



ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

This is a guide to students and faculty involved in the Honors Project. Please address questions to the Honors Program Director.

General Description

The Honors Project is the capstone to a student's academic work in the Honors Program. It is a two-semester, six-credit research or creative endeavor undertaken during the student's senior year. The Honors Project is the final academic requirement for the "Degree with Honors," and as such it must represent an original research or creative project of sufficient scope to merit recognition as an Honors Project, and requiring an investment of the student's time and effort that is at least equivalent to the extent of investment that would be required of the student in two advanced three-credit honors courses.

The student is responsible for designing the content and form of the project in conjunction with a faculty mentor who serves as the Project Advisor. The idea for the Honors Project is first submitted in a formal proposal that must receive approval from the Honors Council. This requires that an honors student register for both Honors 498 and 499 in the fall and spring semesters respectively.

In addition to the "Project Advisor," two other faculty members must agree to read the student's project, the "Field Examiner" and the "Faculty Examiner." All three are involved in the evaluation of the project. Students are expected to make a public presentation of their Honors Project. Two copies of the final version of the project must be submitted to the Honors Program Director. The Honors Project is only open to honors students and is required of all those graduating with an honors degree.

Basic Expectations

Above all, we expect a student's very best work. The Honors Project should reflect intellectual integrity and seriousness of purpose. It should also reflect a commitment of effort worthy of six credits of advanced work – that is, the sum total of what a top student would accomplish in two 400-level courses. The final product is expected to exhibit a high level of accomplishment.

The formal proposal should present a well thought-out and well-designed project that provides a clear statement and thorough explanation of the character, aim, procedures and significance of the proposed project.

It is expected that a student will pursue the project outlined in his or her proposal. Students should treat the proposal as a binding statement of intent. The Honors Council must therefore approve any significant deviation (i.e., one that changes its character or direction) from the project as proposed.

We also expect the student to make a public presentation of his or her Honors Project at a time and date approved by the Honors Program Director. This presentation should offer an articulate, though summary, discussion of the project that exhibits the student's competence in the relevant area(s).

Preliminary Project Proposal

The *Preliminary Honors Project Proposal* is due in the spring semester of the junior year. It asks that you describe your basic idea for the Honors Project and have a faculty member who agrees to serve as the Project Advisor. Students must have an approved Preliminary Honors Project Proposal *before* they may register for HON 498. The Preliminary Proposal is designed to act as a draft of the Honors Project Proposal with the expectation that the student will work over the summer months to develop the project in accordance with suggestions and feedback provided by the Honors Council and the Project Advisor. Once a Preliminary Proposal has been approved, the student will not be permitted to submit a new topic for the Honors Project Proposal in the fall.

Honors Project Proposal

The *Honors Project Proposal* is a formal document that will act as a contract between the student, the Project Advisor, and the Honors Council. This proposal must be approved by the Honors Council. If a project is not approved, the student will not be able to complete the Honors Degree at St. Bonaventure University.

The proposal itself is divided into several sections. Each of these should be addressed as fully as possible in the proposal:

Title – Provide the (provisional) title of the project.

Hypothesis – Students must provide a statement of the thesis or purpose, goals and significance of the project. If the project has a specific hypothesis, it should be clearly spelled out here. If not, the student should take this opportunity to describe the intent of the project as clearly and as fully as possible.

Bibliography – A current and thorough bibliography of materials is required in order to effectively pursue the proposed study. This ought to include both the sources that have been consulted and those that it will be necessary to consult. The student should work with the Project Advisor to compile the bibliography and the works included should represent foundational texts as well as current research on the topic. Students are

encouraged to include works that have been assigned in relevant coursework taken over the past two years.

Background – This section asks for a full discussion of relevant background that helps situate your work in regard to that of other studies, research, and/or projects of a similar theme. Students will want to consider whether their projects build upon current scholarship or provide an argument in disagreement with a current study. Be sure to take this opportunity to underscore what is distinctive about your own work.

Procedure – This section should elaborate a detailed account of how the student proposes to proceed in his or her research or creative endeavor. If there are particular methods of analysis to be employed given the topic, describe them in detail; if there are special features of your approach, highlight them; if there are unique considerations, explain them. It may be helpful to provide a timeline indicating what will be accomplished over the course of the fall semester, winter break and spring semester.

Table of Contents – Articulate as specifically as possible what the final product of the honors project will look like. If it will have the form of a written report or paper, provide a prospective table of contents. Otherwise provide an appropriate catalogue of its contents.

Students proposing creative projects are required to submit pertinent samples of their creative work. It is also required that such projects propose a critical essay reflecting on relevant features of their creative work, as well as a detailed explanation of the relevant coursework completed at St. Bonaventure University.

Honors Project Proposals must include *at least* three pages for the hypothesis and background, two pages of procedure, and a bibliography of at least ten sources (typed, double-spaced and following a professional style guide). The most common reason that proposals are returned for revision is that the Honors Council has not been given enough information on the procedure.

Timetable

Preliminary Honors Project proposals are due in the spring semester, shortly after the Easter recess. A due date will be specified when the student receives the form for the preliminary Honors Project proposal. Upon approval, students will be registered for HON 498 and given a copy of the Honors Project Proposal form for their project.

Students will be registered for *Honors 498/ The Honors Project* for the fall semester by the Honors Program Director; register for *Honors 499* in the spring.

Students will receive a letter from the Honors Program Director concerning their preliminary proposal before the end of the spring semester. This letter will convey any

concerns about the project that the Honors Council requires you to consider in working up the formal proposal for the fall. Preliminary Proposals that require significant revision will require a meeting between the student, the Honors Program Director, and the Project Advisor.

Formal Honors Project proposals are due by the end of the second week of the fall semester. Students will be provided with the Honors Project Proposal form upon approval of the Preliminary Project Proposal. Students are strongly encouraged to return in the fall semester with a completed draft of the Honors Project Proposal for review with their Project Advisor.

Proposals are read by all members of the Honors Council during their initial meeting at the end of September. At this meeting, it is decided whether the project is sufficiently articulated to merit approval and suggestions are made to improve the proposal. These deliberations are critically dependent upon the amount and quality of information provided by the student in the Honors Project proposal. If that proposal is inadequately articulated, then the Honors Council is compelled to request revisions.

A formal evaluation of the student's proposal is conveyed in a letter from the Honors Program Director, no later than the end of the second week of October. The letter reflects the views of the entire Honors Council. If the proposal is approved, the student will receive no further communication from the Honors Council. If it is not approved, then the student will be asked to submit revisions that address those specific concerns expressed in the letter. Revised Project Proposals will be due within one week of being returned by the Honors Council, and the student will meet with the Honors Program Director and the Project Advisor to discuss the areas of concern. All Honors Projects must be approved by the end of October.

Public presentation of the Honors Projects is typically scheduled for mid-April. It is expected that the student will provide a complete (though not necessarily final) version of the project for faculty readers to examine by early April.

Two copies of the finished Honors Project are due by noon on the first Monday of exam week in the spring semester. They should be submitted to the Honors Program Director.

The Honors Luncheon recognizing the accomplishments of honors degree recipients (among others) is typically held the Saturday before graduation.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I decide what to do for my honors project?

Of course, that decision is finally up to each student. But the Council has noticed that honors students generally have one of several motivations in making that decision. Students who expect to go on to graduate study often use the Honors Project to deepen some competence in their chosen field. Other students have used it as an opportunity to

establish competence in a particular area (e.g., book editing) that they wish to pursue after graduation, but for which St. Bonaventure provides no specific preparation. And then there are those students who simply seize upon the Honors Project as a chance to pursue something that they find personally fulfilling and intellectually satisfying.

Must my Honors Project be in my major?

For your Honors Project you are not obliged to pursue research in the area of your major, although you are strongly encouraged to do so. However, you must pursue a topic in a field where you have sufficient background to do quality work. If your project comes from a field outside your academic major, you should expect to show the Honors Council that you have the necessary preparation.

Do I have to do research for my Honors Project?

Honors Projects are not restricted to research studies. However, the Honors Council does require that all projects have an intellectual component that usually involves research of some relevant kind, even if the product is not a standard research paper. This would rule out, for instance, internships or other practical involvements – unless they include a significant research element.

How “off beat” can an Honors Project be?

The Honors Council is open to a great variety of possible Honors Projects. Many of the projects approved depart significantly from standard research studies or creative writing projects. In the recent past this has included such endeavors as: writing, filming and producing a movie; casting, directing and promoting a play; procuring, editing and marketing a fantasy novel; creating a visual journal of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Nevertheless, even such “off beat” projects must meet the general expectations for every Honors Project.

Who selects my Project Advisor?

The student is responsible for choosing the faculty member who will serve as his or her Project Advisor. (It goes without saying that it is the faculty member’s prerogative to accept or decline your request.) While you want to select a Project Advisor with whom you have a good working relationship, you must be sure to choose one who possesses the expertise to help you shape and pursue your project. Keep in mind that your Project Advisor is the faculty member to whom you will be principally responsible throughout the process of pursuing the Honors Project.

How should the other members of my committee be selected?

You are also responsible for selecting the other two faculty members involved in reading and evaluating your Honors Project. The Field Examiner is sometimes called the “inside reader.” This faculty member should have competence in an area directly relevant to your project. If your project is interdisciplinary, your Field Examiner should represent one of those other fields – especially if it is not one covered by the expertise of your Project Advisor. The third committee member, the Faculty Examiner, is sometimes called the “outside reader.” This faculty member should not typically have a special competence in the area of your project. Before asking faculty members to serve on your

committee in these roles, it is advised that you consult with your Project Advisor in case he or she has any recommendations. Whether the faculty member serving as Field Examiner will have a substantial role in defining the project or responding to early drafts is something that must be worked out at the beginning – not at the end – of the process.

What are the expectations for the Honors Project proposal?

Please consult the section of this guide entitled “Project Proposals.”

When will I hear from the Honors Council about my proposal?

You should receive a letter from the Honors Program Director expressing the Honors Council’s evaluation of your Honors Project proposal around mid-October. The best advice is to *use* this time constructively. Assume that your proposal will be approved and proceed with your project. This is valuable time that you cannot afford to waste.

What happens if my proposal is rejected?

Although it is rare for the Honors Council to simply reject an Honors Project proposal, it is not uncommon to request revisions of those proposals that do not meet the expectations outlined above. Typically revisions are requested where some significant aspect of the proposal or element of the project has not been sufficiently explained, clearly conceived or adequately considered. In these cases the letter written by Honors Program Director specifies the areas of concern that need to be addressed by the student in the revision. Students should not expect opportunities for revision to extend beyond the initial semester.