



Honors Course Agreement Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is an Honors Course Agreement?

A: An **Honors Course Agreement** allows a student to take a non-Honors course for Honors course credit by enhancing the experience with components that provide additional rigor, increased independence, and/or greater depth of study. Course Agreements are developed in consultation between the student and the course instructor. When they have agreed upon the terms, the student will submit an online form to the Lewis Honors College (LHC) that outlines any additional or alternative course components and articulates how that additional/alternative work makes the course Honors-worthy and relevant to the student's interests and/or course of study. Upon completion of the form, the instructor will receive an email asking them to verify the agreement. The LHC Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) will then read the agreement and either approve it or suggest modifications.

Q: Why does the option of an Honors Course Agreement exist?

A: In order to complete the LHC Curriculum at UK, students need to earn 30 Honors credit hours. While the LHC itself offers many courses (including HON 140, our Foundational Seminar, and many courses that satisfy UK Core requirements) and partners with departments across campus to offer Honors sections, many students need one or two more courses in order to complete all their requirements on time. A course agreement is a powerful tool that students can use to convert a regular course into an Honors course, thereby allowing them to earn additional necessary Honors credits.

Q: Who is eligible for an Honors Course Agreement?

A: Any Honors student in good standing (i.e., with a CGPA of 3.4 or above) can petition a faculty member and the LHC to create a course agreement. *It is not required that they be a major in the department in which the course is offered.*

Q: Which courses are eligible for an Honors Course Agreement?

A: Any 200-level or above non-Honors course can be converted to Honors with the faculty member's permission and LHC's approval.

Q: Is a faculty member obliged to offer an Honors Course Agreement if a student asks them to do so?

A: No. It is entirely up to the faculty member's discretion to determine whether a course agreement is feasible for them and for the given course.

Q: Is there a limit to the number of Honors Course Agreements a student can request in a given semester or overall?

A: This option works to satisfy lower-level, upper-level, and elective options; a student can use up to three course agreements over their time in LHC.

Q: Is an Honors Course Agreement the same thing as an Independent Study?

A: No. A course agreement is an addendum or modification of an existing course, and is not comparable to an independent study in terms of the time commitment required by either the faculty member or the student.

Q: If a faculty member is willing to offer the Honors Course Agreement, what is required of them?

A: Every course agreement will differ, but we offer the following guidelines:

- The instructor should be willing to meet with the student to determine what different or additional work the Honors Course Agreement will require and to verify the agreement by email.
- In alignment with best practices in Honors education, Honors coursework involves not simply “more” or “harder” work, but “measurably broader, deeper, or more complex learning experiences” (NCHC). Instructors are encouraged to require students to be more independently responsible for their own learning. For instance, if the regular course requires exams, the Honors Course Agreement could instead require independent papers. Particular details will vary by course level, discipline, and faculty/student interest.
- A faculty member will evaluate the student’s alternative assignments and assess whether the student should receive Honors credit for the additional or alternative work. Normally, the additional or alternative work does not change the distribution of grades as they count toward the final grade; it just determines whether or not the student is eligible for HON credit. However, every case is unique, and students and faculty members can mutually agree to changes in the grading schema when they make the course agreement.
- A faculty member may (but is not required to) meet with the student throughout the semester to guide their alternative coursework.

Q: How are grades calculated?

A: We advise that the student retain the same grading distribution as the other students, and that the Honors component be considered similar to a “Pass/Fail,” where a B or higher for the course, plus the Honors requirement, constitutes a successful completion of the agreement and the credit for Honors. If a student declines to do the work or fails to meet the level of B for the Honors-related work or for the course, the student will fail to get the Honors credit for the course, but their grade in the course will not be affected by the Honors component.

Q: Is it possible for a student to enter into an Honors Course Agreement and then not earn HON credit?

A: While we have a very high (95%+) rate for Honors Course Agreements, if a faculty member determines that the student did not complete the work agreed upon in the Honors Course Agreement, they can indicate that to the Honors advisor at the end of the semester, and no Honors credit will appear on the student’s record.

Q: Does signing an Honors Course Agreement commit the faculty member to additional effort?

A: Every course agreement will differ, and the necessity of any faculty member’s extra effort or time will depend upon the details agreed upon by the faculty and student. At a minimum, most Honors Course Agreements will call for different assignments, which the faculty member will have to grade separately.

Q: How are Honors Course Agreements tracked?

A: When a faculty member agrees to establish an Honors Course Agreement for a student, it becomes the student’s responsibility to complete an online proposal and submit it to their Honors Academic Advisor. The last day to submit a Course Agreement Proposal is the second Friday of each semester. When the student makes the proposal, the instructor will receive an email asking for confirmation that they consent to the terms of the Course Agreement. At the end of the semester, the student must submit the alternative or additional work **both** to the instructor and to their Honors Academic Advisor. Once again, when students submit the work, the instructor will receive an email asking them to confirm that the work was completed satisfactorily. Upon receipt of faculty confirmation, the student’s Honors

academic advisor will enter an exception into the student's record that will count the course for HON credit.

Q: If a faculty member agrees to do an Honors Course Agreement for one student, can the same agreement be extended to other Honors students in the course, or recycled in a subsequent semester?

A: Yes, this is an option that the faculty member can exercise at any time.

Q: Can faculty advertise their willingness to offer an Honors Course Agreement at the beginning of the semester to the class as a whole?

A: Yes. This is very helpful to Honors students who may not have considered the possibility.

Q: What are the benefits of an Honors Course Agreement for students?

A: An Honors Course Agreement can allow an Honors student to earn needed Honors credit hours in the course of their progress toward their major or degree. It can allow them to turn a course that interests them into a deeper learning experience. It may allow them to develop a more individual relationship with the faculty member. In some cases, it may even lead to the discovery of a thesis topic and lead to progress toward completion of the thesis.

Q: What are the benefits of an Honors Course Agreement for faculty?

A: An Honors Course Agreement can allow a faculty member to work independently with a highly motivated student without having to take on the full commitment of an independent study. The faculty member may use the Course Agreement as a chance to experiment with alternative assignments or topics before incorporating them into the course at large.

Q: What are some examples of course modifications that could appear in an Honors Course Agreement?

A: Here are a few examples (not an exhaustive list):

- Additional research or length requirements for an existing assignment in order to allow the student to either delve more deeply into a topic, or to set it in a broader context
- Assigning the student more independent responsibility for determining the content or topic for (a) major assignment(s)
- An additional independent assignment that allows the student to pursue or apply concepts from the course into an area of personal or potential research interest
- Replacing tests with more independently-generated assignments, such as a research paper

Q: If a student completes an Honors Course Agreement for a course at one level (for example, 200), does the Agreement upgrade the level of the course (say to 300)?

A: No.

Q: Do faculty receive extra financial compensation for doing Honors Course Agreements?

A: No.

For questions not answered here, please contact LHC.Advising@uky.edu