

On behalf of the Lewis Honors College, thank you for supervising a student in a section of HON 491. We cannot accomplish our educational mission without the dedication of faculty members who work to supervise honors theses. We are sharing information here to help you understand the parameters of HON 491. If you have additional questions, please contact the Lewis Honors College Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Dr. Pearl James, Pearl.James@uky.edu

Q: What is the thesis requirement for Lewis Honors College Students?

A: All students must complete an Honors thesis as part of their 30-hour curriculum in the Lewis Honors College (LHC). The Honors thesis provides a culmination to an Honors student's academic career. The Honors thesis should be an outgrowth of the student's academic work, rooted in their chosen discipline, in most cases in the student's major or minor. Theses take very different forms across the university, and follow the norms and parameters of the students' major discipline as determined by the faculty in the student's home discipline. In cases where a student has multiple majors, minors, or interdisciplinary interests that are not captured in a major or minor, the student should work with a faculty member to identify a topic that is supported by their academic work. The Honors thesis offers an opportunity - along with the responsibility - for a student to work with a faculty member on a research or creative project that integrates and expands on previous work. The Honors thesis will incorporate relevant, current research/previous work and demonstrate experience with design, execution, analysis, and presentation. *Students earn three hours of Honors course credit the semester that they complete their thesis. All theses will have an artifact (whether written, visual, digital, or otherwise) and a presentation (usually an oral presentation of the thesis or a performance).*

Q: What is HON 491?

A: HON 491 is the course students can enroll in to earn the 3 credit hours associated with completing the thesis if their major does not have a thesis course, or if their thesis project transcends the boundaries of their major areas of study. Each student enrolls in their own individual section of HON 491, and each must have a faculty member who will serve as their thesis supervisor and the instructor of record for their section of HON 491.

Q: Is HON 491 the only course a student can use to complete their thesis requirement?

A: No. Many majors have a capstone or thesis course that the student can take and use to complete the thesis requirement.

Q: What does the Lewis Honors College need from HON 491 instructors?

A: When a faculty member agrees to supervise a thesis and is assigned a section of HON 491, they are the instructor of record for that course, and they must treat it as they do all their other classes in MyUK: they must indicate whether the student is attending (in order to comply with Title IV) and they must enter midterm and final grades.

Q: What happens if a student fails HON 491?

A: This is extremely unlikely. We have a nearly 100% successful completion rate for HON 491.

Q: How is HON 491 tracked?

A: LHC will soon have a thesis-tracking portal. Students will log in and submit the name of their thesis advisor(s) and their thesis proposal. This will trigger an email to the faculty advisor that will ask them to log in, view, and approve (or not) the student's proposal. When the student has finished the thesis, they will again log into the portal and submit their completed thesis. A completed thesis submission will trigger another email to the faculty advisor, who will again log in, view, and indicate the thesis's grade, and verify that the student has completed an oral/presentation component. At that point, the student's Honors Academic Advisor will mark the thesis complete in the student's academic record and, assuming all other requirements have been met and that the student's final cumulative GPA is 3.4 or above, the student will receive University Honors on their transcript and diploma.

Until the portal launches, this same process unfolds over email.

Q: If a student does not complete the thesis, or the thesis is not Honors-quality work, what should the faculty member do?

A: The faculty member should give the thesis the grade it deserves. Currently, any passing grade on the thesis allows the student to earn University Honors. If the student does not complete the thesis, the faculty member can either assign an "E" or an Incomplete. The faculty member will enter their grade into both MyUK and into the Honors Thesis Portal.

Q: Does being a thesis supervisor/instructor of HON 491 bring additional requirements to the faculty member?

A: Every thesis project will differ and so will the faculty member's level of supervision and involvement. The Lewis Honors College defers to the faculty member's judgement about how much supervision their advisee needs. At minimum, the faculty member must approve the proposal, consult with the student before midterm in order to submit an accurate mid-term grade, and evaluate the final product. It is the student's responsibility to identify an opportunity to present their work orally, and they should notify the faculty about their presentation. Many students, for instance, use the Undergraduate Research Showcase to present their work. Ideally, the faculty member will witness the student's oral presentation, but it is not always feasible. It is sufficient for the faculty member to indicate that the presentation happened, even if they were not able to attend in person.

Q: Does the Lewis Honors College issue guidance on what constitutes an Honors thesis?

A: The LHC issues only very general guidance: the Honors thesis should be the student's own work (though group-projects are permissible) and should be the culmination to an Honors student's academic career. Beyond that, the LHC asks departments to articulate the standards for what counts as an Honors thesis in their discipline. Those standards will vary tremendously. A music major's thesis project might take the form of a performance; an engineering major might complete a group project to build a machine; a history major may write a long-form research essay with archival and secondary sources. We strongly suggest that all students, even those whose theses are based on group projects, complete at least a short individual reflection on their particular role in the project; we also require an oral presentation in addition to a written thesis. (If the thesis is a performance, then we ask the inverse: the student should also produce a short written document that describes the performance.).

Q: Where can I see examples of other Honors theses?

A: Honors theses are published, with student permission, at <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/honors/> where they can be consulted as examples. We encourage but do not require students to publish their work on this university database. Any students with copyright or patent(s) pending may request a publication delay.

Q: If the Honors student does extremely high-quality work, how can I help them receive recognition?

A: Every March, faculty, staff, and students are invited to nominate seniors for Lewis Honors College graduation awards, which are bestowed at our annual Medal Ceremony in May. A student's thesis advisor may nominate their student for an award in Lewis or from their home college or disciplinary organization. The faculty may also encourage the student to present their research at a professional academic conference, in which case the student could apply for travel-support or other funding from LHC. All faculty are cordially invited to attend our Medal Ceremony and celebrate our outstanding graduates.

Q: Is HON 491 an independent study?

A: Yes. Each student in HON 491 has a thesis advisor who is also the instructor of record for that section. The amount of individual supervision will vary tremendously depending on the project.

Q: What are the Student Learning Outcomes for HON 491?

A: After successful completion of the Honors thesis a student will be able to:

1. Clearly identify a project goal and/or problem and articulate a subsequent research question/hypothesis or creative objective.
2. Discover and evaluate existing research/previous work relevant to a project of interest.
3. Formulate a plan to achieve desired research or creative goals, while identifying opportunities to make improvements throughout the process.
4. Recognize the importance of meeting established goals and/or deadlines.
5. Demonstrate a command of relevant scholarship/creativity and offer a rationale for the work's contributions to a discipline in an appropriate manner in the form of a written and an oral component.

For questions not answered here, please contact Dr. James at Pearl.James@uky.edu.