

University Honors Guidelines

In order to graduate with University Honors—for such designation to appear on the transcript and diploma—the Honors track student must satisfy the following in the last year of study at Drake:

1. Successfully complete all Honors Program track requirements of the Drake Curriculum.
2. Maintain a 3.2 GPA or higher by the end of the graduating year.
3. Complete Honors 199 – Honors Senior Thesis.

Guidelines

The Honors Senior Thesis is a 3-credit hour thesis project undertaken during the fall or the spring semester of the graduating year (senior year). It is a project conceived by you in consultation with a select faculty member knowledgeable in the proposed field(s) of study. This faculty member agrees to mentor you and your thesis work towards successful completion. It must be recognized that faculty who agree to mentor the Honors Senior Thesis do so as extra curricula. They are to be recognized for their extraordinary contributions to you and your project. **It is your responsibility to seek out faculty scholars who may best guide your work and to bring that faculty scholar on board.**

The Honors Senior Thesis most successfully reflects the individual's field(s) of study in unique and interdisciplinary ways. The student is the principal creative force behind the work; the project must require intellectual intensity transcending that of the usual undergraduate term paper or creative project. In addition, the product must clearly demonstrate the scholarly or essential creative nature of the work and should provide evidence that the student has been challenged. Finally, collaborative work with a research or visual arts mentor is acceptable only if the production represents true individual student achievement.

The Honors Senior Thesis must culminate in some concrete project, written, performed, filmed, art based, or other that is structured or written according to the professional standards of the field(s) it ultimately represents. It must be of such quality that both the Faculty Honors Senior Thesis Mentor and the Director of Honors deem the project to have been successfully completed. The Honors Senior Thesis must earn a B or better for the student to graduate with Honors.

Combining with another Major Capstone

The Honors Senior Thesis may, in some cases, be cross-listed with a proposed Senior Capstone within the major(s). Approval for cross listing is primarily made by evaluation of the proposed project's interdisciplinary character. Approval is not made if the capstone project functions only as a replacement of primary Honors Senior Thesis expectations. Approval for cross listing is made by the Director of Honors and will typically require that a meta-analysis of the interdisciplinarity of the project be added to the project. You will also be required to have two advisors, one of whom will need to be from outside of your Major department.

Timeline for Honors Senior Thesis

1. The Honors Senior Thesis must be approved by the Director of Honors before the project begins. Submitting the online Honors Senior Thesis Contract Form begins the approval process.
2. It is recognized that conceiving and coordinating the Honors Senior Thesis takes time to organize. Sometimes this is not possible before registration begins. In such cases you may complete the Preliminary Agreement for Honors Senior Thesis. This form is to be turned into and signed by the Director of Honors prior to registration.
 1. The Preliminary Agreement for Honors Senior Thesis generates an override so that you may register for Honors Senior Thesis without having yet completed all of the necessary final paperwork for the proposed thesis.
3. Once you have a Faculty Honors Senior Thesis Mentor/Advisor and you have settled upon a topic, you must complete the [online Honors Senior Thesis Contract Form.](#)¹
4. The Honors Senior Thesis Contract is to be completed and submitted no later than the end of the **second week** of the semester in which the project is to be completed. At that time course enrollment information will be changed to reflect the **Honors Senior Thesis – Honors 199**, rather than the generic holding designation generated by the Preliminary Agreement for Honors Senior Thesis.
5. The Director of Honors is available throughout the semester in which you are completing your thesis, however, primary mentorship is with the faculty member you have designated to work with.
6. Upon completion, or near the completion, of the Honors Senior Thesis, you must present your project to the Honors community and faculty mentor/advisor during one of the scheduled Honors Senior Thesis sessions are held during the final few weeks of the semester in which you worked upon and completed your thesis.
 - a) Presentations run 15 -20 minutes with a 10-minute question and answer period to follow.
 - b) You will be notified by email once Honors Senior Thesis Presentation sessions and time slots have been organized. It is up to you to coordinate and choose a time slot that accommodates your faculty mentor/advisor. You are encouraged to invite other faculty, friends and family.
7. Final submission of your Senior Honors Thesis is to be determined by you and your Thesis Mentor/Advisor but should allow enough time for your advisor to adequately assess your work and submit your grade before Final grades are due.
8. You will be expected to submit a final version of your Presentation in addition to your final thesis submission.

¹ You are encouraged to work with more than one advisor when the disciplines with which you are working are either very different from each other or you have little familiarity with them (the disciplines).

Honors Thesis Description

The Honors Thesis is a culminating work in an Honors' student university career. Foremost, it provides Honors students in their senior year an opportunity to explore, in depth, a question that they find interesting and that may or may not be related to their major course of study. Students are encouraged to explore approaches to engaging ideas that they may not have had during their college career. It is also students' opportunity to provide evidence of what has been learned through their experience in the Honors Program.

Students who receive a B or higher on their thesis and who have maintained an overall GPA of 3.2 or higher will receive University Honors.

The Honors Thesis:

- Must be completed in the student's senior year
- Must address a question or issue that requires an interdisciplinary approach to answer well
- Must display an intellectual intensity transcending that of a usual undergraduate term paper or creative term paper
- Must culminate in some product (e.g., a written thesis (suggested page length of 30 pages) or creative work in the arts)
- Must be structured or written according to relevant professional standards
- Must be supervised by a faculty member who should be chosen by identifying a general area the student is interested in and then finding a faculty member who may be qualified to supervise this work. Or, the student may want to ask a faculty member with whom the student has a good relationship or wants to work with further, provided they are able to give you the support you need for that project.
- Is a culminating experience of the Honors Program and, as such, could not have just as easily been done by someone who has not taken Honors courses.
- May count toward capstone requirement in major department with permission of major department and Honors Director
 - Honors thesis is expected to *exceed* requirements of a capstone in a major department
 - If it will also count toward major capstone, must have two advisors for thesis (one within major and one outside)
- May be collaborative with a research or artistic mentor *only if* the product represents true individual achievement of the student.
 - That is, the student should not *simply* be doing research *for* someone else, but should be clearly working on and developing an individual product that is not primarily the work of the mentor.
- Must clearly demonstrate scholarly or essential creative nature of the product
- Must provide evidence that the student has been challenged
- Includes an oral defense/presentation near the end of the semester, which the thesis advisor and director of the Honors Program will attend and is open to anyone else who is interested to attend. The attendees will ask questions of the presenter related to method, results and implications of thesis.
- Requires those working on a thesis to participate in regular gatherings with others working on theses (regardless of the product being worked on).
 - At these meetings students will share with each other the progress on their work, share struggles they are having and get support and feedback from others going through the same general process.
 - These gatherings will happen, generally, monthly and will be organized and attended by the Director of the Honors Program. The times for these meetings will be determined after registration for the semester in which the thesis is to be done and may take place virtually.

Any questions regarding any aspect of the Honors thesis project should be directed to the Honors Director.

SPRING				
	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Wk 1	Finalize Topic / Secure Advisor	Research	Research/Writing	Final Revisions/Submit
Wk 2	Complete Thesis Contract Form	Research	Presentation	Submit
Wk 3	Research	Research/Writing	Presentation	
Wk 4	Research	Research/Writing	Presentation	
FALL				
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Wk 1	Finalize Topic / Secure Advisor	Research	Research/Writing	Final Revisions/Submit
Wk 2	Complete Thesis Contract Form	Research	Presentation	Submit
Wk 3	Research	Research/Writing	Presentation	
Wk 4		Research/Writing	Presentation	