

# Honors Undergraduate Thesis Student Handbook

*Updated 9/21/2022*

The Burnett Honors College is pleased that you are interested in pursuing a research or creative project that can lead to the Honors distinction. Depending on your major and the academic discipline in which you write your thesis, you can earn either Honors in the Major, Honors in Research, or Honors in Creative Inquiry. This handbook contains information to guide you through the thesis process from inception to completion. Modeled after a master's thesis program, the Honors Undergraduate Thesis (HUT) program enables qualified students to pursue advanced undergraduate research and creative activities. This program structures opportunities for you to experience the rewards of independent research that would be otherwise unavailable through standard course offerings. In addition, your efforts will be recognized by the award of an Honors medallion upon graduation and the Honors distinction on your transcript and diploma. What follows is an overview of the major components of the program and the steps that you will need to follow in order to graduate with the Honors distinction.

## **Section I: General Information**

The Office of Honors Research in the Burnett Honors College coordinates the Honors Undergraduate Thesis (HUT) program, which is designed to encourage the best juniors and seniors to undertake original and independent work any academic discipline of their choosing. Working closely with a faculty committee, students work over two to four semesters to design and carry out an honors thesis or project.

The faculty committee consists of a UCF faculty mentor from the student's thesis discipline who serves as the Thesis Chair and a second committee member who can be from the same academic discipline/department or outside of it, as long as the member meets the minimum requirements. Additional committee members from UCF, other academic institutions, or community members may be added in consultation with the Thesis Chair.

The Burnett Honors College provides the structure and oversight for the HUT program, but the academic direction and approval of the thesis project is the responsibility of the student's faculty thesis committee and academic department. In some cases, departments or colleges have additional requirements for students who are pursuing the HUT program. These majors include Nursing, Biomedical Sciences, Psychology and English. In addition to formal requirements, each department has its own standards as to what constitutes a proper thesis or project report. Students must consult their Thesis Chair or HUT Faculty Liaison for specific thesis guidelines.

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## **Completion Requirements**

To graduate with Honors Undergraduate Thesis/ Honors in Research or Creative Inquiry, students must complete all of the following:

- Three (3) credit hours of Honors Directed Readings or an approved substitute in which a grade of "A", "B", or "S" is earned.
- Three (3) credit hours of Honors Thesis in which a grade of "A", "B", or "S" is earned.
- A formed committee that meets the requirements of the HUT program, and submission of a proposal that has been approved by the entire thesis committee.
- Meeting all deadline requirements, including successful completion of the format review and oral defense and submission of the Notice of Defense, thesis approval and Intent to Graduate forms.
- Successful submission of the thesis to the UCF library.
- Exit UCF GPA of 3.2 or above.

Every student who successfully completes the Honors Undergraduate Thesis program graduates with one of three Honors distinctions: Honors in the Major, Honors in Research, or Honors in Creative Inquiry. This distinction is printed on the student's diploma and final transcript. Students with a "Z" designation on their final transcript are not eligible to graduate with Honors distinction.

## **Workshop Requirements**

Students are required to attend at least one workshop that will supplement their research or professional development each semester. The workshop requirement can be fulfilled by the following:

- The Office of Honors Research hosts several informative workshops that fulfill this requirement, and the dates and locations of these workshops are emailed to students each semester.
- Our partner, The Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR), hosts workshops that fulfill this requirement. An updated schedule of upcoming OUR workshops can be found [here](#).
- Our partner, Academic Advancement Programs (AAP), also hosts workshops that fulfill this requirement. An updated schedule of AAP workshops can be found [here](#).
- In addition to these workshops, students can fulfill the workshop requirement by scheduling a meeting with their subject librarian.
- Students whose research involves statistics can also schedule a meeting with our Research Consultant by filling out the [Research Consultation Request Form](#).

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## Course Enrollment

Students must enroll in a minimum of two Honors independent study courses for the Honors in the Major program: **Honors Directed Readings** (xxx 4903H) or an approved substitute (see below), and **Honors Thesis Writing** (xxx 4970H). Each of these independent research courses is weighted at 3 credit hours and may be taken in addition to other course work each semester. If a student needs additional time to complete Honors Directed Readings or Honors Thesis, they may request to enroll in Honors Directed Readings II (xxx 4904H) or Honors Thesis Writing II (xxx 4971H) at the end of the Honors Directed Readings or Honors Thesis semester. The progression of enrollment is as follows:

- Honors Directed Readings I (xxx 4903H) – required course (3 credit hours)\*
- Honors Directed Readings II (xxx 4904H) – optional course (1 or 3 credit hours)
- Honors Thesis I (xxx 4970H) – required course (3 credit hours)
- Honors Thesis II (xxx 4971H) – optional course (1 or 3 credit hours)

\*Approved substitutes for Honors Directed Readings I include:

- Honors Nursing Research (NUR 3165H) – open to Nursing students, Summer C only
- Nursing Research (NUR 3165) – Nursing students; main and regional campuses; online students; offered various semesters
- Conflict Communication Research Methods (COM 3800)
- Communication Research Methods (COM 3311)
- Mass Media Research Methods (MMC 3420)
- Research Methods for Filmmaking (FIL 3401)

Students enroll in Honors Undergraduate Thesis coursework by completing a registration agreement from the Office of Honors Research. **Students must complete a registration agreement before each semester in which they select to enroll in Honors Undergraduate Thesis course credit.**

Students who enroll in a course substitute for Directed Readings are expected to meet the same requirements as Directed Readings students, including identifying a thesis committee consisting of a Chair person and an additional member, attending a relevant workshop, drafting a thesis proposal, and submitting the thesis proposal with a signed cover page to the Office of Honors Research. Students will not be allowed to enter the Thesis Semester without completion of these requirements.

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## **Interdisciplinary Thesis**

Students interested in completing a thesis outside of their degree or field of study can elect to do the Interdisciplinary Thesis. This thesis follows the same guidelines as the Traditional Thesis, but students can choose a Thesis Chair outside of their department and engage in a research or creative project in a different discipline. Students who successfully complete the Interdisciplinary Thesis will be awarded the Honors in Research or Honors in Creative Inquiry distinction on their diploma.

## **Degree Requirements**

Most academic departments accept HUT courses as part of their degree programs. If a student is seeking to have Honors Undergraduate Thesis coursework replace electives or other degree requirements, they must speak with an academic advisor in their department or college. Departments must grant permission for Honors coursework to replace other degree requirements if they do not currently allow these courses to serve as elective credit.

## **Course Grading**

Honors Undergraduate Thesis coursework may be graded either on a letter scale or as Pass/Fail (Satisfactory/ Unsatisfactory). HUT courses graded on a letter scale count towards the GPA, while courses taken on a Pass/Fail basis do not. The Thesis Chair is responsible for grading the course at the end of each semester. Students should discuss their preference for a letter grade or a pass/fail grade with their Thesis Chair prior to submitting the Honor Undergraduate Thesis registration form for the semester.

## **Course Override**

Overrides are necessary if a student plans to exceed 17 hours in the Fall or Spring semester, or 14 hours in the Summer. The Coordinator of Honors Research processes overrides during the registration process.

## **Student Resources**

As members of both the Honors Undergraduate Thesis program and the Burnett Honors College, HUT students have access to a number of resources that can supplement their research project. These resources include:

- Unlimited free printing at the Burnett Honors College computer lab
- Free access to Grammarly Premium, a comprehensive online word processor
- Access to Burnett Honors College events such as internship and career fairs, networking events, and other exclusive opportunities
- The opportunity to apply to exclusive BHC grants and scholarships, including the Honors Undergraduate Thesis scholarship
- Ability to register for Honors courses and seminars on a space-available basis.

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## **Honors Undergraduate Thesis Scholarship**

The Honors Undergraduate Thesis Scholarship is a competitive \$1000 scholarship co-sponsored by UCF's academic colleges and the Burnett Honors College, and awarded in the Spring and Fall semesters. The scholarship is awarded by the academic college in which students are writing their thesis, and each academic college has its own application process and deadlines. Students interested in the scholarship are encouraged to contact their thesis college liaison to ask about the specific requirements for the scholarship. Students may only receive this scholarship once during the program.

## **Advising**

Students who seek additional advising are encouraged to speak to a peer mentor or staff member at the Office of Honors Research. The office can be contacted by email at [HonorsResearch@ucf.edu](mailto:HonorsResearch@ucf.edu), or by phone at (407) 823-0851. Meetings with peer mentors can be scheduled by filling out the [Request for Contact form](#).

Additionally, students can seek walk-in advising at Trevor Colbourn Hall, suite 248.

## **Program Enrollment**

Semesters of enrollment in the Honors Undergraduate Thesis program do not need to be sequential. Students are allowed a hiatus of up to two semesters (not counting the summer term). Students must notify the Office of Honors Research of any plans to take time off from the program. We also require immediate notice of any changes to the expected thesis completion timeline and graduation plans.

If a student fails to enroll in an Honors Undergraduate Thesis course for two consecutive semesters, the student will be automatically removed from the program. If the student wishes to continue or be reinstated in the program, they must submit a petition for special consideration (available from the Office of Honors Research staff), as well as letter of support from the Thesis Chair.

Honors Undergraduate Thesis students receive several benefits by belonging to the Burnett Honors College. The associated privileges are terminated when a student withdraws or is removed from the program. This is the case regardless of whether students have registered to participate in any events or submitted any voluntary donations to the College.

## **Graduation and Honors Distinction**

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In addition to UCF academic colleges, the Burnett Honors College requires that students submit an Intent to Graduate form at the beginning of the semester in which the student plans to graduate from the University of Central Florida. Every student who completes the Undergraduate Thesis requirements earns the Honors distinction on their diploma and transcript.

During the student's graduating semester, the student and their Thesis Chair will receive an invitation to the Burnett Honors College medallion conferral ceremony, where they are awarded the Honors medallion. The medallion is then worn with their academic regalia at commencement.

## Section II: Thesis Chair and Committee

The Thesis Chair serves as a research and professional mentor for the Honors Undergraduate Thesis student. The Thesis Chair aids the student in selecting the other members of the thesis committee as well as in narrowing their topic of study within the discipline. In selecting a thesis chair, students should seek a faculty member with interests and expertise in areas compatible with the intended thesis topic or creative project.

### Thesis Chair

The Honors Thesis Chair must be tenured or tenure-track (titles: Assistant/Associate/Full Professor) or have an appointment as Lecturer in the Department/School in which the thesis discipline is housed. Non-tenure-track faculty must possess a terminal degree in their discipline\* and be a subject matter expert in the discipline in which the student intends to write a thesis.

\*Exceptions may apply to students from departments or colleges with specific agreements with the Burnett Honors College.

### Thesis Committee Members

The Honors Undergraduate Thesis program requires that at least one additional UCF faculty member serve on the thesis committee. \* The additional faculty member can be selected from within or outside of the department. The committee member must be a subject matter expert in the field of the student's thesis.

***\*Students in Biomedical Sciences are required to have at least two committee members in addition to the thesis chair. One of the faculty members must be from a unit outside of your chair's home department. No two committee members may be married to each other.***

### Optional Committee Members

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Students have the option of choosing up to three additional members to serve as part of the thesis committee. (Note: Biomedical Sciences students can only add two additional members). It is advised that students consult with their Thesis Chair prior to selecting additional members. Additional members are not required to be faculty members at UCF.

## **Changes to Thesis Committee**

Any changes to the committee identified during the Directed Readings semester must be approved by the Department Chair and require justification and notification to the Office of Honors Research. Please note that any changes to the thesis committee must be addressed well ahead of the defense date.

## **Section III: Directed Readings Semester**

Students must enroll in a minimum of three credit hours of Honors Directed Readings, with the option of an additional one or three-credit-hour semester.

During Directed Readings, students, in consultation with the Thesis Chair, initiate bibliographic research on the topic of interest and develop a research design. Within six weeks, the remaining member(s) of the thesis committee must be selected. Students submit a thesis proposal to the thesis committee for approval by the posted deadline. If students take two Directed Readings courses, the proposal must be submitted by the deadline posted for the second Directed Readings term.

The grade for the Directed Readings semester depends upon the quality and depth of the work, communication with the Thesis Chair and committee, and fulfillment of the Directed Readings semester requirements in a timely manner.

If a student is interested in enrolling in Directed Readings II (xxx 4904H), they must inform the Office of Honors Research ([honorsresearch@ucf.edu](mailto:honorsresearch@ucf.edu)) at least one week before the proposal submission deadline.

## **Directed Readings Requirements**

- Participate in Honors Undergraduate Thesis Orientation
- Attend an additional support workshop
- Identify an eligible Thesis Committee by mid-semester
- Complete a Thesis Proposal
- Submit Thesis Proposal to the Office of Honors Research with signed Cover Page by Semester Deadline

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## **Honors Undergraduate Thesis Orientation**

All incoming Honors Undergraduate Thesis students must participate in Honors Undergraduate Thesis orientation, which is held at the beginning of the semester. This Orientation is designed to provide students with a complete overview of the Honors Undergraduate Thesis program, inform students of additional resources, and introduce partner offices to them. Orientation is conducted online through a PowerPoint presentation and a quiz in Webcourses. Specific details, including the deadline by which students must complete Orientation, will be communicated via Knights email within the first few weeks of the semester.

## **Thesis Committee Formation**

The thesis committee's role is to guide students in the research. The members of the committee should be carefully selected to include individuals who will contribute to the conceptualization and development of the thesis. Students and the Thesis Chair work together in selecting additional committee members. The composition of the thesis committee is communicated to the Office of Honors Research through the Committee Member Information Form halfway through the Directed Readings term.

See Thesis Chair and Committee requirements in Section II of this handbook.

## **Thesis Proposal**

The final requirement of the Directed Readings course is a thesis proposal. A thesis proposal is a document that outlines the thesis topic, defines the issues that the thesis will address, and explains why the topic warrants further research. It should identify a question and provide a proposed answer to that question. For students conducting more theoretical or comparative analyses, the structure could also take the form of chapters that define and specify each concept, and a concluding chapter that brings all of these ideas together. For students in the arts, a proposal and thesis may take the form of a creative project and an associated write-up.

See Thesis Proposal examples [here](#).

## **Formatting & Length of a Thesis Proposal**

The Thesis Chair and committee will specify a formatting style to be used for the proposal (e.g. APA, MLA, Chicago, IEEE). The proposal should be formatted according to the guidelines set forth in the selected style guide. The most recent editions of formatting style manuals for APA, MLA, Chicago, and others are available from the "reserves" section of the UCF library. The OWL at Purdue is also a largely reliable online resource for formatting.



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The proposal must be a minimum of five content pages (excluding the title page and the bibliography or reference list). An average proposal for the Honors Undergraduate Thesis program ranges between 10 and 20 pages (excluding graphs, charts, references, and bibliography). We recommend that students review the thesis formatting guidelines available in our Webcourse page and format their proposal according to guidelines. This will help students familiarize themselves with the thesis format guidelines, as well as reduce the workload involved in formatting towards the end of the thesis writing process. Students should ask the Thesis Chair and committee about the appropriate length of the proposal beyond the Honors College mandated minimum and what sections/chapters need to be included.

## **Traditional Thesis Proposal**

For students pursuing a traditional Honors in the Major, the Thesis Proposal typically has the following components:

- Topic introduction
- Literature review
- Theory/hypothesis
- Methodology
- Data sources
- Bibliography

## **Thesis Proposal in Creative Inquiry**

Students pursuing a thesis in a creative discipline have a few different requirements to meet in their thesis proposal. Their thesis proposal should provide an introduction, literature review, bibliography, and how the student intends to approach their creative work.

## **Thesis Proposal Cover Page**

The proposal must include a cover page. This cover page verifies that the entire committee has read and approved the proposal. This cover page must also include the signature of the HUT Faculty Liaison. Templates and examples of the thesis proposal cover page can be found [here](#).

When creating the proposal cover page, students must make sure that the degrees and titles of the committee members are correct. The best way to do this is to visit UCF department/college websites.

## **Submission of Thesis Proposal To the Committee**

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Students and the Thesis Chair will work on the proposal throughout the Directed Readings I (and Directed Readings II, if applicable) semester. Students should aim to submit a completed draft of the thesis proposal to the committee at least two weeks before the approved proposal is due to the Office of Honors Research. Once students and the Thesis Chair agree that the proposal is ready to be distributed to the committee, students are responsible for sending the proposal to the committee for review and approval. The committee members will provide comments and suggestions about the proposal and research. The student and the Thesis Chair then decide how to incorporate these suggestions into the proposal.

## **To the Office of Honors Research**

A signed copy of the approved proposal must be submitted electronically by the deadline posted for the Directed Readings I (or Directed Readings II, if applicable) semester.

When turning in the proposal to the Office of Honors Research, the Thesis Chair, all other members of the thesis committee, and the Department Chair or Department HUT Faculty Liaison must sign the thesis proposal cover page. Students will not be allowed to register for the Thesis I course until the signed proposal is submitted.

Students who are planning on taking two semesters of Directed Readings turn in the proposal at the end of their second Directed Readings semester.

## **Proposal Examples**

Discipline-specific proposal examples with cover pages can be found on our website [here](#). The examples should be used for reference only and not necessarily as templates. Students should note that each academic discipline is different. Students should ask their Thesis Chair about what should be included in the proposal and how it should be formatted.

## **Section IV: Thesis Semester**

Following successful completion of Honors Directed Readings and approval of the proposal, students enroll in three hours of Honors Thesis Writing (xxx 4970H). During this semester, students work closely with their Thesis Chair to develop the Honors thesis. When and as appropriate, other committee members should be consulted to review and comment on the student's written work.

Students may also choose to take a subsequent semester (xxx 4971H) of thesis credit for 1 or 3 additional hours if more time is needed to complete the thesis.

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At the end of the Thesis semester, students who have successfully written and defended their thesis will publish their final draft to UCF Showcase of Text, Archives, Research & Scholarship (STARS), an online database of all research theses completed by UCF researchers. Students looking for examples of what a published thesis looks like are encouraged to use the [Honors Undergraduate Theses collection](#) in STARS as a resource as they work towards completing their thesis.

## **Thesis Semester Requirements**

- Attend the Ethical Decision-Making in Research Workshop
- Attend an additional support workshop
- Submit thesis for Format Review
- Submit Notice of Defense
- Complete Oral Thesis Defense
- Submit Thesis Approval Form
- Submit Thesis for final publication

## **Ethical Decision-Making in Research Workshop**

Students must attend one session of the Ethical Decision-Making Workshop in order to complete the HUT program. This is mandatory for Thesis I students and it does not need to be completed more than once. Specific details, including dates and times of live sessions, as well as alternatives for students who are unable to attend a live session, will be communicated to students within the first few weeks of the semester.

## **Format Review**

Students must submit a substantial draft of their thesis for the thesis format review by the deadline posted for the Thesis writing semester. Instructions for uploading your thesis to the format review will be distributed to your Knights email a few weeks prior to the posted deadline.

During the format review, the Thesis Editor looks at formatting, not content. The Thesis Editor ensures that the title page is correct, headings and subheadings are formatted consistently, margins are correct, tables and graphs are formatted properly, etc.

The thesis does not need to be complete for the format review, but enough information must be present so that the format review is useful. If a student successfully completes the format review, they will not be required to resubmit the document for a secondary review. If a student is asked to make changes and resubmit the document for approval, they must re-send the Thesis Editor a digital copy of the thesis for review before submitting a final copy to the UCF library.

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Please review [formatting guidelines](#) in the Webcourse.

## **Thesis Defense**

Students will establish with their Thesis Chair and committee a mutually agreed upon thesis defense date that will be no later than the deadline published by the program. Students may reserve a classroom, meeting room, or other common meeting space online. Additionally, students, with the permission of their Thesis Chair and committee, may defend their thesis virtually over a virtual conferencing tool, such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

For the thesis defense, students are expected to prepare a formal presentation about their thesis and answer questions about the thesis that are posed by each committee member. Because each discipline and committee is different, students should ask their Thesis Chair what is expected for the defense. In many cases, the entire committee will approve the thesis immediately following the defense. In other instances, the committee will approve the thesis after some revisions are made to the document.

## **Notice of Defense**

Students must provide an electronic PDF version of their Notice of Defense, signed by the Thesis Chair, to the Office of Honors Research at least one week prior to the date of the student's defense.

A Notice of Defense template can be found [here](#).

## **Thesis Approval Form**

Prior to submitting the thesis to the UCF library, students must complete the Thesis Approval Form and have it signed by their thesis committee. This form allows:

- The Thesis Chair and committee to verify that they have reviewed the results of the thesis submission to Turnitin.com/iThenticate and that the thesis is an original document.
- The Thesis Chair and committee to indicate their approval of the student's defense and thesis, with no additional changes necessary.
- Students to indicate how they would like the thesis to be made public once it is submitted to the UCF library.

Students who have pending patents, U.S. copyrights, or permissions may delay the electronic dissemination of their thesis for six months, with available consecutive six-month extensions available for approval upon request.

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This form must be submitted to the Office of Honors Research after the successful thesis defense. The Thesis Approval Form can be found [here](#).

## **Turnitin.com/iThenticate**

Students or Thesis Chairs must submit a copy of the completed thesis to plagiarism software Turnitin.com or iThenticate by the deadline listed in the Thesis writing semester. Students should wait to submit their document until it is completed for this review to be credible.

The thesis can be submitted to Turnitin software through a plugin available in Webcourses. Faculty also have free access to Turnitin.com through the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL). If the Thesis Chair has questions about Turnitin.com, they should contact FCTL for assistance: <http://fctl.ucf.edu/>. For iThenticate, faculty should contact the UCF Office of Research & Commercialization.

The Thesis Chair is responsible for reviewing the student's thesis through Turnitin.com or iThenticate. The results of the submission to Turnitin.com/iThenticate are not reported to the university. The results should be discussed by the student, the Thesis Chair, and the committee. The Thesis Chair will sign off on the Thesis Approval form to verify that this review has been completed and that no issues exist with plagiarism.

## **Submission of Thesis Approval Form**

It is recommended that students take the Thesis Approval Form to their thesis defense. For a virtual thesis defense, the form may be emailed to committee members ahead of the meeting. Once the members of the Committee have reviewed the results of the Turnitin/iThenticate submission, attended the thesis defense, and approved the thesis, they must sign this form. The student's HUT Faculty Liaison must also sign this form. After all signatures are obtained, the form is submitted to the Office of Honors Research. Students should note that changes in the thesis title and committee are unacceptable once the form has been submitted.

The committee identified on the Thesis Approval form must match the committee that the Office of Honors Research has on file. Changes made to the committee must be addressed well ahead of the defense date.

## **Thesis Submission**

After a student successfully completes their format review and submits the Thesis Approval Form, they will receive instructions to upload the final thesis document to the university library. Students should follow these instructions carefully prior to submitting their document.

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**Changes to the thesis cannot be made once the document is submitted to the UCF library. This includes substantive content, formatting changes, grammatical errors, or misspellings.**

There is a deadline by which students must submit the thesis to the library each semester. If the student misses this deadline for a particular semester, they will not complete the Honors Undergraduate Thesis program.

All Honors Theses are housed in UCF's [Showcase of Text, Archives, Research & Scholarship \(STARS\)](#) digital repository.

## **Exit Survey**

All students who successfully complete the HUT program are asked to submit the Honors Undergraduate Thesis Exit Survey in the student's graduating semester. This Office of Honors Research will send a link to this online survey at the end of the semester once students complete their thesis.

Students should use this survey to provide honest, detailed, and constructive feedback about their experience in the Honors Undergraduate Thesis program. We will use the feedback to improve this program for future students.