



# Honors Thesis Handbook

(for Students, Advisors, and Committee Members)

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## The Honors Thesis Handbook: Introduction & Overview

The Honors thesis is an independent project conducted over the course of two semesters (6 cr.) that includes the following: research, investigation of relevant scholarly literature, data collection and analysis, and writing. Students may also opt to undertake a creative project; e.g., writing a novel, making art, or producing an album of songs, which are accompanied by a written disquisition. Either path includes two key components: 1) the written document itself--a traditional research thesis or a disquisition, and 2) the oral defense where students respond to questions from their committee on their Honors thesis. More information on these components is provided below.

This handbook provides an overview of important details about the thesis process. It is written for students undertaking an Honors thesis, faculty thesis advisors, and thesis committee members. It is intended to provide all stakeholders with information about processes, expectations, roles, and responsibilities related to the Honors thesis. If you have questions on any of these aspects, please reach out to the Honors College associate dean.

The majority of Honors theses will follow a traditional research thesis format, but students have the option of doing a creative thesis if the traditional research thesis format is not suitable for their research interests or if they would simply like to take advantage of this opportunity to pursue a creative endeavor. All creative theses will include a disquisition which contextualizes the creative work, discusses related research, and reflects on the work overall (see for the Disquisition Guidelines). In both types of thesis, the student is expected to include a thesis question or claim that is driving the scholarly undertaking, scholarly literature relevant to the topic, a description of the methodology/approach, and an analysis of the findings/discoveries. The Honors thesis may sometimes replace a student's capstone requirement in their major. Questions about a thesis covering a capstone requirement should be directed to the department chair in the student's major.

Students who complete and successfully defend their thesis as determined by their Honors thesis committee will be awarded *honors*. An option of *no honors* does exist, but a thesis should not be allowed to proceed to the oral defense if it is not *honors*-worthy. Questions or concerns about the readiness of a thesis or student for the oral defense should be directed to the Honors College associate dean.

Students who are not making satisfactory progress on their thesis will be notified via email by the Honors College dean's office, and will be given an opportunity to address this issue. If the concerns go unresolved, the student may jeopardize their ability to remain in the

Honors College. The Expectations for Progress Policy for Honors College Thesis Students explains the steps in this process (see **Appendix B**).

Researching and writing a thesis on a topic of the student's choosing is a serious and rewarding undertaking. In addition to the major accomplishment of producing a scholarly work, there are other important benefits to doing an Honors thesis including:

- An opportunity to research a topic that is of particular interest to a student under the guidance of a faculty advisor. Note: the thesis advisor is not the same as the academic advisor.
- Developing professional relationships with the advisor and committee members.
- Honing a specialized knowledge and/or skill set.
- Becoming skilled at project management as it is the responsibility of the thesis student to drive this undertaking.
- Gaining confidence in communication skills through public speaking and presentations.
- Demonstrating academic motivation and intellectual specialization through a well-researched and well-written document that can be shared with graduate programs or future employers.
- Experiencing a strong sense of accomplishment on having completed a major, independent research/creative project.
- Becoming one of a select group of students graduating from the University of Maine Honors College.
- Featuring the Honors designation on both the diploma and transcript, which also includes the title of the thesis.

## **Required Honors Thesis Courses**

### **HON 391: Introduction to Thesis Research (1 credit)**

HON 391 provides prospective Honors thesis writers with the knowledge, resources, and tools to prepare them to undertake an independent research project resulting in an Honors thesis. Students will also complete a Reading List in HON 391. Successful completion of HON 391 with a grade of “Pass” is a prerequisite for HON 498.

Offered: Fall, Spring, sometimes Summer

Prerequisites: Enrollment in the Honors College and completion of HON 111 - HON 212

Grading: Pass, Low Pass, or Fail

### **HON 498: Honors Thesis I (3 credits)**

Note: HON 498 and HON 499 cannot be taken simultaneously.

The first of two directed thesis research courses required of all students graduating from the Honors College. HON 498 is effectively an independent study where thesis students meet regularly with their thesis advisor as they progress in their research/creative work and writing. Frequency of meetings is determined by the student and their advisor. Though there are no set meeting times, this is a 3-credit course, and students are expected to spend approximately ten hours per week on the thesis. In HON 498, students typically focus on the “research” portion of the thesis such as reviewing scholarly literature, conducting experiments, gathering data, engaging in the creative process, and they may even begin writing the document or disquisition.

Offered: Fall, Spring, Summer

Prerequisites: Enrollment in the Honors College and HON 391

Grading: The letter grade for HON 498 will be determined by the thesis advisor, the faculty of record for the course. Please refer to the HON 498 Grading Guidelines (see **Appendix C**).

### **HON 499: Honors Thesis II (3 credits)**

Note: HON 498 and HON 499 cannot be taken simultaneously.

The second of two directed thesis research courses required of all students graduating from the Honors College. Like HON 498, HON 499 is effectively an independent study where thesis students meet regularly with their thesis advisor as they progress in their research/creative work and writing. Frequency of meetings is determined by the student and their advisor. Though there are no set meeting times, this is a 3-credit course, and students are expected to spend approximately ten hours per week on the thesis. In HON 499, students typically focus on analyzing their research and writing the thesis or disquisition. The oral defense of the thesis also takes place in the HON 499 semester.

Offered: Fall, Spring, Summer

Prerequisites: Enrollment in the Honors College and HON 498

Grading: The letter grade for HON 499 will be determined by the thesis advisor, the faculty of record for the course. Please refer to the HON 499 Grading Guidelines (see **Appendix C**).

## Thesis Forms

The Honors College uses a series of online Thesis Forms to monitor a student's progress on their thesis with the goal of ensuring they are on track to meet expectations and graduation requirements (see Appendix D for a list of the thesis forms and a thesis forms checklist). Students, advisors, and committee members are asked to submit/approve forms at various points in the process. The due dates of these forms vary, depending on which semester a student enrolls in HON 498 and HON 499. The chart below indicates form due dates based on the semesters in which a student enrolls in HON 498 and HON 499.

| Thesis Forms:            | HON 498 Fall<br>HON 499 Spring | HON 498 Spring<br>HON 499 Fall | HON 498 Spring<br>HON 499 Summer | HON 498 Summer<br>Hon 499 Fall |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <a href="#">Form 1</a>   | May 1 (semester prior)         | December 1 (semester prior)    | December 1 (semester prior)      | May 1 (semester prior)         |
| <a href="#">Form 2</a>   | June 1                         | January 1                      | January 1                        | June 1                         |
| <a href="#">Form 3</a>   | November 1                     | March 1                        | March 1                          | August 1                       |
| <a href="#">Form 4</a>   | March 1                        | November 1                     | August 1                         | November 1                     |
| <a href="#">Form 5</a>   | April 15                       | December 15                    | September 15                     | December 15                    |
| <a href="#">Form 6</a> * | May 1*                         | January 1*                     | October 1*                       | January 1*                     |

\*Note: The completed, properly formatted thesis manuscript **and** Form 6 are both due by these deadlines.

Students submit Thesis Forms 1, 2, 3, and 4. Advisors submit Thesis Forms 5 and 6. Forms requiring approvals by advisors and/or committee members will appear in their @maine.edu account with the subject line "Form Approvals". Approvals are **required** as they indicate the faculty member's willingness to serve on the committee and take part in the oral defense.

If the Honors thesis replaces the capstone in the student's major, then the departmental chair or program director will also be asked to approve Thesis Form 1. Their approval

serves as confirmation that the thesis project will satisfy the capstone requirement. Finally, the Honors associate dean reviews and approves the thesis forms.

## **Getting Started on the Honors Thesis**

### **Thesis Advisor(s)**

The fundamental role of a thesis advisor is to mentor and guide the thesis student through the process of researching and writing their thesis. The advisor is the primary point of contact for the thesis student as they develop and undertake their thesis or creative project.

Ultimately, the thesis student is responsible for the timely and successful completion of their thesis. It is this independence and commitment that separates thesis work from normal coursework. But, please also keep in mind that this is the first time a student is doing a thesis and the advisor's guidance and mentoring through this process is critical.

### **Finding a Thesis Advisor**

Students typically find an advisor by asking a faculty member if they are available to work with them on their topic of interest. The faculty member may be someone with whom the student has already been working with in a lab or on a research project, someone from whom they have taken a class, or someone with expertise in their field of interest.

It is not required that students have previously worked with their advisor, but it can be very helpful when there is an established working relationship. Students searching for a potential advisor in their areas of interest are advised to review specific departmental websites and online faculty profiles where professors describe their research interests and list their publications. Some departments require students to have a thesis advisor who is attached to the department of their major. Questions about this requirement should be directed to departmental chairs. Students may also seek guidance/assistance in identifying a potential advisor from the Honors College associate dean.

See **Appendix E** for guidance on emailing a potential thesis advisor. During the initial meeting with a potential advisor, students should pay attention to whether or not there is alignment in research interests and working styles, as these are important for a successful advisor/advisee relationship.

### **Responsibilities of a Thesis Advisor**

A faculty member who agrees to serve as a thesis advisor commits to:

- meeting regularly with the thesis student to guide and mentor them as they undertake their thesis research and writing.



- working with the student to help them shape and focus their research interests into a manageable thesis project.
- providing clear expectations for the thesis/creative project germane to the research and scholarship in the particular field or discipline.
- helping identify thesis committee members with expertise in the research area.
- assisting the student in preparing the thesis research proposal that is circulated to the committee one week in advance of the first committee meeting (see Thesis Proposal Guidelines).
- helping to convene and attending the first committee meeting in which the student will present the thesis proposal and receive feedback from the committee.
- setting up regular meetings in consultation with the student (at least bimonthly, but we encourage weekly meetings) throughout the duration of the project to help keep the student on track.
- reading and commenting on drafts of the thesis as it develops.
- grading the student in HON 498 and HON 499 (see the Rubric for the Honors Thesis Advisor's Assessment in **Appendix F**).
- approving all relevant Thesis Forms (1, 3, 4, 5, and 6) and submitting Forms 5 and 6.
- attending and chairing the student's oral defense of the thesis, including the thesis committee's deliberation on the awarding of *honors* or *no honors*. (For guidance on this assessment, see the Rubrics for the Written Honors Thesis and Oral Defense of the Thesis in **Appendix G**).
- participating (when possible) in the year-end Honors Celebration where thesis students are recognized by the College for their accomplishment and advisors are publicly thanked for their support and mentorship of their Honors students.

### **The Thesis Committee: Composition & Expectations**

The thesis committee must be composed of a minimum of three UMaine faculty members, including the thesis advisor. To ensure continuity for the committee, all members should be full-time members of the UMaine faculty; the Honors dean and/or associate dean may also serve. The committee may include a maximum of five total members; the total number of committee members will be determined by the advisor and student:

- The committee *may* include 1 external member (e.g., a faculty member at another institution, a researcher affiliated with a lab outside of UMaine, or a community

partner); 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 meeting the capstone requirements for double majors, the committee may need to have advisors or members from both disciplines. Consult with the chairs/directors of the specific departments to make this determination.

In consultation with their thesis advisor, students will identify potential committee members who have expertise in or can contribute to the research topic and the student then reaches out to ask if these faculty members are available to serve (see **Appendix E** for guidance on this outreach). Students should not ask potential members to serve on their committee without consulting with their advisor.

**A faculty member who agrees to serve on a thesis committee commits to:**

- attending a minimum of two meetings (a thesis student and/or the advisor may ask for a second committee meeting if there have been significant changes in the research project that warrant an additional meeting):
  - A 1 hour committee meeting which takes place during the semester the student is taking HON 498,
  - and a 1.5 hour thesis defense which takes place during the semester the student is taking HON 499.
- working within the committee structure to provide feedback on the student's thesis proposal and helping the student refine the scope of the research project.
- recommending scholarly literature or resources relevant to the thesis project.
- offering guidance/advice in their area of specialty such as helping a student learn and use a specific analytical tool or suggesting scholarly resources.
- reading and providing feedback on the final thesis. Committee members may sometimes be asked by students to read drafts of a chapter(s), but that is not required if time and capacity do not permit
- attending the 1.5 hours oral thesis defense and contributing to the evaluation of the thesis project as *Honors* or *No Honors*. For guidance on this assessment, see the Rubrics for the Written Honors Thesis and Oral Defense of the Thesis in **Appendix G**.

## **Honors Thesis Committee Meeting**

Students are responsible for arranging the committee meeting and the meeting space. Arranging a time for 3-5 committee members to meet can be a challenge and we

recommend using an online meeting scheduler to determine everyone's availability. Committee meetings must be held by the date listed on Brightspace and the Honors website, which are determined by the semester in which the student is taking HON 498. All members of the committee must be present at this committee meeting.

While Honors only requires one committee meeting during HON 498, a second meeting in the HON 499 semester is recommended if there are significant changes to the research project. Emails to the committee about the project progress can also be useful.

The central feature of the meeting is the presentation and discussion of the thesis proposal (see below for guidelines on what to include), which is required to be submitted to the committee a week in advance of the scheduled meeting. The student is responsible for submitting Thesis Form 3 after the meeting's conclusion. The advisor and each committee member will then receive an email with the subject "Form Approval" and are required to approve Form 3 indicating their willingness to serve on the thesis committee.

## **Honors Thesis Proposal**

The thesis proposal should include:

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.
7. Typical length is 3-5 pages, single spaced.

### **Guidelines for developing the thesis proposal:**

1. The proposal should be prepared in conjunction with the advisor. If a student has prepared another research proposal (for example, for a CUGR grant), they may use this proposal for their committee meeting, though they need to be sure the thesis proposal includes all components listed above.

2. The proposal is due to the committee at least one week prior to the first committee meeting date.
3. The student should be prepared to present and discuss the proposal at the first committee meeting.
4. During the meeting, the advisor and committee members ask questions and help the student refine the research project by suggesting relevant literature, potential critical or theoretical approaches, and weighing in on the scope and scale of the project. In some cases, narrowing 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 research project.

### **Requirements for Research Involving Human Subjects**

If the thesis involves human subjects research (surveys, interviews, testing, etc.), you must complete an application to the [IRB \(Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects\)](#) and receive notification of approval before any research, surveys, interviews, tests, etc., can take place. Students work with their advisor on the IRB application, which is then submitted by the advisor. Students must also complete any required training. Review of applications can take up to a month, so it is critical to complete this step early. Students may even work on this application before they enroll in HON 498. Please direct questions about the IRB to UMaine's Office of Research Compliance.

### **Requirements for Research Involving Animal Subjects**

If the thesis involves research with animal subjects, students must work with their advisors to complete the appropriate [IACUC \(Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee\)](#) paperwork. Students must also complete the required training. Review of applications can take up to a month, so it is critical to complete this step as early as possible. Students may even work on this application before they enroll in HON 498. Please direct questions about the IACUC to UMaine's Office of Research Compliance.

### **Thesis Funding**

Potential funding opportunities including thesis fellowships, scholarships, and research support can be found on the ['Scholarships & Funding' tab](#) on Honors College website. Please direct questions to the contact associated with the funding source.

### **Honors College Thesis Archive**

If you are interested in exploring past theses, take a look at the [Honors College thesis archive](#). This archive can be searched based on title, student's name, thesis advisor, major,

year, etc. This is an excellent resource if you're curious about previous theses both in and outside of your discipline!

## Writing the Honors Thesis

### Thesis Formatting Guidelines

The Honors College has created specific formatting guidelines ([Honors Thesis Formatting Guidelines](#)) for Honors theses that students must adhere to in order for their thesis to be posted on the Digital Commons and in the Honors College Thesis Archives. Following these guidelines ensures your manuscript is properly formatted and looks professional.

To help with this, we have created two template Word documents, one for traditional and one for creative theses. **We strongly advise** students to use the appropriate one when they begin writing their thesis manuscript or disquisition. It will be much easier to start writing with the template than it will be to copy and paste an existing document into the template afterwards as it doesn't reliably preserve the formatting. Those [templates](#) can be found on the Honors College website under the Thesis tab.

### Oral Thesis Defense

Students work with their advisor and committee to schedule 1.5 hours for their oral thesis defense early in the semester in which they are taking HON 499. Once a date and time is determined, students submit Thesis Form 4: Declaration of Defense Date (see the section on Thesis Forms for a list of due dates). To reserve a space for the defense in one of the Honors classrooms, email [honors@maine.edu](mailto:honors@maine.edu). Be proactive as these spaces fill quickly.

Students are required to send their completed thesis to their committee members two weeks in advance of their defense date along with a copy of the Rubrics for the Written Thesis and Oral Defense of the Thesis (see **Appendix G**).

We recommend that students begin preparing for the oral thesis presentation and defense at least two weeks prior to the defense date. Here are some helpful tips to prepare:

- Hold “mock defenses” with family, friends, and/or lab groups.
- Become familiar with and comfortable in your presentation space, including practicing your presentation using the available technology. Ensure all of the technological equipment is working properly beforehand.
- Anticipate questions your committee may ask, and think about how to answer them.

- Discuss presentation strategies with your advisor.
- Create a “script” for the presentation and then practice, practice, practice!
- Get a good night’s sleep the night before your defense!
- Be confident (we know—much easier said than done). You have invested 6 credits worth of time and effort in researching and writing the thesis/disquisition. You have learned a lot and should be excited to share that knowledge with your committee.

## Defense Expectations & Schedule

Thesis defenses are structured according to the outline below:

- Students give a 20-30 minute presentation of their thesis project covering their research claim/question, approach to data gathering or creative process, analysis/interpretation of the data or reflection on the creative outcome, and conclusion based on their findings. The presentation of the thesis to the committee often is accompanied by a slideshow, but that is not required.
  - With permission from the committee, students may invite members of the public to attend the presentation of the research. They may even be invited to ask a question or two at the end of the presentation, but only the committee members remain for the actual oral defense of the thesis.
- For the remaining 30-40 minutes following the presentation, students answer questions from their committee related to their thesis project.
- The last 30 minutes are set aside for the committee to deliberate if the student’s work has earned *honors* or *no honors*.

During the deliberation period, the student is excused from the room and the thesis committee discusses amongst themselves if the thesis will be awarded *honors* or *no honors*. After the deliberation is over, the student is invited back, and the advisor informs the student of the committee’s decision. The committee may suggest edits to the thesis that will need to be made before the student submits their final manuscript to [honors.thesis@maine.edu](mailto:honors.thesis@maine.edu) for formatting review. Advisors submit **Thesis Form 5: Awarding of Honors** right after the thesis defense concludes.

## Post-Defense Requirements

After the defense, there are still steps that must be completed in order for the student to be certified as an Honors College graduate, including:

- Submission of Thesis Form 6 by the thesis advisor(s).
- Completion of edits to the thesis of disquisition recommended by the advisor(s) and committee members.
- Submission of edited thesis manuscript to [honors.thesis@maine.edu](mailto:honors.thesis@maine.edu) (for formatting review) by the due dates (students will be informed of this date on the Brightspace page for their thesis course).
- Students must complete all the formatting edits indicated by the stated deadline and resubmit the final document. The Honors College is **not** responsible for editing students' theses, helping with writing issues, or fixing formatting.

Students will only have **one opportunity** to make formatting revisions to the thesis manuscript after it has been reviewed by the Honors College. If your thesis does not meet formatting standards, it will **not** be posted on the Digital Commons. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the final manuscript meets the formatting expectations as stipulated by the Honors College.

- Submission of Thesis Form 6 by the advisor(s) once the advisor has reviewed and accepted the final manuscript submitted by the student.
- Submission of final, properly formatted thesis manuscript to [honors.thesis@maine.edu](mailto:honors.thesis@maine.edu) (for posting onto the Digital Commons and Honors Thesis Archives)

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Disquisition Guidelines

A creative thesis is not just a stand-alone work. It is accompanied by a disquisition, which is a formal inquiry into or a discussion of a subject in the form of an essay. As a guideline, the disquisition should be approximately 15 to 20 pages in length, but could be longer depending on the topic. Use the Creative Thesis Template (see Honors College website under the thesis tab) to write the disquisition so that it is properly formatted from the start.

The disquisition should include the following components:

- Discussion of how you came to decide on your particular creative thesis.
- Purpose or intent, i.e. what you are trying to accomplish through both the
- process and product.
- Literature review discussing the works that influenced and informed your understanding of your topic.
- Methodology section describing the creative process.
- Critical analysis of your creative work and process within the broader context of the genre/form and the scholarly literature you reference.
- Summary of what you have learned through the process.
- Bibliography in the format consistent with your discipline.



## **Appendix B: Expectations for Progress Policy for Honors College Thesis Students**

Thesis deadlines are designed to ensure that students stay on track, fulfill requirements in a timely fashion, and complete a high-quality project. Students who do not make satisfactory progress on the thesis (e.g. failing to meet stipulated deadlines and/or to respond in a timely fashion to outreach from the Honors College or the thesis advisor) may be dismissed from Honors.

Students who are not making satisfactory progress will be notified by email by the dean's office and given the opportunity to address concerns/missing materials by a specified date. Students who fail to meet second deadlines or fulfill stipulated expectations will receive notification of dismissal.

## **Appendix C: Grading Guidelines for HON 498 and HON 499**

The following guidelines are designed to help students succeed in a process which takes them out of the familiar world of well-defined course assignments to the self-paced arena of independent, but guided, study. HON 498 is graded with traditional letter grades (A, B, C, D, F, I, L) as it provides the student with a clear assessment of their progress. The responsibility for determining the grade rests with the Honors thesis advisor who is the instructor of record. These guidelines and expectations should be discussed with the advisee at the outset of HON 498. A minimum grade of C in HON 498 is required for students to enroll in HON 499.

### **Suggested guidelines for assessing a student's work in HON 498:**

1. Thesis Form 1 has been submitted the semester prior to taking HON 498.
2. The student prepares a written thesis proposal under the guidance of their faculty member and sends it to their committee for review one week before the first committee meeting.
3. The first committee meeting is held prior to the deadlines stipulated according to the semester in which the student is taking HON 498 (see chart on page 6).
4. The student schedules and attends all meetings with advisor, with the suggestion that these occur at least bimonthly. Attendance at these meetings is required and will be taken into consideration in the final grade.
5. The student meets the goals set by them and their advisor for the course.

One way to consider the above elements in terms of awarding a grade is that an A = successful completion of 1-5; while a C = successful completion of 1-3.

### **Grading HON 499**

HON 499 should NOT be assigned a letter grade until AFTER the thesis defense has taken place and the final thesis is submitted along with the advisor's signature on Thesis Form 6. After the advisor has signed Thesis Form 6, a grade for HON 499 should be given (A, B, C, D, F). Please note that students cannot graduate without a grade for HON 499. If the student does not finish the research or defend the thesis before the end of the term, the student can continue working on the project without having to enroll again in HON 499. In that case, please assign the student a TH grade (stands for ongoing work on the Honors thesis) for HON 499. Once the thesis is completed as indicated by the submission of Thesis Form 6 and the final copy of the thesis, the advisor submits a change of grade request. If the student does not successfully complete the thesis in the time frame planned, and does not wish to extend the thesis work into an additional semester, the student may still receive a passing grade in HON 499 based on the effort invested, communication maintained, and work accomplished throughout the thesis process.

**Suggested guidelines for assessing a student's work in HON 499:**

1. The student schedules and attends all meetings with their advisor throughout the semester, with a recommendation of weekly check-ins on the student's progress.
2. The student communicates regularly with the advisor on thesis progress.
3. The student shares drafts of their thesis in a timely manner.
4. The student meets the deadline for scheduling their thesis defense and submits Thesis Form 5 (which requires the approval of the advisor and committee).
5. The student sends an advisor-approved version of the thesis to the committee for review two weeks before the thesis defense.
6. The student meets the goals -- created mutually by the student and the advisor -- for submitting work and completing the thesis.
7. The student submits their properly formatted thesis to the Honors College by the deadline.

## **Appendix D: Thesis Forms Checklist**

### **Thesis Form 1: Declaration of Advisor & Description of Thesis Project (submitted by the student)**

- ☐ Thesis title & description (approx. 250 words)
- ☐ Advisor approval
- ☐ Honors College approval
- ☐ Department approval (required if the thesis is replacing the capstone)

### **Thesis Form 2: Thesis Committee Approval (submitted by the student)**

- ☐ Confirm commitments from the faculty you have asked to serve on your thesis committee. Faculty members listed on Thesis Form 2 must have already agreed to serve on the thesis committee; students should list 'prospective' committee members on this form.
- ☐ Check for the correct spelling of committee members' names and email addresses
- ☐ Honors College approval

### **Thesis Form 3: Thesis Form 3: Confirmation of Committee Meeting & Members (submitted by the student)**

- ☐ Students circulate a 3-5 page proposal with the thesis committee 1 week before meeting. The written proposal is a **required** component of HON 498.
- ☐ This form is submitted by the student after the 1-hour thesis committee meeting. Following the committee meeting, each committee member receives an email with the subject line Form Approval. Approving this form is required as it indicates the faculty's willingness to serve on the committee.
- ☐ Approval by advisor and committee members which indicates their willingness to

### **Thesis Form 4: Declaration of Defense Date (submitted by the student)**

- ☐ Schedule your 1.5 hour thesis defense
- ☐ Advisor and Committee approves that they can meet at the designated date and time

### **Thesis Form 5: Awarding of Honors (submitted by the advisor)**

- ☐ Submission of Honors designation by advisor immediately following the defense
- ☐ Student submits edited thesis manuscript to [honors.thesis@maine.edu](mailto:honors.thesis@maine.edu) for review by the Honors College. The College checks formatting, but Honors is not responsible for editing the document.

### **Thesis Form 6: Final Document Submission and Thesis Completion (submitted by the advisor)**

- ☐ Student completes formatting edits according to feedback given by Honors College and sends the final document in Word and as a pdf to [honors.thesis@maine.edu](mailto:honors.thesis@maine.edu))\*
- ☐ Advisor submits form 7 confirming the student is done by the deadline

\*Reminder: properly formatted theses will not be posted on Digital Commons.

## **Appendix E: Guidance for Students Emailing a Potential Advisor or Committee Member**

This communication with a potential advisor or committee member is often the first impression you will make when contacting them. But, even if it is a faculty member you know, you want to be sure the email is professional and not too long!

### **Contacting a potential thesis advisor:**

This professional communication should include:

- A proper greeting (Dear Prof Smith, Dear Dr. Jones; never use Mrs. If you don't know if the faculty member has their PhD, then using Prof. is a good default greeting)
- A brief introduction of yourself
- A brief discussion of the research that they are doing that you find interesting
- A request to meet with them to discuss their research and the potential of you working with them on it
- If you have an idea for a research project, you could mention that here and then expand on your ideas when you meet
- A proper sign off

Do not ask the faculty member to be your advisor in the email; wait until you meet in person to initiate that conversation. Be BRIEF—you want to convey enough information, but you also want to be respectful of their time and if the email is too long, they might set it aside to read at a later date.

### **Contacting a potential thesis committee member:**

This professional communication should include:

- A proper greeting (Dear Prof Smith, Dear Dr. Jones; never use Mrs. If you don't know if the faculty member has their PhD, then using Prof. is a good default greeting)
- A brief introduction of yourself
- A brief description of your thesis research/creative project (You could briefly describe how their research is relevant to your thesis project and/or how their knowledge and expertise can contribute to the research you are undertaking)
- The name of your thesis advisor and your advisor.
- A request to meet to discuss their potential of serving on your thesis committee
- A proper sign off

Again, be BRIEF—you want to convey enough information, but you also want to be respectful of their time and if the email is too long, they might set it aside to read at a later time.

## Appendix F: Rubric for the Thesis Advisor's Assessment

The Thesis Advisor's Assessment rubric is primarily intended to guide the advisor's evaluation of the work the student does on the thesis research and writing in both HON 498 *Honors Thesis/Research I* and HON 499 *Honors Thesis/Research II*. Honors students who complete a thesis defense will be awarded *honors* or *no honors* for their work based on the evaluation of several components: the written document itself (the most weight is given to this), the presentation of the thesis, and the oral defense of the thesis.

A thesis student is evaluated as *satisfactory* or *unsatisfactory* on the following categories and components. A student who attains *Honors* will typically receive a rating of *satisfactory* on each of the dimensions below and on the rubrics corresponding to 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.

The advisor should be sure the student's thesis is satisfactory on the metrics included here before the thesis defense. If the thesis is found to be unsatisfactory overall and not *Honors-worthy*, it should not be allowed to go forward and the defense should be postponed. Questions or concerns about this should be directed to the associate dean in Honors ([melissa.ladenheim@maine.edu](mailto:melissa.ladenheim@maine.edu)).

1. Relationship with the advisor:
  - a. Assesses own knowledge, skills, and abilities accurately
  - b. Perseveres toward attaining mutually agreed upon goals
  - c. Displays high standards of attendance and punctuality
  - d. Responds thoughtfully to feedback
  - e. Sets, reflects upon and adjusts priorities in order to balance professionalism
2. Relationship with the project:
  - a. Clearly understands the big picture while attending to the details of the specific project
  - b. Works independently; is a consistent "self-starter"
  - c. Reliably recognizes the existence of a problem, identifies potential causes, and implements possible solutions
  - d. Seeks and evaluates information using multiple criteria for topics/issues under consideration
3. Assessment of thesis project:
  - a. Originality of the thesis
    - i. Was the thesis idea developed by the student?

- ii. Does the work done for the thesis represent an original perspective?
- b. Contribution of the thesis to disciplinary or interdisciplinary scholarship
  - i. Does the thesis introduce new knowledge or analysis?
  - ii. Will the thesis serve to stimulate other research or scholarship?



## Appendix G: Rubrics for the Written Thesis and Oral Defense of the Thesis

These rubrics are intended to guide the committee's evaluation of an Honors thesis and assist in the determination of *Honors* or *No Honors*. Honors students who complete a thesis defense will be awarded *Honors* or *No Honors* for their work based on the evaluation of several components, with the majority of the evaluation based on the written thesis itself. The committee also considers the presentation and oral defense of the thesis.

Committee members are asked to evaluate students as *satisfactory* or *unsatisfactory* on using the following categories and elements as guides. A student who attains *honors* will typically receive a rating of satisfactory on each of the dimensions below. 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.

### WRITTEN THESIS

1. Research Question or creative challenge:
  - a. Unique research question/issue/creative challenge identified
  - b. Goals/objectives/hypotheses are explicit
  - c. Historical and contemporary contexts, assumptions/biases, or ethical considerations are identified
  - d. Thesis presented is within an academic framework
2. Methodology/approach: development:
  - a. Methodology/approach is appropriate to disciplinary/interdisciplinary focus
  - b. Topic is contextualized among sources and materials cited
  - c. Multiple perspectives are considered
  - d. Demonstrates understanding of the content, tools, and structures in the field
3. Methodology/approach: implementation
  - a. Quantitative and/or symbolic tools are utilized effectively
  - b. Evidence is sufficient to address the research question and is well utilized
  - c. Accuracy and relevance of evidence are appropriately questioned; possible times are identified
  - d. Evaluates, analyzes, and synthesizes information
  - e. Demonstrates understanding of professional standards
4. Conclusions, implications, and consequences:
  - a. Conclusions, qualifications, and consequences, including value of the thesis, are presented

- b. Significance of what was discovered, learned, or created is demonstrated
  - c. Assertions are qualified and well supported
  - d. Demonstrates independent and critical thought
5. Writing
- a. Language clearly and effectively communicates ideas
  - b. Any errors in grammar, spelling, mechanics, and/or punctuation are minimal
  - c. Organization is clear and effective
  - d. Sources and citations are used correctly

### **THESIS ORAL PRESENTATION AND DEFENSE**

1. Presentation:
- a. Introduction is interesting and engaging
  - b. Speech is clear and articulate
  - c. Presentation is well-organized and easy to follow
  - d. Media and format are appropriate for the content
  - e. Presentation appropriately represents the thesis project
2. Discussion with the committee:
- a. Questions are answered well and with reference to the thesis student's own work
  - b. Demonstrates knowledge of the subject
  - c. Comfortably engages committee
  - d. Demonstrates understanding of and facility with the content of the thesis
  - e. Demonstrates understanding of and facility with the disciplinary context and implications of the thesis
  - f. Findings central to the thesis are extended to questions external to the discipline