Honors Thesis or Project: Proposal for Individually Contracted option

A proposal is required for each semester of honors thesis or project (499Y and/or 499T/P) that is individually contracted. The proposal defines your honors research, establishes a definitive list of goals, methodology, evaluation procedures, and faculty expectations, serves with the contract as a binding agreement between you and your guidance committee, protects you and your guidance committee from misunderstandings which could cause problems with grading or delays in your graduation clearance.

The details below are provided to assist with online contract submission via CHC PATHS.

Part I: 499Y Honors Research Proposal - Semester Plan

Organize your 499Y-Semester Plan using the sub headers below. Consult your Honors Thesis or Project Committee Chair for guidance in writing your 499Y-Semester Plan. Your Committee Chair may request additional information or may require adjustments that reflect the professional standards within the department. Note: If you and your committee mutually agree upon changes to the initial plan, please submit a revised 499Y-Semester Plan (with your Committee Chair’s signature) to the CHC office.

1. STATEMENT REGARDING THE GOAL OF THE THESIS OR PROJECT

What do you intend to discover or create during your Honors Thesis or Project experience?

2. KEY READINGS

List the items that you plan to read in preparation for your own work. A literature review format appropriate for your discipline is required as part of the proposal for the 499T/P semester.

3. COMMUNICATION

- How often will you meet with your Committee Chair?
- What are your Committee Chair’s expectations of such meetings?
4. SPECIALIZED TRAINING

Does your proposed activity involve live human beings? If so, your committee chair may need to contact the UMass Office of Human Research Protection to establish whether your proposed work falls under the federal definition of human subject research. Please indicate the status of your proposed work in this regard.

If work on your thesis or project should require specialized training (e.g., human/animal subjects testing, lab-safety instruction, survey technique), please specify the type of training required and when and from whom that training will be obtained.

5. METHODS OR AGENDA

What are you going to do to complete the project/thesis? In language appropriate for your disciplinary area, describe how you will decide on your methods or agenda.

If you have already decided on your methods or agenda and have begun or will start your original work in the 499Y semester, then describe, again in language appropriate for your disciplinary area, what you will do.

If you are not in a position to describe your methods or agenda at this stage, note that you are required to do so in your proposal for the 499T/499P semester.

6. TIMELINE

Give the deadline dates and descriptions, where relevant, for each of the following:

- An assignment due before the end of the “Withdrawal Period” (see UMass Academic Calendar). For example, a summary of the initially assigned readings, a draft of one or more sections of your Thesis or Project Proposal, or even a first draft of a chapter of your Thesis/Project.
- Any other first-semester assignments, for example, weekly lab reports or annotated bibliography specified by your Committee Chair.
- Selection of second committee member.
- Completion of the literature review.
- Online submission of the “499T/P Honors Thesis/Project Contract” form with affiliated Honors Thesis or Project Proposal.  
  (This deadline should be prior to the end of the 499Y semester.)

Part II: 499T/P Honors Thesis/Project Proposal

Organize your 499T Proposal using the sub headers below. Consult your Honors Thesis or Project Committee Chair for guidance in writing your 499T/P Proposal. Your Committee Chair may request additional information or may require adjustments that reflect the professional standards within the department.

1. INTRODUCTION

What are you researching and why?

- General description of your Thesis or Project topic (about 1 page)
- Statement about the scientific problem or intellectual/creative intent (at least 1
page): description of objectives and hypotheses or other discipline-specific inquiry

- Explanation of the significance of the problem or justification of the creative intent (at least 1 page): e.g., relate the key literature to the problem or creative endeavor, and explain the study's importance to the advancement of knowledge in the discipline.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

What have other researchers already written/published on your topic?

- Demonstrate your understanding of the primary literature (about 5-15 pages) (text-based thesis writers should seek guidance from their Committee Chairs)
- Consult your Committee Chair about the key literature needed for your thesis or project manuscript and the formatting style used in your discipline for notes and bibliography (e.g., Chicago, MLA, APA, a specific Journal, etc.). Be sure to note the style you will be using.

3. METHOD

How are you conducting your research?

- What procedures or techniques are you using to gather information/data or to create your project?
- What resources or materials are you using in your research?
- If specialized training was required for your thesis or project, e.g., lab safety certification or human/animal testing, what training did you receive or are you receiving and from whom?

4. EVALUATION

How will your work be reviewed and graded?

- What measurable goals does your 499 guidance committee expect you to accomplish during the final stages of your research/creative project?
- How will your committee provide feedback regarding your progress?
- How will your committee assess the viability of your research to produce an Honors Thesis or Project manuscript with oral defense?
- If you are registering for an Honors Project, be specific about the artifact that you will produce in addition to the Project manuscript, e.g., a novel, poetry collection, art DVD, case study, engineering design, story board, film DVD, musical composition CD or DVD, etc.

5. COMMUNICATION

What are the expectations about meetings with your Committee Chair and other Committee Member(s)? Be specific.

- How often are you meeting with your Committee Chair? How often will you meet with the full committee?
- What are your Committee Chair’s expectations of such meetings? What are your committee members’ expectations about meeting with you?
- What time commitment is expected to be applied to your research between
meetings with your Committee Chair? (For example, 10 hours of work per week.)

6. TIMELINE

- What are the dates and expectations for periodic review of your research results? (weekly? bi-weekly?)
- When is your first outline due? When is your thesis or project manuscript
  - First draft due?
  - Second draft due?
  - Final completed manuscript and artifacts (where applicable) due?
- What is the date and setting for your oral defense? (e.g., informal with 499T/P committee members only or public defense open to others)

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