must be submitted in the HON 499 semester for approval by the Honors Dean, with the final version of the Reading List attached by the fourth week of your 499 semester.

Obligations for HON 499: You must submit thesis forms 3, 4, 5, and 6 in the HON 499 semester (see deadlines in thesis calendar for each form). This includes turning in a final draft of your reading list (form 3), scheduling your thesis defense date, time, and location (form 4), participating in the defense (form 5), and the final submission of the post-defense edited thesis (form 6). The most significant obligation for HON 499 is to complete and successfully defend your thesis.

Grading for HON 499: Your thesis advisor grades HON 499 based on your progress in the course. You can be given an A through F for your work in HON 499. There is also an optional “TH” grade that can be assigned which means that your advisor will retroactively give you a grade in HON 499 once the thesis process is complete. However, **YOU CANNOT GRADUATE WITH A “TH” OR A BLANK GRADE ON YOUR TRANSCRIPT**; therefore, your advisor will need to submit a grade for HON 499 before you are certified to graduate. Read more about Thesis Course Grading here: https://honors.umaine.edu/resource/thesis-course-grading-guidelines/

Thesis Defense
For this part of the process, your most important task is to work with your advisor and provide a final, thoroughly edited version of your thesis (along with your reading list) to each member of
your committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense. Do not share a copy of your final document with your committee without prior knowledge/approval of your thesis advisor. If your thesis is submitted without proper editing or less than two weeks prior to the scheduled defense, you will need to reschedule your defense.

The Honors College recommends that you defend your thesis and reading list in the month prior to your graduation if not earlier. Defending several weeks before graduation typically means that committee members have more time in their schedules, and if you need to push the defense date back in the case of a scheduling conflict or an emergency, there will still be time before the end of the semester. We also recommend that you determine your defense date as early as possible.

**Scheduling the Defense Date:** You must submit form 4—which confirms the date of your defense—to the Honors office no later than week 8 of the 499 semester. It is recommended that you determine the defense date at your committee meeting, or as soon as possible thereafter, using tools like Doodle. Send out a reminder of the time and place to your committee a couple of days before your thesis defense.

**Location of the Defense:** You are responsible for arranging a defense space. Honors classrooms are available to use for your defense, but you must reserve them through the Honors College staff. If you would rather use a classroom space or conference room in your departmental building, see the administrative assistant for the department or building to reserve the space. The Honors Associates may also be available to assist you if you have reasonable technology requests such as: dongles, chargers, spare laptops. But resources are limited, and you’ll want to email the Associates well in advance of your defense.

**Defending the Thesis and Reading List:** Thesis defenses last 2.5 hours, and must follow the three-part defense structure. Refer to the sample thesis Defense Agenda in Appendix B. The first hour is devoted to your thesis work. Usually you will be asked to present a summary of your thesis for about 20 to 30 minutes, after which the committee will engage you in a question and answer session. During this discussion, as well as after the defense, suggestions for revisions may be made. The specific format of this first hour is something you should talk over with your advisor.

Refreshments are not required as part of the thesis defense process but are a nice gesture.

A short break is optional between defense of the thesis and defense of the reading list. In the second hour, you will defend your reading list, where you discuss how these texts were significant in your intellectual development and undergraduate education. Since members of your committee may not be familiar with some of the texts included, you should be able to convey a sense of the importance of these works. Be prepared for this discussion to go far afield of the actual texts; your committee members will want to know how you make connections and how you push the envelope of your education. Bear in mind that all reading list defenses
are different. It’s important for the student to engage in this discussion of their reading list in a way that demonstrates a deep engagement with the texts.

The last half hour is for the committee to determine a level of honors based on your written thesis, reading list and oral defense. You will be asked to leave the room while the discussion happens, and typically your advisor will invite you back into the room to be notified of the committee’s decision, and any edits that need to be made before final submission.

### Evaluation of the Thesis, Reading List and Defense

To receive any level of honors for the thesis, the committee should agree that the thesis, which is the major body of work here, deserves at least honors. The committee can award the following levels of honors based on your efforts:

- No Honors
- Honors
- High Honors
- Highest Honors

Further definitions of criteria for level of honors can be found in these rubrics.

In addition to the written thesis, the oral presentation of the thesis, the performance in the Q&A, and the depth of discussion of the reading list will all play a part in the committee’s determination of the level of honors.

### Submitting the Final Thesis

It is the **requirement** of the Honors College that your final thesis is submitted as both a Word document AND a pdf. If the submitted thesis is in another format or requires different software to edit (LaTeX or others), the Honors College staff will **not be able to do any editing**. If the submitted thesis contains formatting errors, it will be sent back to you for corrections. Only after corrections are made will Thesis Form #6 be approved, and certification for graduation initiated. **Please use the Formatting Checklist in Appendix C before emailing your documents to the Associates.**

The final Word document and pdf should be emailed to BOTH Honors Associates for submission.

**Graduating with Honors:** All thesis forms and the digital thesis (properly formatted) must be submitted by May 31st for May grads, by Aug. 31st for August grads, and by January 15th for December grads. These documents are required before the Honors College will certify you as an Honors College graduate (even if you have successfully defended your thesis)! It is your responsibility to be sure all of the documents are submitted by the deadline.
Appendix A - Template Emails

Email to potential Advisor

Hello Professor _______,

My name is ________, and I am currently a third year ______ major in the Honors College. I am looking to undertake the Honors thesis and would like to discuss my thesis idea with you at your earliest convenience. I am interested in ___(thesis topic description)___, and feel that your specialty/research in ______ would help in refining my topic/research question. I am available (days and times) to meet. Attached, you will find a more detailed description of my thesis proposal for your review.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you, ________

https://honors.umaine.edu/faculty-resources/

Email to Potential Committee Member

Hello Professor _______,

My name is ________, and I am currently a fourth year ______ major in the Honors College. I am beginning my Honors thesis this year, and would like to discuss my thesis idea with you at your earliest convenience. I am working with my advisor, ____________ on ___(thesis topic description)___, and feel that your specialty/research in ______ would help in refining my topic/research question. I am most available (days and times), and would like to meet with you if possible!

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you, ________
Appendix B - Sample Agendas

Sample Thesis Committee Meeting Agenda

Date:  
Time:  
Location:  

AGENDA

I. Thesis & Research (15 minutes)  
   A. Current state of research  
   B. Review prospectus  
      1. Topics  
      2. Expectations  
      3. Sources  
   C. Comments/Questions/Suggestions

II. Discuss Defense Structure (15 minutes)  
   A. thesis  
      1. Presentation  
      2. Discussion/questions  
   B. Reading list discussion  
   C. Decision on level of honors

III. Proposed Timetable (15 minutes)  
   A. Copies of thesis to committee date  
   B. Tentative defense date/time

IV. Other Business

Sample Thesis Defense Agenda

Date:  
Time:  
Location:  

AGENDA

I. Honors thesis & Research (~1 Hour)  
   A. Presentation (~20 min)  
   B. Committee Questions (~40 min)

II. Honors Reading List (~1 Hour)  
   A. Presentation/Reading List Description (~3 min)  
   B. Reading List Discussion (~55 min)

III. Committee Deliberation (~30 min)  
   A. Level of honors discussion  
   B. Suggestions for edits/revision
## Appendix C - Formatting

### Thesis Document Pages and Page Numbering Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preliminary Pages</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title Page</td>
<td>Number not typed on page, counted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copyright (Optional)</td>
<td>Number not typed on page, counted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Number not typed on page, counted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication (Optional)</td>
<td>Lower-Case Roman Numeral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements (Optional)</td>
<td>Lower-Case Roman Numeral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface/Forward (Optional)</td>
<td>Lower-Case Roman Numeral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>Lower-Case Roman Numeral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures, Tables (If Any)</td>
<td>Lower-Case Roman Numeral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body Pages</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Arabic Numerals (Must begin with 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>Arabic Numerals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix(ices) (If Any)</td>
<td>Arabic Numerals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors Biography</td>
<td>Arabic Numerals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Formatting Videos
- General Overview -
- Title Page and Margin -
- Hidden Formatting, Page/Section Breaks -
- Page Numbers -
- Table of Contents -
- Table of Figures -

### Full thesis Formatting Guide
[https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#guide](https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#guide)
FORMATTING GUIDE CHECKLIST
(last updated 6/2018)

TITLE PAGE
Title: Capitalized, double spaced
Ensure that “by” is lowercase
Reference example title page

MARGINS
   Left: 1.5
   Right, Top, Bottom: 1

FONT
   Times New Roman, 12 point
   Exception: Size for captions & footnotes: 10 point

SPACING
   Double-spaced
   Exceptions: Single Spaced: advisory committee (title page), thesis submitted lines (title page), footnotes, bibliography, captions, data within tables, quotations longer than 4 lines

ORDER (bold is mandatory)
1. Title Page
2. Copyright Page
3. Abstract
4. Dedication/Preface
5. Acknowledgements
6. Preface or Foreword
7. Table of Contents
8. List of Figures, Tables, Definitions
9. Text of Manuscript
10. Bibliography
11. Appendices
12. Author’s Biography

PAGINATION
   Nothing: title page, copyright page, abstract
   Small Roman Numerals (ex: ii, iv): dedication/preface, acknowledgments, preface/foreword, table of contents, list of figures/tables/definitions
   Starting Number: document page number
   Arabic Numerals (ex: 1, 2): text of manuscript, bibliography, appendices, author’s biography
Starting Number: 1

CHAPTER/SECTION
    Starts on new page
    Capitalized
    Centered
    Three Spaces underneath

SUBHEADING LEVELS
    1st: Centered and underlined
    2nd: Side and underlined
    3rd: underlined beginning at the paragraph indentation, followed by a period and the text.

TABLE OF CONTENTS
    Contains (at least): all chapter/section and 1st level headings
    Contains Listings for: bibliography, appendices, author’s bio

CHARTS/GRAPHS/TABLES/FIGURES
    If any, thesis must have a list after the Table of Contents
    Each one must…
    Fit on one page
    Have a caption on the same page

BIBLIOGRAPHY/WORKS CITED/LIST OF REFERENCES
    Entries: Single spaced
    Between Entries: double spaced

APPENDICES
    If multiple, appendices cover page before them

FINAL CHECKING
    Page numbers on table of content (and list of figures) are correct
    Everything fits within the margins
    Font and size is correct on page numbers
Guidelines for Honors Thesis Committee Meeting Student Proposal

Honors students must hold a thesis committee meeting attended by their advisor and the other four members of their committee by the 8th week of their HON 498 semester. The central feature of the meeting is the presentation and discussion of their thesis proposal. A written proposal is recommended by the College, as outlined below. A PowerPoint or other presentation manager may be used to present the ideas to the committee. The committee members shall sign Form 2 at the end of the meeting.

The written proposal should include (typical length 3-5 pages, single-spaced):

1. Summary or abstract of the thesis project (like thesis prospectus)
2. A clear statement of thesis question or claim.
3. Review of the literature on the topic that has informed the student’s thinking to date.
4. Discussion of methodology, theoretical approach, or creative approach to the thesis project.
5. Working bibliography that includes works already read, ones the student plans on reading, and avenues for gathering further background materials.
6. Working timeline for the research, writing, and defense of the thesis, including a plan for the reading list.

Suggested Guidelines:

1. The proposal should be prepared in conjunction with the advisor.
2. The proposal should be sent to the committee one week prior to the established first committee meeting date.
3. The student should prepare to present and discuss the proposal at the first meeting.
4. Advisor and committee members will ask questions and help the student refine the proposal by suggesting additional bodies of literature, potential critical or theoretical approaches, and weighing in on the scope and scale of the project. In some case, restricting the topic may be in order if it is too ambitious. The committee will also clarify the roles of different members with respect to the project.
The Honors Thesis Checklist

Thesis Form 1 (Advisor and Proposal)*….Due the semester BEFORE you take HON 498**
- Submit with a 250-word description of your thesis topic and question
- Signed by your thesis advisor
- Signed by the Unit or College Chair/Director/Associate Dean if the thesis is to satisfy your capstone experience

Thesis Form 2 (The Committee Meeting)…………Due 8 Weeks into the HON 498 Semester
- Attain 5 committee members total (4 members plus your advisor)
  - 1 must be from Honors
  - 1 must be from outside your major (the Honors member can count for this spot, too)
- Hold a 1-hour meeting where you discuss your thesis with your committee.
  - This is the meeting where your committee members sign this form.

Thesis Form 3 (The Reading List)…………Due 4 Weeks into the HON 499*** Semester
- 12-15 “texts”**** that have shaped your thinking throughout your undergraduate career
- Approved by your thesis advisor

Thesis Form 4 (Scheduling your Defense)……….Due 8 Weeks into the HON 499 Semester
- Find a date and space that works with your advisor and committee to defend your thesis (2.5 hours).

Sending Out the Written Thesis and Reading List……Due Two Weeks Before the Defense
- Have your thesis approved by your thesis advisor before it is circulated.
- Send your thesis and reading list to your committee at least two weeks before the defense.
- Ask if they want it sent electronically, as a hard copy, or both.

Thesis Form 5 (Level of Honors) …………………………………..Due post-thesis defense
- Your committee determines your level of honors and signs off after you have completed your defense.
- Bring a copy of this form to the defense.

Thesis Form 6 (Final Thesis)
- Signed by your advisor
- Turned in an electronic copy of your final thesis in a word doc and pdf to the Honors Associates
- **You cannot graduate from the Honors College without submitting Thesis Form 6 before the last day of your graduation month.**

Notes:
*Drop off all forms in the Honors Office, 146 Estabrooke Hall.
**HON 498 is typically taken two semesters before your expected graduation.
***HON 499 is typically taken the semester of your expected graduation.
****“Text” - mostly books, but, music, paintings, movies, podcasts, and experiences can be included on your reading list. Work with your advisor to make your list, though the Honors member of your committee can also be helpful.