

Honors Thesis Handbook

Table of Contents

I. Overview of the Honors Thesis Process.....	2
II. Benefits of the Thesis Process.....	3
III. More About the Honors Thesis.....	3
IV. The Timeline for Honors and the Thesis Process.....	4
V. Requirements of the Honors Thesis Process.....	5
VI. The Thesis Advisor.....	5
VII. The Thesis Defense.....	6
VIII. More About the Honors Reading List.....	7
IX. Special Considerations.....	7
X. When to take the Honors Thesis Classes (HON 391, HON 498 and HON 499).....	9
XI. Thesis Forms.....	9
XII. HON 391.....	10
XIII. Finding a Thesis Advisor.....	10
XIV. IRB Application.....	11
XV. HON 498.....	11
XVI. Forming a Thesis Committee.....	12
XVII. Formatting the Thesis.....	14
XVII. HON 499.....	15
XVIII. Thesis Defense.....	16
XIX. Evaluation of the Thesis, Reading List and Defense.....	17
XX. Submitting the Final Thesis.....	18
Appendix A — Template Emails.....	19
Appendix B — Sample Agendas.....	20
Appendix C — Formatting.....	22
Appendix D — Honors Thesis Process Checklist.....	23

I. 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 independent-study courses 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. 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 may 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 scholar and as a person through college and your Honors journey. Thus the texts should be works that are meaningful to you and each text's meaning and impact should be the focus of the annotation.

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.

II. 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.

III. More About the Honors Thesis

Determining a Thesis Topic: 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 own contributions to the topic**, an outgrowth of your 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.

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 on the Honors website at:

honors.umaine.edu/resource/requirements-for-the-creative-thesis/. **We strongly encourage students considering the creative option to set up time to talk with the Honors Associate(s)**

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; (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.

IV. 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 in your third year, mandatory for class of 2022 and after)
- HON 498 (Usually in the fall of your final year)
- HON 499 (Usually in the spring of your final year)

Thesis Due Dates (by semesters of enrollment in HON 498 and HON 499):

<i>Thesis Forms</i>	<i>498 Fall, 499 Spring</i>	<i>498 Spring, 499 Fall</i>	<i>498 Spring, 499 Summer</i>	<i>498 Summer, 499 Fall</i>
<i>Form 1</i>	May 1	December 1	December 1	May 1
<i>Form 2</i>	September 1	February 1	February 1	June 1
<i>Form 3</i>	November 1	March 1	March 1	August 1
<i>Form 4</i>	March 1	October 1	June 1	October 1
<i>Form 5</i>	April 1	November 1	August 1	November 1
<i>Form 6</i>	May 1	December 1	September 1	December 1
<i>Form 7</i>	June 1	January 1	October 1	January 1

V. 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 a 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 the calendar of form due dates in sections IV and XI, or on the Honors site at honors.umaine.edu/resource/honors-thesis-form-due-dates/), 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. At the same time, your advisor, committee, and the Honors staff know that this is your first time doing a thesis and will provide you with appropriate guidance and mentorship throughout the process.

VI. 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 simply by meeting with a faculty member, sharing information about the thesis topic, and asking them to serve. 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.

- Your thesis committee must be comprised of a minimum of three UMaine faculty members (full-time or part-time), including the thesis advisor; the committee may include a maximum of five total members. The number of committee members and their expertise will be determined by the advisor and student.
- The committee *may* include one Honors College representative*; this member will serve as the mentor for assembling the Reading List. Many committees do not include an Honors representative; in these cases, the Honors College assigns a representative to the student.*f*
- The committee *may* include 1 external member; the external member may not serve as the thesis advisor. The external member would constitute a fourth member of the committee.
- If the thesis is a capstone for double majors, the committee may need to have advisors or members from both disciplines. Please consult with the chairs/directors of your departments to make this determination.

*Information on who can serve as your Honors representative can be found at the “Contact Us” page on our website.

VII. 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!

VIII. More About the Honors Reading List

All Reading Lists are different, but you can find exemplary samples our website:

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

IX. 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: 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.

X. 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:

Year		3rd Year			4th Year	
Semester		Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring
Most Common	Plan 1	<i>HON 391</i>			HON 498	<u>HON 499</u>
	Plan 2		<i>HON 391</i>		HON 498	<u>HON 499</u>
	Plan 3	<i>HON 391</i>	HON 498		<u>HON 499</u>	
	Plan 4		<i>HON 391</i>	HON 498	<u>HON 499</u>	
Alternative Plan	Plan 5	<i>HON 391</i>		HON 498	<u>HON 499</u>	

If your academic plan would conflict with these sample timelines, **or you intend on graduating in August or December**, see the off-sequence writing calendar or reach out to Honors staff to create a plan that will fit your schedule.

Thesis Class Meeting Times:

HON 391 – Once a week for 1 hour with the Honors Dean and Honors Associate(s).

HON 498 – *No regular class meetings*. You must arrange to meet with your thesis advisor.

HON 499 – *No regular class meetings*. You must arrange to meet with your thesis advisor.

XI. Thesis Forms

Thesis forms provide deadlines to keep you on track and allows us to measure the progress of thesis students. All thesis forms can be submitted online via Google Forms and are on our website at honors.umaine.edu/resource/honors-thesis-form-due-dates/.

There are seven 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). Please note that some forms must be submitted by the thesis advisor, while others must be submitted by the student. However, **it is your responsibility to make sure these forms are turned in by the Honors College deadlines**. Please make sure to read ALL directions closely on each form before they are submitted.

Thesis Form Deadlines (by semesters of enrollment in HON 498 and HON 499):

<i>Thesis Forms</i>	<i>498 Fall, 499 Spring</i>	<i>498 Spring, 499 Fall</i>	<i>498 Spring, 499 Summer</i>	<i>498 Summer, 499 Fall</i>
<i>Form 1</i>	May 1	December 1	December 1	May 1
<i>Form 2</i>	September 1	February 1	February 1	June 1
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<i>Form 4</i>	March 1	October 1	June 1	October 1
<i>Form 5</i>	April 1	November 1	August 1	November 1
<i>Form 6</i>	May 1	December 1	September 1	December 1
<i>Form 7</i>	June 1	January 1	October 1	January 1

XII. HON 391

HON 391 is a 1-credit introduction to the Honors thesis process, taught by the Dean and Honors Associate(s). 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. This course is graded Pass/Low Pass/Fail.

XIII. 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 website(s): 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: peoplesearch.maine.edu/

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 sure to provide the following link on Honors advisor resources. The document will provide more detailed information about the commitment of becoming a thesis advisor:

honors.umaine.edu/resource/thesis-advisor-and-committee-member-handbook/

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 with a potential advisor (via Zoom) 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. You will then submit this description as part of your submission of Thesis Form 1 online. Your advisor will receive a request to approve it and confirm their position as your thesis advisor. If your thesis is replacing your major capstone, then your home program's chair, director, or Associate Dean will receive a request to approve your submission of Form 1 and confirm that the thesis project will satisfy the capstone requirement. Lastly, the Honors Dean will review Form 1 and approve the project if everything is in order.

XIV. IRB Application

If your thesis involves human or animal subjects research (surveys, interviews, testing, etc.), you must complete an application to the IRB (Institutional Review Board) BEFORE any research, surveys, interviews, tests, etc. take place. Work with your advisor to complete an IRB application and the required trainings before or 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 at umaine.edu/research-compliance/human-subjects/.

If you have any questions, please see the Honors Dean.

XV. 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 Honors thesis rubrics with your advisor. These can be found here (for the written thesis)

honors.umaine.edu/resource/rubric-for-the-written-thesis/

and here (for the thesis and Reading List oral defense)

honors.umaine.edu/resource/rubric-for-the-thesis-and-reading-list-oral-defense/.

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 and share a written proposal with them in advance of meeting (guidelines available at honors.umaine.edu/resource/committee-meeting-proposal-guidelines/)
- Hold a committee meeting, and submit Thesis Form 3 by [the 8th week of the semester](#)

(See specific due dates for each form in sections IV and XI, or here:

honors.umaine.edu/resource/honors-thesis-form-due-dates/)

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:

honors.umaine.edu/resource/grading-guidelines-for-hon498-hon499/.

XVI. 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 must be comprised of a minimum of three UMaine faculty members (full-time or part-time), including the thesis advisor; the committee may include a maximum of five total members. The number of committee members and their expertise will be determined by the advisor and student. The committee may include one Honors representative*. Many committees do not; in these cases, the Honors College assigns a representative to the student. The committee may include 1 external member; the external member may not serve as the thesis advisor. The external member would constitute a fourth member of the committee. If the thesis is a capstone for double majors, the committee may need to have advisors or members from both disciplines. Please consult with the chairs/directors of your departments to make this determination. 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. Clarification of roles and expectations of each of your committee members should be done at your first committee meeting. The committee determines the level of honors you will receive at the defense.

At least one week in advance of your committee meeting, you are **required to send a written thesis proposal** to all members of your committee. Guidelines from this proposal are available at honors.umaine.edu/resource/committee-meeting-proposal-guidelines/.

Holding a Committee Meeting: A committee meeting is **required by week 8 in your HON 498 semester** (see the linked due dates or the table in sections IV and XI). 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** (sent at least one week in advance to all committee members)
- **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.
- Confirm that all committee members agree to serve on the committee, and submit Thesis Form 3 (Confirmation of Committee Meeting).

You are responsible for arranging the committee meeting and the meeting space (in person or virtual). Honors students must hold Honors thesis defenses following the latest University of Maine health and safety guidelines. Traditionally, the thesis defense is an in-person event.

However students may hold either remote or in-person Honors thesis defenses per unanimous agreement of the thesis committee.

Arranging a time for three to five committee members to meet can be a challenge. We recommend using an online meeting scheduler such as Doodle to determine everyone's availability. All 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 to work this out with the committee.

XVII. Formatting the Thesis

You can find a Pre-Formatted Template and Formatting Guide honors.umaine.edu/resource/honors-thesis-format-template/ and a Thesis Formatting Checklist honors.umaine.edu/resource/honors-thesis-formatting-checklist/ on the Honors website (also listed in **Appendix C**).

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

Thesis documents are typically created in Microsoft Word.
UMAINE STUDENTS CAN DOWNLOAD MICROSOFT OFFICE FOR FREE
umaine.edu/it/software/office/

Although many students will write in Google Docs, some required formatting elements **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/

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.

XVII. HON 499

Thesis Form 3 (Committee Meeting) should be submitted prior to enrolling in HON 499.

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 to save each iteration as a separate document (e.g. *Last.First_Thesis_DRAFT_1.docx*).

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 in the creative thesis guidelines: honors.umaine.edu/resource/requirements-for-the-creative-thesis/.

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. The Reading List must contain at least twelve texts, at most three texts may be drawn from the Honors Civilizations sequence. You will also write multiple drafts for revision. Thesis Form 4 (Reading List) must be submitted by the fourth week of the HON499 semester for approval by your advisor and the Honors Dean or Associate Dean. A student cannot defend their Honors thesis without receiving approval of the Reading List by the Honors College.

Obligations for HON 499: You must submit Thesis Forms 4, 5, 6, and 7 in the HON 499 semester (see due dates for each form in sections IV and XI, or here: honors.umaine.edu/resource/honors-thesis-form-due-dates/). This includes turning in a final draft of your Reading List (Form 4), scheduling your thesis defense date, time, and format (whether it's happening remotely via Zoom, or the room you booked) (Form 5), participating in the defense (Form 6), and the final, correctly formatted submission of the post-defense edited thesis (Form 7). 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, used in scenarios in which students extend their thesis work beyond the HON499 semester. 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:

honors.umaine.edu/resource/thesis-course-grading-guidelines/

XVIII. 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. Please note that this final version of your thesis must include all required sections including the title page, author’s biography, etc. See the [Remote Honors Thesis Defense Guidelines](#) and review the formatting guidelines for more information (**Appendix C**).

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 5—which confirms the date of your defense—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 your defense.

The Honors Associate(s) 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.

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 you to engage in this discussion of your 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 (or the Zoom call) while the discussion happens, and typically your advisor will invite you back to be notified of the committee's decision, and any edits that need to be made before final submission.

Following the defense, the thesis advisor will submit the online Thesis Form 6. Please note: the thesis advisor's submission of Form 6 informs the Honors College of the thesis committee's collective decision on the level of Honors and obviates the need to gather individual committee member signatures.

XIX. 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 the quality of your thesis:

- No Honors
- Honors
- High Honors
- Highest Honors

Further definitions of criteria for level of honors can be found in the rubric on our website: honors.umaine.edu/resource/rubric-for-the-thesis-advisors-assessment/.

In addition to the written thesis, your presentation of the thesis/project, your discussion with the committee of the thesis/project, your Reading List, and your discussion with the committee of the Reading List will all play a part in the committee's determination of the level of honors.

XX. 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. Additionally, please note that the editing of your final thesis submission is up to you. **The Honors Associate(s) do not edit theses directly, help with writing issues, or fix formatting.**

In scenarios where the submitted thesis must be created in 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, those errors will be identified and it will be sent back to you for corrections. Only after corrections are made will Thesis Form 7 be approved, and certification for graduation initiated. **Please utilize the formatting resources linked in Appendix C before emailing your documents to the Associates.**

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 7th 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.

Thesis Dissemination: Theses will be uploaded to the Digital Commons for global digital access at digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/honors/, **as long as the formatting adheres to standards found in Appendix C and at honors.umaine.edu/resource/honors-thesis-formatting-checklist/.**

Any thesis that does not conform to this format will not be uploaded to the Digital Commons.

If you still have questions after reading through, please reach out to the Honors Associate(s), Associate Dean, and/or the Dean! We are here to help you.

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 idea for your review.

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

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,

Advisor and Committee Member Handbook

honors.umaine.edu/resource/thesis-advisor-and-committee-member-handbook/

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	
Preliminary Pages	
Title Page	Number not typed on page, counted
Copyright (Optional)	Number not typed on page, counted
Abstract	Number not typed on page, counted
Dedication (Optional)	Lower-Case Roman Numeral
Acknowledgements (Optional)	Lower-Case Roman Numeral
Preface/Forward (Optional)	Lower-Case Roman Numeral
Table of Contents	Lower-Case Roman Numeral
List of Figures, Tables (If Any)	Lower-Case Roman Numeral
Body Pages	
Text	Arabic Numerals (Must begin with 1)
Bibliography	Arabic Numerals
Appendix(ices) (If Any)	Arabic Numerals
Authors Biography	Arabic Numerals

You can find a pre-formatted template and formatting guide here:

honors.umaine.edu/resource/honors-thesis-format-template/

See here for a final formatting checklist:

honors.umaine.edu/resource/honors-thesis-formatting-checklist/

Please note: Improperly formatted theses will not be published on the Digital Commons.

Appendix D — Honors Thesis Process Checklist

Thesis Form Deadlines (by semesters of enrollment in HON 498 and HON 499):

<i>Thesis Forms</i>	<i>498 Fall, 499 Spring</i>	<i>498 Spring, 499 Fall</i>	<i>498 Spring, 499 Summer</i>	<i>498 Summer, 499 Fall</i>
<i>Form 1</i>	May 1	December 1	December 1	May 1
<i>Form 2</i>	September 1	February 1	February 1	June 1
<i>Form 3</i>	November 1	March 1	March 1	August 1
<i>Form 4</i>	March 1	October 1	June 1	October 1
<i>Form 5</i>	April 1	November 1	August 1	November 1
<i>Form 6</i>	May 1	December 1	September 1	December 1
<i>Form 7</i>	June 1	January 1	October 1	January 1

Thesis Form 1 (Advisor and Proposal)*.....Due semester *before* you take HON 498**

- Propose a title and a 250-word description of your project, including background, driving claims or questions, and your planned methodology.
- After reviewing your proposal, your advisor must approve Form 1 to confirm they agree to serve as your advisor for the proposed thesis project.
- If you intend for your thesis to count as your capstone, the chair / director / associate dean of your unit or college must also approve Form 1.

Thesis Form 2 (Committee Member Approval).....Due 1 week into the HON 498 semester

- Attain 3-5 committee members total.
- Submit your list of committee members to ensure all of them meet the requirements (see section XVI for details).

Thesis Form 3 (The Committee Meeting).....Due 8 weeks into the HON 498 semester

- Write a 3-5 page proposal and share it with your committee one week ahead of your meeting (see section XVI for details).
- Hold a 1-hour meeting where you discuss your thesis with your committee.
- Submit Form 3 after the meeting. Each of your committee members will be asked to approve it, to confirm that the meeting took place.

Thesis Form 4 (The Reading List).....Due 4 weeks into the HON 499[†] semester

- Reflect on 12-15 “texts”[‡] that have shaped your thinking throughout your undergraduate career .
- Work with your advisor and Honors representative to develop annotations or a narrative essay presenting your reflection.
- Once they approve your Reading List, you will submit it through Form 4.

Thesis Form 5 (Scheduling Your Defense).....Due 8 weeks into the HON 499 semester

- Find a date that works with your advisor and committee to defend your thesis (2.5 hours)
- If you will be holding your defense in-person, contact the Honors Associate(s), honors@maine.edu, or um.scheduling@maine.edu to find and reserve a space.

Sending Out the Written Thesis and Reading List.....Due 2 weeks before the defense

- Ensure your thesis advisor approves your written thesis before you circulate it. The document must include all required sections (from title page through author’s biography).
- Send your written thesis and your Reading List to your committee at least two weeks before the defense.

Thesis Form 6 (Level of Honors)Due after the defense

- Your committee collectively determines your level of honors. After you have completed your defense, your advisor must submit Form 6 online to indicate the level the committee decided upon.

Thesis Form 7 (Final Thesis)

- Thesis Form 7 is submitted online by your advisor. This includes a list of keywords to use for uploading to the Digital Commons. Make sure they have that list before they need to submit Form 7.
- Send a *properly formatted* electronic copy of your thesis to the Honors Associate(s), in the form of a PDF and the original file (typically a Word or TeX document).
- You cannot graduate from the Honors College without submitting Thesis Form 7 before the last day of your graduation month.**

Notes:

* All forms may be submitted online via the Honors College website. Please note that some forms must be completed by the student, and others by the advisor.

** HON 498 is typically taken two semesters before your expected graduation.

† HON 499 is typically taken the semester of your expected graduation.

‡ “Text” mostly means books, but, music, paintings, movies, podcasts, and experiences can be included on your Reading List. Work with your advisor and your Honors representative to make your list.