



## Honors Thesis Frequently Asked Questions

***On behalf of the Lewis Honors College (LHC), thank you for supervising a student's work as they complete their Honors Thesis. We cannot accomplish our educational mission without the dedication of faculty members who work to mentor and supervise Honors students. We are sharing information here to help you understand the parameters of the thesis. If you have additional questions, please contact the LHC Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Dr. Pearl James, [Pearl.James@uky.edu](mailto:Pearl.James@uky.edu)***

### **Q: What is the thesis requirement for LHC Students?**

**A:** All students must complete an Honors thesis as part of their 30-hour curriculum in the LHC. The Honors thesis provides a culmination of 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 student's major discipline as determined by the faculty in their home department. In cases where a student has multiple majors, minors, or interdisciplinary interests that are not captured in a major or minor, the student can 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. In order to receive Honors, the student must earn an A or a B on both the thesis (or comparable artifact) itself **and** in the thesis-related course. *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 thesis or capstone course that the student can take and use to complete the thesis requirement.

### **Q: What does the LHC need from thesis supervisors?**

**A:** When a faculty member agrees to supervise a thesis, whether in a section of HON 491 or in a departmental course under another prefix, 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.

In addition, we need supervisors to **help us track the progress of the thesis on our LHC thesis portal**. Students log in and submit the name of their thesis advisor(s) and their thesis proposal. This triggers an email to the faculty advisor that asks 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 supervisor, 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 the student has earned at least a B on the thesis and in the thesis class, 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.

**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. In order to receive Honors, students must earn an A or B on both the thesis itself and in the thesis course (i.e., in some departments, capstone or thesis courses have additional requirements). A lower grade means that the student gets the course credit *but not Honors credit*. 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 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. When the student is completing the thesis in conjunction with a departmental course, the course requirements should be made clear in the syllabus. The LHC defers to the faculty member's judgment about both the thesis requirements and how much supervision their advisee needs. At minimum, the faculty member must approve the proposal, consult with the student before the midterm in order to submit an accurate midterm 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; in the Fall, the LHC hosts a Thesis Showcase for students to share 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 LHC 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 of 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 do require 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 or embargo.

**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 LHC graduation awards, which are bestowed at our annual Medal Ceremony in May. A student's thesis advisor may nominate their student for an award from the LHC 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.

For questions not answered here, please contact Dr. James at [Pearl.James@uky.edu](mailto:Pearl.James@uky.edu).