

# Department of Communication Honors Handbook for Faculty & Students



## **Table of Contents**

Welcome from the Honors Coordinator

Frequently Asked Questions (for students)

Frequently Asked Questions (for faculty)

Appendix-Forms

# Welcome from the Honors Coordinator

Students and Faculty:

Welcome to the Communication Department Honors Program. Whether you are a faculty member teaching an honors course or directing a thesis (or considering doing so), or a student in the department honors program (or considering it), I hope this handbook is a great resource for you in reducing uncertainty about requirements, processes, and procedures.

Honors is an exciting and enriching opportunity for us to explore communication from various perspectives and grow in our understanding of the discipline. I am excited to begin my duties as the program's coordinator.

Please feel free to contact me with questions, concerns, and suggestions about the program.

Sincerely,

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# **Frequently Asked Questions -- For Students**

## **How are Departmental Honors students selected?**

Students eligible for departmental honors are declared Communication majors who have a cumulative GPA of 3.45 (or greater) and a Communication GPA of 3.45 (or greater). A few weeks in advance of the fall (or spring in rare cases) semester, the Honors Coordinator determines all declared Communication majors who meet these GPA requirements through student records in the Banner system. The Honors Coordinator then sends a formal invitation by email to each eligible student. The invitation outlines the requirements of the program. Administrative support for this process is provided by the COM office and/or work study staff as needed.

Interested students should accept the invitation (usually via email), and are then officially in the departmental honors program. The student should then make an appointment to discuss Departmental Honors with the Departmental Honors Coordinator and his/her academic advisor.

## **What are the benefits of being a Departmental Honors student?**

- 1. Recognition of your achievements at commencement and on your transcript*
- 2. Invitation to Departmental Colloquia and Special Events*
- 3. Access to smaller classes and/or more challenging academic/creative courses*
- 4. Personalized interaction and mentoring from faculty*
- 5. Opportunities to explore a topic or problem in depth through research and/or creative/production projects*

## **I'm interested! What do I need to do?**

Upon receipt of an invitation to participate in the department honors program, interested students should accept the invitation via email, and then follow up with advising (through the Honors Coordinator and their department academic advisor) and completion of department honors requirements (see below specific details on requirements). You will then be part of the department honors program provided that you maintain the requisite GPA and complete the academic requirements (more on these below).

## **I heard a rumor that Honors students receive priority registration. Will I be able to register early as a Departmental Honors student?**

At this time, University Honors students are eligible for early registration; Departmental Honors students are not. However, Departmental Honors students receive priority registration for Departmental Honors courses.

## **Once I have been accepted, what else do I need to do?**

You should schedule an appointment with your academic advisor (in the Department of Communication) and/or the Honors Coordinator to discuss department honors requirements and courses. As needed, you should meet with your advisor and/or the Honors Coordinator to ensure that you are making adequate progress toward the completion of your degree with departmental

honors. A departmental honors advising worksheet/checklist to assist you with your program of study and to assist faculty with advising is located at the end of this handbook. An information brief and checklist is also available on the communication department website.

Register for 6 semester hours of Departmental Honors courses (-410 or -411 sections) (these may be honors communication courses, or honors seats in communication courses, and you may take communication honors courses outside of your major) and earn at least a B in each of those courses. Remember that you do not need to take all 6 hours in one semester (unless you plan to complete the Departmental Honors program in two or fewer semesters).

Begin thinking about a possible thesis project and discuss your preliminary ideas with potential faculty advisors who have academic and/or professional expertise in the subject, methodology, and/or medium that interests you. Our most successful students also inquire early about the faculty member's availability and willingness to advise the proposed thesis project. Keep in mind that your thesis advisor is not necessarily your academic advisor (although that arrangement is certainly possible), but is instead the faculty member who has the expertise to supervise your research and/or creative work. You are responsible for choosing a thesis advisor, but remember that faculty members are fully within their rights to decline your invitation for any reason.

Finally, you must remain in good standing with the Department and the University. To remain eligible for Departmental Honors, students must maintain the minimum GPA requirements for invitation to the program (3.45, overall and in COM courses) and remain a student in good standing with the university. Any student whose GPA falls below the minimum requirements will be placed on probation from Departmental Honors for one semester. Once the student has recovered his/her GPA to the minimum standards, s/he will be invited to rejoin the Honors program.

Any special circumstances that may warrant an exception to this policy must be submitted in writing to the Honors Coordinator.

### **Which courses will be offered as Departmental Honors?**

At the beginning of each semester, the Honors Coordinator puts out a call to each concentration in the department to teach honors courses and to determine which courses would best fit the needs of our Departmental Honors students. Honors seats and honors courses are offered after determining course needs and availability each semester in the areas/majors within the department. This creative approach ensures that Departmental Honors students from any concentration can complete the required 6 s.h. of COM honors courses while also making progress toward their degree. Please note that you may take communication honors courses outside of your major, such as a public relations major taking an honors course that is in advertising; this will ensure that you are making progress toward fulfilling your honors requirements and also expand your knowledge of converging media in preparation for your professional life. In exceptional circumstances, students and faculty may opt to develop a rigorous Honors Contract ([https://honors.appstate.edu/sites/honors.appstate.edu/files/honors\\_contract\\_2016.pdf](https://honors.appstate.edu/sites/honors.appstate.edu/files/honors_contract_2016.pdf)) for courses that are not regularly offered as Departmental Honors. Paperwork for Honors Contracts must go

through the department and through University Honors.

**If I'm a distance education student, can I be in Departmental Honors? Will classes be offered through distance education?**

Yes, you can. If you meet the GPA requirements, just as any communication major does, you can be invited to participate in the program. The honors coordinator will work with distance education to create honors seats/sections for distance education students in courses, or if honors seats/sections are not offered, students may earn honors credit through honors contracts.

**Which Departmental Honors courses should I take ... and when?**

Each Departmental Honors student should plan to complete the 6 s.h. of COM honors courses before his/her thesis-writing semester (enrolling in COM 4511; for students completing *only* University Honors, register for HON 4010 for thesis hours), so planning ahead with input and guidance from your academic advisor and/or thesis director is important. Each student's plan of study is slightly different and will be tailored toward his/her professional and intellectual goals; thus, no two students may necessarily have an identical Departmental Honors plan of study. Most students will complete the 6 s.h. of COM Honors courses as they work toward fulfillment of their programs of study. For instance, if COM 3928 Communication Research Methods is required for your program of study, you may take an honors section/seat of this course and complete 3 s.h. of your honors requirements while also fulfilling 3 s.h. of your general communication degree requirements. Please also note that you may take communication honors courses outside of your major, such as a public relations major taking an honors course that is in advertising; this will ensure that you are making progress toward fulfilling your honors requirements and also expand your knowledge of converging media in preparation for your professional life.

**How are Departmental Honors courses different from non-honors courses?**

Departmental Honors courses (and department honors seats) offer significant opportunities for in-depth intellectual inquiry, expanded professional/creative opportunities, and personalized mentoring. Students enrolled in honors courses and sections are required to complete additional readings and/or assignments. They may also have the opportunity to contribute to and/or participate in a faculty member's research or creative project, or may participate in professional endeavors, such as media production for local outlets. The point, however, is not to simply do "more" work for the sake of accumulation: instead, students and faculty should be prepared to meet outside of class for possibly 3-5 additional contact hours for discussion or other complementary purposes. Students enrolled in Departmental Honors courses may be graded differently than students enrolled in non-honors courses (i.e., there may be an Honors version of a syllabus and a non-honors version that use different learning outcomes/objectives, grading rubrics, grading scales, and/or different assignments to assess the Honors component of the course). The expectations for completing the Honors course or section, however, must be clearly identifiable in writing as a syllabus or an addendum to a syllabus. Finally, Departmental Honors courses have smaller enrollments (This enrollment numbers aspect is not the case when honors seats are offered within a regular course.). When seats are offered instead of courses, faculty may meet outside of normal class hours with the honors students in the course for additional mentoring, discussion, and research/creative activity.

**I want to take a course for Departmental Honors credit, but ...**

- A) I have already completed the courses that are currently being offered
- B) There are few or no Departmental Honors courses offered in my area
- C) I have already completed the courses that will be offered next semester
- D) All of the above

In such cases, an **Honors Contract**

([https://honors.appstate.edu/sites/honors.appstate.edu/files/honors\\_contract\\_2016.pdf](https://honors.appstate.edu/sites/honors.appstate.edu/files/honors_contract_2016.pdf))

may offer an appropriate solution.

All approved Honors Contracts will be kept in student files in the Department of Communication. Paperwork must go through the department (and university honors if the student is in Honors College as well).

**What is an Honors Contract?**

*Adapted from the University Honors Handbook:*

*The Honors Contract is an agreement between a professor, a department, the Honors College, and the student. The student agrees to complete ten to fifteen percent more work for a course that is non-honors in order for the course to count as an Honors course. The purpose of an Honors contract is to permit a student who has a documentable scheduling conflict, hour requirements, or other valid reasons, to propose a rigorous supplement and enrich a course beyond its current readings, assignments, and objectives (in consultation with a faculty member) to meet Honors requirements.*

*All contracts ideally should be written, signed, and turned in **before the end of the second week of class**, though later applications may be considered at the department honors level. Copies of the contract (the form is located at*

[https://honors.appstate.edu/sites/honors.appstate.edu/files/honors\\_contract\\_2016.pdf](https://honors.appstate.edu/sites/honors.appstate.edu/files/honors_contract_2016.pdf)) *the original course syllabus, and the honors addendum must be furnished to the Departmental Honors Coordinator for review.*

*Pending approval, copies of the contract must be provided by the student to the Honors College Director, departmental Honors Coordinator if applicable, and the student's Academic Advisor. The student should complete the form in consultation with the faculty member; the form should be as detailed as possible. Vague learning outcomes or forms of assessment will be sent back to the faculty member for revision. The form stipulates what work above and beyond the standard course requirements makes the course an Honors experience. It also indicates the criteria to be used for evaluation.*

*Examples include:*

- *Reading and writing assignments which extend qualitatively (and perhaps quantitatively) beyond regular course expectations.*
- *Substantial faculty-student conference time outside the classroom.*
- *Opportunities for in-class student presentation of research/creative activities*

- performed independently under the professor's guidance.*
- *Library, laboratory, production, creative, or computer work considered worthy of Honors-level credit by the faculty member that also fosters greater student understanding of the course material.*
  - *Involvement in special events such as travel, lectures, performances, or other creative/production activity for which the student will give formal account to the professor and/or other appropriate audiences.*

*Students must have a GPA of at least 3.0 before attempting a course with an Honors Contract. Contracts specify that the student must earn at least a B grade for the course to count for Honors credit (the student receives standard credit for grades below B).*

*Honors Contracts must be in courses that are 3000-level or higher. Contracts will not be approved for courses taught by teaching assistants, part-time faculty, or those listed as Staff, without the prior approval of the Department Chair and the Honors College Director. Honors contracts are not permitted in courses where an Honors version of the course is offered by that department.*

### **Who do I meet with about honors courses/honors advising?**

This decision is up to you. Most students continue to meet with their assigned or chosen academic advisor in the Department of Communication for all of their advising questions. You may also meet with the Honors Coordinator. You may wish to meet with either during office hours to discuss your progress, to find out about future Departmental Honors course offerings, and/or to learn about internships, research opportunities, and other resources on campus specific to your interests and goals. A departmental honors advising worksheet to assist you with your program of study and to assist faculty with advising is located at the end of this handbook. A copy may be kept in your student file in the department. As with any student advising, the scheduling of a student's classes and completion of his or her program of study is ultimately the student's responsibility.

### **How do I choose a Thesis Director?**

The decision to work closely in a formal mentoring relationship with a faculty member is one that should be influenced by several factors, but the choice is ultimately up to you and the faculty member. The primary criterion that must be justified when submitting your Honors Thesis Application form (form to be completed for registration for COM 4511 or HON 4010-[https://honors.appstate.edu/sites/honors.appstate.edu/files/thesis\\_application\\_form\\_updated\\_2016\\_pdf.pdf](https://honors.appstate.edu/sites/honors.appstate.edu/files/thesis_application_form_updated_2016_pdf.pdf)) is *the relevance of the faculty member's expertise and/or experience to your project.* (Note that the form goes through the department only for solely departmental honors students. For students in departmental and University Honors, or only University Honors, the form goes through the department and University Honors.) For example, if you plan to complete a content analysis of messaging strategies found in pharmaceutical advertisements, then it makes sense to choose a Thesis advisor with expertise in quantitative methods, content analysis, health communication, and/or advertising. Many students choose a Thesis Director based upon a prior working and/or mentoring relationship with that faculty member. Students often pick professors who challenge them to



improve their critical thinking, writing, and speaking skills, who provide consistent and supportive mentoring and substantive feedback on their work, and who are able to take a primary role in shaping their intellectual and professional growth. Remember, planning ahead and asking a faculty member if s/he is willing and able to serve as your Thesis Advisor is an important part of the process; it's perfectly acceptable to ask someone 1-2 semesters (or more) in advance. Looking for a Thesis Advisor during the semester in which you plan to write the thesis is too late.

### **How do I “declare” a Thesis Advisor?**

Formal declaration of a thesis advisor doesn't officially happen until you turn in the thesis project application form required to enroll in COM 4511 (or HON 4010 if you're in solely University Honors)

([https://honors.appstate.edu/sites/honors.appstate.edu/files/thesis\\_application\\_form\\_updated\\_2016\\_pdf.pdf](https://honors.appstate.edu/sites/honors.appstate.edu/files/thesis_application_form_updated_2016_pdf.pdf)) during the first two weeks of the semester in which you will complete your thesis.

(Note that if you're completing only department honors, you just submit this form through the department. If you are completing just University Honors or University and department honors, you submit this form through the department and University Honors. In any case, you must submit the special course form to register for thesis hours, and this can be obtained online or in the department office. Note that you register for COM 4511 unless you are only in University Honors. In this case, you register for HON 4010 for thesis hours.) However, you should choose and ask a faculty member (full time/tenure-track faculty) to be your advisor before this time so that you may discuss your project idea and write the brief synopsis of your thesis project that goes along with the thesis form. Also consider who your second reader will be, who should be a faculty member in another department outside of that of your director. You may also select a second reader who is another professor at another university, or a professional in a field related to your thesis topic. Again, planning ahead and asking a faculty member if s/he is willing and able to serve as your Thesis Advisor is an important part of the process; it's perfectly acceptable to ask someone 1-2 semesters (or more) in advance. Looking for a Thesis Advisor during the semester in which you plan to write the thesis is too late.

### **Once I have declared a Thesis Advisor, is it possible to change advisors?**

The formal declaration of a Thesis Advisor is a process the department takes seriously, as it provides a reliable way of forecasting faculty commitments and other university resources. Students should also allow adequate time to consult with faculty members and make the best possible decision. Under no circumstances (other than exceptional situations like death, serious illness, etc. to be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Honors Coordinator) may a student petition to change advisors at any time while enrolled in COM 4511.

### **If I wrote a research paper for a COM course in Dr. X's class and I want to use it as a foundation for my Departmental Honors thesis, am I required to have Dr. X serve as my Thesis Advisor?**

No, and Dr. X should not pressure you to pick him/her as your Thesis Advisor. Should this happen, make an appointment to talk with the Honors Coordinator.

### **I'm a double-major in the Department of Communication (for example, Communication Studies and Public Relations). Do I have to complete the Departmental Honors program for**

**both?** No. Students may only complete the Departmental Honors program for one of their majors if both are in the same department. In this case, the student may opt to write a thesis that bridges both Communication Studies and Public Relations. Most students, however, choose to focus on a thesis that focuses on one major or the other, in this case, either Communication Studies *or* Public Relations.

### **What is an Honors Thesis?**

#### **Adapted from the University Honors Handbook:**

*The Honors Thesis is the capstone of the Departmental Honors experience and generally represents a student's unique contribution to scholarship and/or creative endeavors. It is usually the most fulfilling aspect of the undergraduate curriculum for Departmental Honors students as they -- with their Thesis Director's guidance -- develop and complete an individually-tailored project that engages their intellectual and/or creative interests in ways that are focused, highly engaged, and academically rigorous.*

*The Honors Thesis whatever form best suits the subject, research question, and/or medium. The Honors Thesis Application requires a brief thesis prospectus that outlines what the student will do, when, how, and with what resources. While some projects generate comprehensive professional portfolios, documentary films, media pieces, research projects, a collection of podcasts, a "Black Box" performance, or perhaps interpretive dance, all thesis projects require significant written work that documents the theoretical and/or empirical justification for the student's choices. Guidelines for theses including examples, useful advice/instructions/tips, deadlines, and formatting may be found at <https://honors.appstate.edu/academics/thesis>.*

*Honors Theses will fall somewhere between a typical semester paper and a Master's thesis in terms of length and scope. The style/format of writing will be determined in consultation with the Thesis Director and should be appropriate to the conventions of the genre, in this case, the genre of communication.*

*The Honors Thesis is usually counted for three credit hours. The work should be clearly identifiable as scholarship or a creative/production endeavor within the field of communication. In consultation with his/her Thesis Director, students will choose a Second Reader in a different academic department at ASU, if a faculty member at ASU is chosen for the second reader role. The Thesis Director and the Second Reader should both be full-time members of the ASU faculty if a faculty member is chosen for the second reader. This arrangement encourages inter-departmental collaboration and provides a unique opportunity for the student to receive feedback and guidance from a complementary academic or creative perspective. The Second Reader should also be someone with whom the student has an existing relationship, and may be a professor/scholar from another university or a working professional in a field related to the student's thesis topic.*

### **Should I be worried if I don't have a thesis topic or project in mind? How do I get started?**

Unless it's 2+ weeks into the last semester of your senior year and you don't have a Thesis Director or an Honors Thesis Application on file, don't panic. Many students begin thinking about a topic during their sophomore or junior years. Many keep a list of possible ideas -- of

questions, intellectual puzzles, “dream” projects, or possible extensions of papers or projects that they have developed in other courses. Consider what might help you most with your professional and educational goals. For instance, if you’re interested in a career in public relations, perhaps a thesis project that involves preliminary research for a campaign for a client would be a great way to gain relevant professional experience (and have something very marketable to discuss during a job interview!). Most students get started by talking with faculty in the department, by attending research colloquia and screenings/presentations of creative work across campus, by exploring new research in academic journals, by attending University Research Day, and/or by talking with current Honors students. It’s perfectly acceptable to have a few possibilities in mind, but your Thesis Advisor will help you narrow those ideas into a *doable* and *focused* project.

### **How will I be assessed? What does an Honors Thesis look like? What’s a thesis defense?**

Your Thesis Director will submit a letter grade for your performance on the thesis (through a grade in COM 4511, or HON 4010 if you’re solely in University Honors). You will have what is called a “thesis defense” at least two weeks before the end of the semester in which you’re completing your thesis; the defense is a public presentation of your project to your committee and interested faculty and students (more on this below). As for what a thesis or creative project looks like, you can view examples of previous honors theses on file at Belk Library and in the Department of Communication front office. You may also find recent thesis project titles at the university library in the stacks and online and listed at <https://honors.appstate.edu/academics/thesis/thesis-examples>. Remember that each thesis/project is unique and that your project may be substantively different from those on file for previous students.

### **What are the guidelines for the oral Departmental Honors Thesis Defense?**

#### **Adapted from the University Honors Handbook:**

The student will schedule a public defense of the thesis prior to its final approval. Notice of the defense should be made at least two weeks prior to its date (through a departmental announcement made by the Thesis Director and notification to the Honors College as applicable) and a copy of the thesis will be given to the committee (Thesis Director and Second Reader) at that time (or earlier, and earlier reading of drafts is normally the case as well) for review. The thesis defense should be scheduled far enough in advance of the end of the semester to allow for any changes the committee will require after the defense, at least two weeks prior to the semester’s end. The defense typically consists of a 20-30 minute presentation of the project/findings/creative demonstration, but longer defenses are not unusual, particularly in the case of performances.

Following the presentation, the committee may invite the public to ask questions, or they may ask the public to wait until the committee has completed their examination. Once the questioning and “defense” of the thesis has ended, the student and the public are excused so that the committee may deliberate on the outcome of the defense. The committee determines if the student has “passed” or “failed” the defense. The student is invited back and informed of the outcome. Assuming a “pass,” the student will then be instructed as to any remaining work, corrections, changes that the committee require before they accept the thesis in its final form.

The Thesis Director alone is responsible for assigning a grade for the thesis, and this does not need to occur until grades are due at the end of the semester, thus allowing time for any changes the student must implement. If there are substantial changes required before a passing grade can

be assigned, it is possible to assign an incomplete, though this will delay graduation.

*Exceptions to the rules, guidelines, and deadlines for the thesis project, manuscript, and defense for departmental honors students may be considered only in exceptional circumstances through petitioning the Honors Coordinator. Decisions regarding exceptions will be made through the Honors Coordinator in consultation with the chair or assistant chair of the Department of Communication.*

**Will I still graduate with Departmental Honors if I do not successfully complete and defend a thesis or creative thesis project?**

No. Students must successfully complete and defend a thesis or creative thesis project in order to graduate with Departmental Honors.

**What if my Thesis Director and/or Second Reader determines that my thesis is not satisfactory?**

One of the reasons that we ask students and their Thesis Director to schedule thesis defenses at least two weeks before the end of the semester (especially when the student intends to graduate that same semester) is to ensure that there is adequate time (if needed) for substantive revision and the possibility for a second oral defense *at the discretion of the Thesis Director and the Second Reader*. Ultimately, however, the final assessment of a student's thesis or creative thesis project is left to the discretion of the faculty. If a student's Thesis Director and/or Second Reader determine that all or parts of a thesis is plagiarized or otherwise irreparable before the final deadline set by University Honors for graduating with Departmental Honors that semester, then the student will not graduate with Departmental Honors.

**What is the "ideal" timeline for completing the Departmental Honors Program?**

**Sophomore and Junior Years:**

- Accept invitation (from the Honors Coordinator) to Department Honors Program.
- Meet with your academic advisor and/or the Honors Coordinator to discuss requirements and COM Honors courses. The honors advising form at the end of this handbook and the information brief/checklist on the department website will both be helpful during advising and as you plan your honors course of study.
- Complete 6 semester hours of COM Honors courses with a B or greater average.
- Begin to identify potential thesis advisors -- meet with faculty in the department to determine potential fit, faculty availability, etc.
- Begin to brainstorm about your thesis topic, potential resources that you might need, training that you might need to complete (i.e. IRB/CITI training for students who plan to conduct research involving people, such as interviews, survey research, ethnographic or participant observation projects) and/or possible funding sources on campus through the Office of Undergraduate Research, Honorary Societies, etc.

- Secure a Thesis Director and Second Reader.

- Consult with your academic advisor **and** your Thesis Director to determine whether you will complete your thesis in the fall or the spring of your senior year. If possible, try to avoid scheduling your Capstone Seminar during the same semester in which you are writing your thesis.

- Familiarize yourself with the departmental and university deadlines, forms, and procedures for graduating with honors. Make an appointment with the Honors Coordinator and/or your academic advisor to ensure that you're on the right track.

### **Senior Year:**

- Register for COM 4511 (Honors Thesis) by completing the Honors Thesis Application Form ([https://honors.appstate.edu/sites/honors.appstate.edu/files/thesis\\_application\\_form\\_updated\\_2016.pdf.pdf](https://honors.appstate.edu/sites/honors.appstate.edu/files/thesis_application_form_updated_2016.pdf.pdf)) within the first two weeks of the semester you are writing your thesis, along with a description of your project and a special course form (obtained through the COM department front office or online). Complete all appropriate forms before their individual due dates (See <https://honors.appstate.edu/academics/thesis> and this handbook.). If you're solely in Department Honors, you register for COM 4511 and only need to send the thesis application form and special course form through the department office. If you're in only University Honors, you register for HON 4010, and send the thesis forms through University Honors. If you're in University and Departmental Honors, you register for COM 4511 and send the thesis forms through the department and university honors. Generally, guidelines and deadlines for the thesis are the same for University and Departmental Honors, to make it possible for interested students to complete requirements for both honors programs.

You may complete COM 4511 during the summer (full 10-week session), fall, or spring semesters.

### **Thesis Semester:**

- Arrange weekly or bimonthly thesis meetings with your Thesis Director. Complete thesis research/project and write thesis paper, and have drafts reviewed as needed by your committee. Schedule the oral thesis defense to occur at least two weeks prior to the last day of final exams. Your director should announce to the department the defense date, place, time, your name, and thesis title at least two weeks in advance of its date. After your defense, make any appropriate changes or revisions per your Thesis Director, and submit your completed thesis per submission guidelines for departmental honors and/or Honors College (<https://honors.appstate.edu/academics/thesis/submit>). Please note that the library is no longer producing printed, bound thesis copies.

### **Semester in which you Plan to Graduate:**

- Apply to graduate; schedule appointment with your academic

advisor and/or Honors Coordinator to make sure you're on track. The advising worksheet at the end of this handbook as well as your program of study for your general degree and your graduation audit will be helpful with this process.

\*Note that the thesis semester, senior year, and semester in which you graduate may all overlap, and thus forms, deadlines, etc., may overlap as well.

### **What are the requirements for graduating with Departmental Honors?**

To graduate with Departmental Honors, students must fulfill the following requirements:

1. Complete 6 hours of COM courses for Departmental Honors credit, earn a B or greater in each course, and fulfill the following criteria:
  - A) *At least three of these hours must be at the 3000 or 4000 level.*
  - B) *No more than three of these hours may be derived from COM 3500 (Independent Study) or Honors Contracts. Exceptions to this rule are allowed at the discretion of the Honors Coordinator.*
  - C) *With the exception of credits earned via ASU's Study Abroad or UDLAP student exchange program, transferred courses are ineligible for COM Honors credit. Honors credit for Study Abroad or UDLAP must be arranged in advance. Upon their return to ASU, students will submit copies of syllabi for each course under consideration and a sample of the work submitted in fulfillment of that course. These materials will be reviewed by the Honors Coordinator in consultation with the FAA Dean's Office and any other relevant campus offices. Credit may be awarded retroactively based upon their judgment.*
  - D) *Students cannot earn Departmental Honors credit for internships.*
2. Complete 3 hours of COM 4511 and successfully defend a Departmental Honors Thesis in full accordance with the criteria established by the Department of Communication and/or University Honors. (For only University Honors, you register for HON 4010; for University and departmental honors, you register for COM 4511.)
3. Complete submission of the final thesis.
4. Complete all required forms and submit them before the semester deadline(s) to the Departmental Honors Coordinator and/or the University Honors College Administrative Office.
5. Maintain a 3.45 (or greater) cumulative GPA and a 3.45 (or greater) COM GPA through the semester that s/he intends to graduate.
6. Conduct all research in accordance with Appalachian State University's Human Subjects Research Protections/Institutional Review Board protocols (which may include filing for exemption from IRB oversight) and in full compliance with the Code of Student Conduct and its provisions about academic integrity.

### **How will I be recognized for my achievements at graduation?**

Completion of departmental honors is noted on your official transcript (but not on your diploma), and is announced at graduation. Graduating with Latin honors (e.g., cum laude, etc.) as well as with university honors, is also noted on transcripts and is announced at graduation.

You may also receive a medal to wear at graduation recognizing your achievements in department honors.

**Reproduced from the University Honors Handbook:**

*To be eligible for graduation with Latin honors, an undergraduate student must complete, in residence at Appalachian, a minimum of either four semesters in full-time attendance (defined as twelve or more credit hours per semester), or a total of 58 semester hours. (Note: Credit for which a grade is not awarded will not be used in the determination of honors—e.g., APP, CLEP, credit by examination, credit for military service, credit for prior learning, etc.) A minimum grade-point average of 3.45 is required for graduating **cum laude**; a minimum grade-point average of 3.65 is required for graduating **magna cum laude**; and a minimum grade-point average of 3.85 is required for graduating **summa cum laude**. The GPA used to recognize candidates for Latin honors (during the ceremony) is the cumulative GPA earned through the immediately preceding (not the current) semester. Honor cords will be sent to students who are candidates for Latin honors (Cum Laude, Magna Cum Laude, and Summa Cum Laude). Honor cords will be mailed to the student's ASU Box approximately two weeks prior to commencement. For off-campus cohort students, honor cords will be mailed to your permanent address. These cords are to be worn during the ceremony, and are intended to clearly identify the student as a candidate of Latin honors. University, College, and Departmental honors are awarded to those students who complete successfully a series of Honors courses and a Senior Honors Thesis.*

**Am I eligible for any other forms of recognition?**

All students in good standing who have earned at least a 3.0 overall GPA and a 3.25 in the major are invited to become members of the Omega Theta chapter of Lambda Pi Eta (LPH), the national communication honors society, an extracurricular activity offered through the Department of Communication. Members are recognized at graduation by their red and white honor cords and LPH pins. See <http://www.natcom.org/lambdapieta/> for more information or contact the faculty advisor to LPH.

**Can I be in University Honors and Department Honors programs?**

Yes, you can. You can complete Department Honors requirements concurrently within University Honors requirements. You can be in University Honors OR the Departmental Honors program as well.

**Where does the paperwork need to go? For University Honors? For Department Honors?**

Generally, if you're in both departmental and University Honors, you must complete paperwork for both areas. For instance, you would accept an invitation to University Honors and also from department honors. Thesis paperwork (the honors thesis application form ([https://honors.appstate.edu/sites/honors.appstate.edu/files/thesis\\_application\\_form\\_updated\\_2016.pdf.pdf](https://honors.appstate.edu/sites/honors.appstate.edu/files/thesis_application_form_updated_2016.pdf.pdf)), and forms related to the submission of the final draft, would go through both honors programs as well. To register for thesis hours, you complete a special course form (online or in the communication department front office) within the department (register for COM 4511 for departmental honors thesis hours, or University and Departmental Honors thesis hours). If you're in solely University Honors, register for HON 4010 and obtain the special course form through

University Honors as well to register for thesis hours. If you are in solely departmental honors, you would accept the invitation to the honors program through the department. Submission processes for the thesis for both or either programs are outlined at <https://honors.appstate.edu/academics/thesis/submit>.



## Frequently Asked Questions -- For Faculty

### What data do we have about Departmental Honors?

Departmental honors students may be tracked through the Banner system by the Honors Coordinator. Through this tracking, we may assess students for departmental honors criteria (and invite qualifying students to the program), as well as obtain data on current honors students, such as a listing of current participating students, etc.

### What constitutes an Honors Seminar (the information below also applies for assignments for student in honors seats within a course)?

*Adapted from the University Honors website:*

*Honors (HON) courses are **taught by full-time/tenure-track faculty** except in exceptional circumstances with the prior approval of the Honors College Director. Graduate teaching assistants may not teach HON seminars.*

*Honors seminars are about more than just writing longer or more papers. Honors seminars may require quantitatively more from students, but they should definitely require more qualitatively. Ideally, Honors seminars should **stimulate the student to think** about issues from scholarly critical and creative points of view.*

*At a minimum, HON seminar courses should have one or several of the following elements:*

- o Have a **multidisciplinary** orientation, drawing from at least two of the major branches: science/ math, social sciences and fine arts/ humanities*
- o Have significant opportunities for professional development in terms of creative/production-oriented theory, skills, and competencies*
- o Be formatted much like a **graduate-level seminar**, with an emphasis on class discussion and involvement, but with the expectations geared towards the appropriate level for the course (e.g., freshmen for HON 1515, sophomores for HON 2515 and juniors/ seniors for HON 3515).*
  - o Students in HON seminar should **interact extensively** with their classmates regarding the course readings and class discussions.*
  - o Students should also develop a relationship with the professors teaching the course through **class discussion** and discussions of submitted work.*
  - o Instructors should be present at most or all University-wide scheduled classes (barring unexpected emergencies, online meetings) and should also **be available** for out-of-class discussion during office hours or by appointment.*
    - Typical 3 semester hour credit courses must meet for **37.5 hours** (2,250 minutes) each semester; Honors courses can be flexible in the scheduling of these meetings but professors and students should attend all class meetings except in extenuating circumstances. Just as students cannot miss more than 3 class*

*meetings (or 2 for a twice-weekly course), **professors should attend most classes** (except in extenuating circumstances).*

- *Online and other out-of-class activities are to **supplement** in-class discussion and involvement.*
- o *Engage students with **scholarly material**, preferably the original scholarly or creative articles in the discipline. The focus should **not be on typical textbooks** but rather on readings that reflect classic and contemporary research and/or thinking in the field. Honors courses are **multidisciplinary**, so readings may also reflect multiple fields of study.*
- o *Require considerable **writing** with professors providing comprehensive and timely feedback on all written work.*
- o *Focus on the four **primary goals** of ASU's **General Education Program**:*
  - o ***Thinking** critically and creatively*
  - o ***Communicating** effectively*
  - o *Making local to global **connections***
  - o *Understanding responsibilities of **community** membership*

*To learn more about teaching in Honors, please visit the National College Honors Council website at <http://www.nchchonors.org/honorsteaching.shtml>.  
<http://honors.appstate.edu/faculty>*

### **If I'm advising a student who is in departmental honors (or who is interested in joining the Departmental Honors program), what do I need to know?**

Students are eligible for departmental honors if they are declared Communication majors, have a 3.45 overall GPA, and have a 3.45 GPA in communication courses. To join the program, they must receive an invitation from the Honors Coordinator, and accept that invitation. That being said, if a student has been missed during invitations/recruitment, and wishes to discuss the program with the honors coordinator, faculty may certainly direct them to the coordinator as needed. To graduate with departmental honors, students must take 6 hours of departmental honors (at least one at the 3000 level or above) courses (or seats) and complete an honors thesis and defense, maintain a 3.45 GPA overall and in communication, and earn at least a grade of B in all honors courses. At least three hours must come from a course at the 3000-level or above, and in general no more than three hours may come through an honors contract, though these rules may be reconsidered on a case-by-case basis by the honors coordinator. Please note that students may take communication honors courses outside of their majors—for instance, a communication studies student may take an honors advertising course. An advising form located at the end of this handbook may assist faculty in advising students in honors or who are considering honors. The Honors Coordinator may also be contacted with questions and concerns.

### **Where does the paperwork need to go? For University Honors? For Departmental Honors?**

Generally, if a student is in both departmental and University Honors, he/she must complete paperwork for both areas. For instance, the student would accept an invitation to University Honors and also from department honors. Thesis paperwork (the honors thesis application form ([https://honors.appstate.edu/sites/honors.appstate.edu/files/thesis\\_application\\_form\\_updated\\_2016.pdf.pdf](https://honors.appstate.edu/sites/honors.appstate.edu/files/thesis_application_form_updated_2016.pdf.pdf)), and any forms for the thesis submission process, would go through both honors programs as well. To register for thesis hours, the student will also complete a special course form (found

online or in the communication department front office) within the department (register for COM 4511 for departmental honors thesis hours, or for University and Departmental Honors thesis hours). If the student is in solely University Honors, he/she would register for HON 4010 and obtain the special course form through University Honors as well to register for thesis hours. If a student is in solely departmental honors, he/she would accept the invitation to the honors program through the department. Paperwork for honors contracts goes to the appropriate honors program(s) as well. Submission processes for the thesis for both or either programs are outlined at <https://honors.appstate.edu/academics/thesis/submit>.

### **What are my responsibilities as a Thesis Director?**

A thesis director (full-time/tenure track faculty) guides a student during the process of a thesis project, either a creative work or more traditional research project, along with a thesis paper. This guidance will require regular meetings with the student, other consultation with the student on a regular basis (such as via email or phone), advice and direction as well as assistance with logistics and decision making during the project (such as guidance in the IRB process, data analysis, literature searching, honing of ideas into manageable steps, etc.), signatures on related paperwork and documents, and revision of the thesis manuscript. The director must announce to the department the defense date, place, time, student's name, and thesis title at least two weeks in advance of its date, to make the thesis project a public presentation of the student's work; this may be done via email through the department listserv. The director (or the student) should also notify University Honors of the defense if the student is concurrently in University Honors. The director may also help the student secure a location for the defense, which is typically the department conference room. The director will also be present at the thesis defense, decide on a pass or fail of the thesis defense (in consultation with the Second Reader), and enter a grade for the thesis hours (COM 4511) at the end of the thesis semester. The Honors Thesis Evaluation Form for Student Assessment/Grading located at the end of this handbook may assist with grading thesis hours.

### **What are my responsibilities as a Second Reader (for theses originating in other departments)?**

A Second Reader also provides guidance to a student on his or her thesis project, but on a more limited basis and with less direct involvement and contact with the student than the Director. The Second Reader will offer expertise and advice at the request of the student, assist in revision of the project manuscript, and be present at the thesis defense, aiding in deciding on a pass/fail for the defense, but will not enter a grade for thesis hours during the thesis semester. The Honors Thesis Evaluation Form for Student Assessment/Grading located at the end of this handbook may assist with evaluating performance for the thesis defense.

### **How will teaching Departmental Honors Courses and/or Sections be counted for promotion and tenure? For merit?**

Teaching departmental honors courses or sections will be counted as revision of existing courses or creation of new courses in the Teaching area of the department's promotion and tenure criteria, and will be considered in this area for merit as well. Consider also that students could be involved in your research in some way through their work in honors courses, which will also aid in research criteria for promotion and tenure and merit.

### **How will serving as a Thesis Advisor/Director be counted for promotion and tenure? For merit?**

Serving as a thesis director will be counted in the Teaching area of the department's promotion and tenure criteria, and will be considered in this area for merit as well. Your assistance/mentoring of a thesis student's presentation of his or her work at a regional or national conference is also considered in the Research area of promotion and tenure criteria, and additionally in this area for merit. Consider also that students could be involved in your research in some way through their work on their theses, which will also aid in research criteria for promotion and tenure and merit.

### **What opportunities exist on campus for showcasing our students' research?**

Should your student wish to showcase his/her thesis project on campus, you may enter the work in

the Celebration of Student Research and Creative Endeavors. This and other opportunities for showcasing undergraduate student research in general may be found at <http://osr.appstate.edu/present-publish>. The department also has in the past held a showcase of thesis work during department colloquia or in a thesis presentation event and this may be reestablished or considered in the future.

**What opportunities exist in the field of Communication for showcasing our students' research?**

Should your student wish to present his or her thesis work regionally or nationally, there are opportunities to do so through our discipline's professional organizations. Southern States Communication Association (SSCA) offers the Undergraduate Honors Conference each year; the deadline for submission is generally in early December for a late March/early April conference date. More information can be found at <http://www.ssca.net/convention-information>.

The National Communication Association (NCA) began holding its own Undergraduate Honors Conference in 2013; the submission deadline is in early January for a May conference date. More information can be found at <http://www.natcom.org/UGConference/>.

**What opportunities exist on campus for obtaining undergraduate research support?**

Some funding is available for student research through the Office of Student Research and various campus partnerships. For more information, please see <http://osr.appstate.edu/apply>. The Honors College may also have some thesis funding available for Honors College students. As for non-monetary forms of support, should your student need student participants for research, Institutional Research offers random samples of email addresses on a limited basis that may be used as research participant pools for research projects. The thesis advisor may make a request upon receipt of IRB approval for the thesis project.

**What opportunities exist at the regional, state, federal, and/or private level for obtaining undergraduate research support?**

Research support is also available through organizations such as Phi Kappa Phi and the National Science Foundation, as well as NCA, and other organizations. See <http://osr.appstate.edu/apply> as well as <http://www.natcom.org/UGConference/> for more information.

# Appendix—Forms

## Optional Honors Thesis (Director/Second Reader) Guidance in Evaluation Form for Student Assessment/Grading

Student \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Defense Date \_\_\_\_\_

Major/Minor(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Director \_\_\_\_\_ Second Reader \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Title \_\_\_\_\_

As a Committee or as individuals within the thesis committee, please consider on a scale of 1-5 (5 being “best”) how you would evaluate the student in the following areas based on your knowledge of them from their class work, thesis, thesis defense, and other areas to aid in grading and assessing the student during the thesis defense and for the final grade in COM 4511. Please consider the student’s ratings as relative to all other undergraduates you have taught for the following characteristics, abilities, and skills:

1. Communication ability in writing:

1            2            3            4            5

2. Communication ability in speaking:

1            2            3            4            5

3. Thesis specific communication (e.g., music/dance performance, artistic expression, writing, photography, textiles, design, marketing plans, research organization, etc.):

1            2            3            4            5

4. Level of mastery in their thesis topic area:

1            2            3            4            5

5. Level of creativity and/or critical analysis in thesis (indicate which if not both):

1            2            3            4            5

6. Level of autonomy and independence in completing their thesis:

1            2            3            4            5

7. Global competence (does student understand their major/thesis topic in an international context):

1            2            3            4            5

8. Level of understanding of the moral/ethical dimensions of their major/thesis topic (i.e., are they conversant on the current issues in their field, e.g., PSY/informed consent, ART/copyright, TEC/intel property rights, ACCT/independence, CHE/fraud & fabrication, CJ/special population rights, COM/source confidentiality etc.)

1            2            3            4            5

9. Preparation for completing the thesis prior to beginning the work (e.g., research skills, writing ability, ability to be self-directed and self-motivated, performance skills, etc.):

1            2            3            4            5

10. Level of performance throughout thesis process (e.g., attending regular meetings, communicating with committee, timely submissions, responding to feedback, etc.):

1            2            3            4            5

11. Potential for leadership in future professional goals:

1            2            3            4            5

12. Overall rating of the thesis and thesis defense (provide split scores if desired):

1            2            3            4            5

**Please add any other comments you find notable/relevant to the student’s assessment.**

