Honors Thesis or Project: Faculty Guidelines

The honors project or thesis is designed to provide students with an opportunity to integrate their undergraduate experiences and prepare for their careers. Building on the knowledge and skills they’ve acquired, students pursue research questions, create art, engage the wider community in action efforts, or work intensively on one of a variety of other academic projects.

The honors thesis or project expectations are high. Whether the intended end product is a traditional thesis or a specialized project, all honors theses or projects:

- Are six or more credits
- Begin with creative inquiry and systematic research
- Include documentation of substantive scholarly endeavor
- Culminate in an oral defense or other form of public presentation

There are two main types of the honors thesis or project, please read the descriptions below.

Honors Thesis or Honors Project Seminars (faculty initiated)

**Format:** These 6- or more-credit honors thesis or project seminars require the approval of a syllabus by the Commonwealth Honors College Council. They are generally taught seminar style in a traditional classroom setting and are typically offered as 4-credit courses sequentially over two semesters.

Honors thesis or project seminars, like their individually-contracted counterparts require major scholarly undertakings that result in a scholarly manuscript or project artifact. In lieu of an oral defense, most honors thesis or project seminars include a presentation to course members, the instructor, or both.

**Registration:** Most honors thesis or project seminars are registered by students directly on SPIRE. Occasionally, registration may require instructor permission beforehand to ensure that students fully understand and are able to commit to course expectations. Such instructions will be noted in the course description in the Commonwealth Honors College online Honors Course Guide.

**Syllabus Approval:** Instructors who are interested in proposing an honors thesis or project seminar must submit an Honors Thesis or Project Seminar Proposal to the
Commonwealth Honors College office for review by the Commonwealth Honors College Council (CHCC). If the honors thesis or project seminar is approved, and funding is available from Commonwealth Honors College or the instructor’s department, the course will be offered and advertised in the Commonwealth Honors College online Honors Course Guide

**Honors Thesis/Project Individually Contracted (student initiated)**

These honors theses or projects require an agreed-upon and approved contract, proposal, and guidance committee, and they terminate in an oral defense. Examples include:

*Thesis* (six or more credits, usually over two semesters)  
*Project* (six or more credits, usually over two semesters)

**Registration:** Individually contracted honors theses or projects are registered by Commonwealth Honors College after approval by the CHCC Academic Standards Committee. To submit proposals and registration requests for committee review, students should complete an [online Honors Thesis/Project contract](https://www.honors.umass.edu/capstone-experience-faculty-guidelines). Please see [Honors Thesis or Project](https://www.honors.umass.edu/capstone-experience-faculty-guidelines) for additional information and sample proposals.

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