

HONORS THESIS DIRECTOR INFORMATION

Faculty are asked to approach this task assuming that Honors Program students are mature and of superior academic ability, and are capable of serious independent work. Your student will be required to make a public defense of his/her research on or before the last day of the semester (the Friday prior to finals week) in which the work is to be completed. Students need careful direction in the choosing, planning, execution and writing of their theses. Faculty are asked to undertake the direction of a thesis only if they can devote the time necessary to ensure that a high quality thesis is produced. Thesis directors should consult the Honors Program director when questions arise concerning this work, especially if there is any risk that the student will not complete the thesis as scheduled. The director and the student will make decisions together regarding the scope of the project, meeting to discuss work in progress, format, documentation, and so on. We offer the following advice, compiled from the comments of recent thesis directors:

1. As you talk with your student about the scope of the project, you may want to chart middle path between the conventional research paper and the M.A. thesis. Although the senior Honors thesis probably will not be as extensive a project as a Master's thesis, it should represent more expense of time and talent than an ordinary term paper. Remember that your student will receive six hours of 4000-level credit for the work he or she does on the thesis.
2. Early on, get a clear indication from your student of just what he or she is proposing. The prospectus requirement will help here.
3. When meeting to discuss work in progress, make clear that you also want to see work that has been done, drafts of written texts, collected data, and results of surveys, preliminary sketches, photographs, or whatever relevant material you need to examine in order to make sure the project is on track. Doing so will help to protect you and your student from the unpleasant discovery, near the end of the term, that the work which has been done is unacceptable.
4. For a research paper, specify the documentation style you require and be prepared to offer examples of correct form. Remind the student that a bibliography, reference list, or works cited page must accompany a research paper.
5. As you check work in progress, evaluate both content and form, and don't hesitate to ask for revisions in either area. We expect Honors students to be excellent writers, whatever discipline they are in. Let the student know early in the process that completed theses must be free of errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
6. You may want to remind the student that he or she will be responsible for making more than one copy of the completed thesis or creative project. The copy which has your comments and the grade you have assigned will be for the student to keep. The Honors Program receives additional unmarked copies, from which any errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation have been eliminated.
7. As a thesis/creative project advisor, you will sign the final product to signal your approval. You may be reluctant to sign a thesis that represents merely passing work. This is another reason for the importance of regular meetings with your student and careful checking of work in progress. Using this approach, you should be able, early on, to redirect a thesis or project which has taken a wrong turn and save yourself and your student from end-of-term difficulties.
8. Thank you for serving as an Honors thesis director. As a token of our appreciation, the Honors Program will provide you with a modest honorarium to be used for research or classroom expenses.
9. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Honors Program director, Thomas Smith, by e-mail at twsmith@stpt.usf.edu or by phone at 873-4583.