

The Honors Undergraduate Thesis at UCF

Thesis Chair Quick Guide

Thank you for agreeing to contribute your time and expertise to students pursuing the Honors Undergraduate Thesis program. Participating in undergraduate research allows students to gain applied research experience and contribute new knowledge to their discipline; writing an Honors thesis, in particular, is invaluable to students' professional development. We hope that the following information and guidelines will assist faculty with the thesis process.

More detailed information is available in the Honors Undergraduate Thesis Handbook, posted in the Honors Undergraduate Thesis [Webcourse](#).

1. Thesis Chair

The Thesis Chair serves as a mentor for the Honors Thesis student. The Thesis Chair guides the student in selecting, narrowing and refining his or her topic of study within the discipline, and assists in selecting the rest of the thesis committee (see below). Faculty members set their own guidelines and expectations for the structure and length of their student's thesis project.

Eligibility. The Honors Thesis Chair must be tenured or tenure-eligible faculty at UCF. Non-tenure-track faculty must possess a terminal degree in their discipline, hold a continuing, renewable contract as lecturers at UCF and be a subject matter expert in the discipline in which the student intends to write a thesis. Exceptions may apply to departments or colleges with specific "grandfathered-in" agreements with the Burnett Honors College.

2. Thesis Committee

The Honors Undergraduate Thesis program requires that at least one additional person serve on the thesis committee (note: the maximum is five, including the Thesis Chair). The additional member can be selected from within or outside the discipline of the thesis. Any additional committee member must hold a terminal degree and/or be a subject matter expert in the field of the student's Honors thesis.

Exceptions to these eligibility criteria may be granted upon the recommendation of the Department Chair to the Director of Honors Research. The Department Chair must provide a written justification explaining why the proposed committee member should be considered to serve on the thesis committee. The recommendation and justification statement along with a copy of the proposed committee member's CV are submitted to the Director of Honors Research for approval.

Within six weeks of beginning Directed Readings, students and thesis chairs must have identified the additional committee member(s) and submit their names, titles and contact information to the Office of Honors Research. Thereafter, any changes in committee membership will require justification to the Burnett Honors College and approval by the Department Chair.

3. Timetable for the Thesis Process

The Honors Undergraduate Thesis program requires that students enroll in a minimum of two semesters (six credit hours) of Honors course work. The first semester is Honors Directed Readings (4903H – 3 hours) and the second semester is Honors Thesis (4970H – 3 hours). Students who need extra time may enroll in an additional term of Directed Readings (4904H) or Thesis (4971H). The oral defense occurs towards the end of the semester in which students are registered for 4970H or 4971H.

The Honors Undergraduate Thesis Handbook has detailed sections on the progression towards graduation with Honors. Both the thesis chair and student should regularly consult the handbook (and with each other) when assessing progress toward Honors Thesis (or proposal) completion. These **deadlines are fixed** because several UCF units (e.g. Registrar and UCF Library) require timely delivery of thesis and graduation materials.

Webcourses can be used to set these thesis components and deadlines as assignments so students can be reminded of them as the semester progresses, as well as allowing students who receive federal financial aid to complete an academically-related activity within the first week of class (please see <https://finaid.ucf.edu/academic-activity/> for more details).

Thesis chairs should be particularly mindful of the following timeline with associated student responsibilities.

Prior to the first semester, students:

- Complete the Honors Undergraduate Thesis admission agreement and course registration form. These are sent via email to eligible students by the Office of Honors Research and require the thesis chair and HUT Liaison's signatures.
- Register for Honors Thesis Directed Readings (4903H – 3 hours).

***NOTE:** Some courses may be used to substitute for the Directed Readings course either through prior agreements between the department/ academic college and the Burnett Honors College, or through special permission from the Director of Honors Research.*

During the Directed Readings term, students:

- Begin working on project development and background research and formulate ideas for their research proposal.
- Participate in the **Honors Undergraduate Thesis orientation and one additional workshop** (Orientation dates are sent to students via Knights email.)
- Select, in consultation with the thesis chair, at least one additional thesis committee member. The entire committee should be formed at least six weeks prior to the end of the student's first semester and the names, titles and contact information of additional committee members sent to the Office of Honors Research.
- Complete their thesis proposal.
- Submit the thesis proposal to the thesis committee no later than two to three weeks prior to the last day of classes.
- Submit the thesis proposal with the signed **Thesis Proposal Cover Page** to the Office of Honors Research in person or via email by the appropriate deadline.
- Register for Honors Thesis (4970H – 3 credit hours) or, if the proposal will not be completed in time, for Directed Readings II (4904H – 1 or 3 credit hours). Students must use the **HUT Course Registration** form, which is obtained through the Office of Honors Research.

During the Thesis term, students:

- Submit an **Intent to Graduate** form to the Office of Honors Research by the appropriate deadline if they are planning to graduate that semester.

Note: Students graduating in the Summer term must follow the Spring Intent to Graduate deadline since the Honors Graduation banquet is only offered in the Fall and Spring semesters.

- Establish the date of oral defense with thesis chair and committee at least 6 weeks prior to the last day of classes and submit a signed Notice of Defense to the Office of Honors Research **at least a week** before the scheduled defense date.
- Submit a draft of their thesis for the initial format review.
- Complete the thesis, or register for Thesis II (4971H) if additional time is needed.
- Submit a completed version of their thesis to thesis chair and committee at least two to three weeks before scheduled defense date.
- Complete oral defense.
- Incorporate their committee's recommendations into their thesis and make all formatting corrections suggested by the Thesis Editor from the format review.
- Submit a copy of the completed thesis for plagiarism review. The thesis adviser may do this on the student's behalf through their Turnitin.com or iThenticate accounts or create a course section through their Turnitin.com account (or through Webcourses) for the student to upload a final draft of their thesis.

Submission of the thesis for plagiarism review is a UCF requirement for thesis writers at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Without this review and verification that the thesis is, indeed, original work, the Burnett Honors College will not accept a student thesis for publication or completion of the program.

- Submit their signed Thesis Approval forms to the Office of Honors Research through email at HonorsResearch@ucf.edu or in person at TCH 248. Students will then receive permission to upload their final thesis to UCF's Showcase of Text, Archives, Research & Scholarship (STARS) system.

4. Verification of Original Work

All Honors theses must be certified free of plagiarism before being submitted to the Burnett Honors College. This can be done through either Turnitin.com or iThenticate plagiarism detection software. UCF faculty are eligible for free access to both platforms through the Faculty Center for Teacher and Learning (FCTL). If you do not already have an account, please set one up as soon as possible so that submitting the thesis at the end of the semester can be done quickly. Email fctl@ucf.edu to ask for account setup and training. For more details, please click [here](#).

5. IRB

The UCF Institutional Review Board offers the following suggestions to the thesis chair (who acts as IRB faculty advisor) for keeping Honors undergraduate thesis submission reviews short:

- Refer your student to the online resources in Huron IRB found in the Huron IRB Library and Help Center. At minimum, they should read the PI Manual, view the study templates, and visit the Help Center Quick Guides.
- Review the PI manual and the most current version of the forms/templates prior to working with the student to create the study. Advisors should be aware that they will submit the study as the PI and the undergraduate student will be the Co-I. The advisor PI assumes the full responsibility as PI and is expected to fully understand the entire study protocol.
- Use the new Faculty Advisor Review form to help guide the student through what is required for a successful review. If the faculty advisor needs training for this, we recommend scheduling a meeting time with the IRB staff to review the requirements.
- Manage expectations of the student researchers to make sure they are not tackling too large of a research project and teach them that the IRB review is part of the project timeline.

- If possible, submit the studies for review **at least 6 weeks for domestic research and 4 months for international research** before they plan to start any study activities involving human subjects, including recruitment. But in all reality, short, simple studies where the IRB forms and templates are used accurately, the review timeline may be as short as 2 weeks. This is usually dependent on how responsive the PI is to revision requests.

6. Thesis Forms

Except for the initial eligibility form, all forms relating to the Honors Thesis require the thesis chair's approval and signature. Several require the department or College Honors Thesis Liaison's signature as well. All Honors Thesis forms, except for registration forms, are available in the Honors Undergraduate Thesis Resources Webcourse.

The Office of Honors Research accepts electronic signatures for all forms. We recommend HelloSign (www.hellosign.com), a secure platform which allows students to set up free accounts and obtain an unlimited number of signatures for up to three documents per month/ 30 days.

7. Expectations of an Honors Thesis Project

The primary responsibility for ensuring the academic merit of the thesis project rests with the thesis committees, and with thesis chairs in particular. If the thesis chair's department has certain expectations for the structure, content and/or length of an Honors thesis, the thesis chair must share this information with the student at the beginning of the thesis writing process. In addition, the thesis chair must ensure that the student is aware of and writes in accordance with the style and format appropriate for the academic discipline.

It is expected that an Honors thesis will:

- Address an original research question;
- Include a substantial literature review of peer-reviewed or scholarly sources;
- Follow a methodology that is appropriate to answer the research question;
- Demonstrate a clear mastery of the skills of the creative discipline (Arts & Humanities majors);
- Present a solid conclusion that is pertinent to the research question or project.

Honors Thesis Liaisons and department chairs also act as gatekeepers by signing proposal cover pages and thesis approval forms. The Burnett Honors College retains the right to decline to certify theses that do not meet high standards of academic excellence. Students whose theses do not meet such standards will not graduate from the Honors Undergraduate Thesis program.

8. Course Grading

Honors Thesis coursework may be graded either on a letter-scale or as a pass/fail. The student and thesis chair decide on the preferred grading scheme when the student registers for each Honors Thesis course. The Thesis Chair then assigns a grade for these courses at the end of each semester.

In order for students to continue in the Honors Undergraduate Thesis program and be certified for the Honors distinction at graduation, a grade of A, B, or S must be earned in each Honors Thesis course. Students will not be allowed to continue work in the Honors Thesis program if they are awarded a U or any grade below a B.

Conversely, a grade of A, B or S indicates that the student has satisfied **ALL** course requirements and expectations, including producing a proposal or thesis. Please take this into consideration when assigning grades.

- **Directed Readings I and Thesis I:** If a student does not complete their proposal or thesis in Directed Readings I/ Thesis I, but you are satisfied with the amount and standard of work accomplished and the

effort demonstrated, a grade of A, B, or S is warranted. This enables the student to advance to DR II or Thesis II and complete the proposal or thesis. If you are not satisfied with the level of effort or the quality of the work that was produced, a lower grade will automatically terminate the student from the program. In such a case, you may wish to have an honest conversation with the student as early as possible about their chances of success in the program.

- **Incomplete grade:** Please do not both assign an Incomplete grade for DR I/ Thesis I *and* sign a registration form for Directed Readings II or Thesis II. Both indicate that the expected work was not completed in the current semester, but a student's registration for another HUT course will not be processed with an Incomplete grade pending.

9. The Burnett Honors College Graduation Banquet

The Burnett Honors College hosts an Honors Graduation Banquet at the end of the fall and spring semesters (Summer graduates are recognized during the Spring banquet.). At this event, Honors Thesis students are recognized for the completion of their theses and presented with the Honors medallion to be worn at commencement. We invite all thesis chairs to this event when their Honors Thesis students who have successfully completed a thesis are scheduled to graduate from UCF. We encourage thesis chairs to accompany their students to the stage when receiving their medallion from the Dean of the Burnett Honors College.

10. Thesis Chair Honorarium

The Burnett Honors College recognizes that thesis chairs expend a great deal of time and effort guiding their students through the thesis process. As a token of our appreciation, faculty thesis chairs receive an honorarium for each student who completes the Honors Thesis program. This amount is automatically transferred to the thesis chair's department's expense account a few weeks after the end of the semester in which their Honors Thesis student(s) complete their thesis. Spring honoraria are processed in August so faculty will have enough time to spend the funds.

We will notify the thesis chair, department chair/director, and department accountant of the account transfer. Any questions about how and when this amount is spent should be discussed with your Department Chair and department accountant.

Once again, thank you for your mentorship of undergraduate thesis writers and your support of the Honors Undergraduate Thesis program. We hope that mentoring an Honors Thesis student will be an enriching experience, and our staff looks forward to working with you over the next few semesters. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us at HonorsResearch@ucf.edu.