University Honors College

Proposal Guidelines for Admission to Honors Candidacy

Arts & Architecture, Social Sciences, Education, and Humanities

Graduation with Departmental/College or University Honors requires amongst other things the completion and successful defense of an Honors thesis or project. Before you may proceed with this honors capstone, you must submit a four to six-page research proposal with bibliography along with your Application to Candidacy form for approval by the Honors Council. These guidelines will aid you in authoring a successful submission.

Research Focus
Departmental/College Honors Candidates must conduct original research that makes a contribution to their field or profession. While disciplines may require differing formats, all proposals must therefore have a clear research focus: why, what, how, and to what benefit are you engaging your subject. It is important to be explicit and articulate, including a specific research (hypo)thesis, argument, or expectation. Discuss and review your proposal carefully with your advisor. The Honors Review Subcommittee looks specifically for originality, specificity, relevance, and feasibility.

Methodology and Context
To complete a successful honors thesis or project, Departmental/College Honors Candidates must be well-grounded in the research methods, conventions, and scholarship of their major. Your proposal must therefore show a clear understanding of source/data acquisition, research methodology/critical perspective, and current scholarship pertinent to your topic. It is important to specifically address your sources, outline your methodology/critical perspective, and place your efforts within the research context of your field. In addition, you must compile a selective bibliography delineating research data/sources from secondary literature you intend to use for your thesis or project. The Honors Review Subcommittee looks specifically for methodological substantiation and scholarly command.

Research Outcome and Presentation
Departmental/College Honors Candidates may share their research outcomes of their capstone thesis or project with peers and the wider community via undergraduate/honors research forums, exhibits, performances, and/or publications. It is therefore essential that you write your proposal for a wide (academic) audience beyond your immediate discipline. The Honors Review Subcommittee looks specifically for style, readability, and foresight.

Proposal Format
Departmental/College Honors research proposals should be between 1,000-2,000 words and authored according to the convention of one’s discipline. However, they generally contain the following elements:

- **Title** that reveals the essence of your research proposal.
- **Introduction** in which you contextualize and explain the social and scholarly significance of your topic to a wide audience.
- **Relevance Statement** in which you indicate your motives and necessity for your research.
- **Hypo(thesis), Argument, or Research Expectation** in which you pose your thesis/research question and expected findings.
- **Literature Review or Historiography** in which you discuss the scholarly context and grounding of your research proposal.
• **Sources Use and Methodology** in which you qualify and quantify your sources and/or data sets, and lay out the specific research steps/stages of your thesis or project.

• **Outcome and Dissemination** in which you discuss how your thesis/project will benefit the (scholarly) community at large, and how you expect to share your findings.

• **Selective Bibliography** in which you state the most appropriate high quality sources (formatted according to discipline) for your thesis or project.

**Approval Process**

*Your proposal must be reviewed, approved, and signed by your advisor prior to submission to the Honors Council.* It will subsequently be reviewed by three members of the council (Honors Review Subcommittee) who can approve, deny, or return your proposal for a (one-time) revision. The Committee uses the following criteria:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Honors Denial</th>
<th>Revision</th>
<th>Pass</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposal originality, relevance, and feasibility</td>
<td>Proposal lacks or has a structurally flawed focus; or does not make an original contribution to scholarship in the field.</td>
<td>Proposal insufficiently articulates a research focus, and/or original contribution to scholarship in the field; or needs elaboration on source access.</td>
<td>Proposal contains an original, relevant research focus. Sources are accessible, and the project can be completed within the allotted time frame.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem statement, hypothesis, and expected outcome</td>
<td>Proposal lacks or has a structurally deficient (hypo)thesis, or has an irrelevant or unrealistic research expectation.</td>
<td>Proposal fails to state its research purpose; or (hypo)thesis is unclear or underdeveloped; or research expectation is insufficiently articulated.</td>
<td>Proposal contains a clear problem statement, valid (hypo)thesis, and articulates a realistic research expectation/outcome.</td>
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<td>Sources, scholarship and methodology</td>
<td>Proposal lacks scholarship grounding, methodology, and/or appropriate sources.</td>
<td>Proposal insufficiently articulates its scholarship grounding, methodology outline, or proposed source use.</td>
<td>Proposal is well-grounded in scholarship, lays out a clear and valid methodology, and includes an explicit discussion of sources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal quality and style</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Proposal is poorly organized, and/or contains a multitude of grammar/style errors.</td>
<td>Proposal is well-organized and readable, and uses appropriate style conventions.</td>
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You will be notified whether or not your proposal has been accepted, including Committee suggestions and comments as appropriate. If your proposal needs revision, please make these corrections immediately in concert with your Advisor, and resubmit your application within the issued timeline. Please be aware, that the Honors Review Subcommittee customarily only accepts one revision.

**Questions?**

Please discuss your questions with your Advisor and your Department’s Honors Director. The latter will contact Mary Olbrich in University Honors for questions for the Honors Review Subcommittee.