

## **Honors Thesis Guidelines**

The honors thesis is the final requirement of the Honors Program and the capstone experience of your college career. Preparation for this project can help focus your interests, provide perspective in your major field of study, develop research skills, foster creativity and independent effort, and help synthesize your educational experiences to date. Working on this project will improve your ability to investigate a problem independently, explore a concept, perform experimentation, apply scholarship to a real world issue, and/or complete creative work in your field.

The honors thesis should represent approximately the amount of work expected in a semester-long course of three credit hours, but work for the thesis will begin in the junior year and extend throughout the senior year under the guidance of a faculty mentor. Honors students will complete the thesis during their final semester at the university. There are five types of thesis projects, each of which is described below.

### **The Thesis Advisor**

The thesis advisor will offer guidance to the student throughout the research process and is responsible for evaluating the quality of the honors thesis. Students are responsible for finding their own thesis advisor and should begin that process in their junior year. Under normal circumstances, the advisor should be a full-time faculty member in the student's major department. Students double-majoring may choose to complete the thesis in either major. Students who wish to choose an advisor from a department outside the student's major or who wish to choose a part-time faculty member as the thesis advisor must first secure the approval of the Honors Program Director and the chair of the student's home department. Students are required to submit the Honors Thesis Advisor Selection Form two semesters prior to graduation (for most students this would be at the end of their junior year).

During thesis work, the student should make a plan to keep the advisor up-to-date on progress and to meet regularly. Expectations in this regard may vary from advisor to advisor, but it is recommended that students send a written update to the advisor each week and meet with the advisor at least every other week.

### **Honors Thesis Course (required)**

The thesis must be completed in a course of at least three credits in the senior year. For the majority of students this will be the course "Honors Thesis" that has the course number 4593 in each major. Interdisciplinary thesis projects will use the course number HNRS 4593. Most departments prefer that their students register for the course in the Spring semester of the senior year, but it is permissible to register for the course in the Fall and take an Incomplete until the thesis is submitted in the Spring. Any overload charges incurred due to the honors thesis course will be waived by the Bursar provided the academic advisor of the student certifies to the Honors Program Director that all other courses on the student's schedule are required for graduation, a major, or a minor.

## **HNRS 4459: Developing an Honors Thesis Proposal (required for students entering the program in Fall 2019 or later; optional for students entering the program prior to Fall 2019)**

To help develop and refine an idea for their honors thesis project, all honors students are required to take HNRS 4459. This 1-credit course will lead students through the process of finding an advisor, developing an idea, conducting a literature review, and outlining a preliminary research methodology or project plan. As a final project, each student will write a draft of their honors thesis proposal.

### **Honors Thesis Support Courses (optional)**

The ability to produce polished, professional writing and to explain complex research concisely and effectively to a live audience are skills too often neglected by students. This is despite the fact that [employers rate](#) communication skills as among the most desirable in new hires. To help students develop these skills the Honors Program offers two thesis support courses

- HNRS 4457 (1 credit) “Honors Thesis Presentation Skills”
- HNRS 4458 (1 credit) “Honors Thesis Writing Workshop”

HNRS 4457 will teach students the skills necessary to deliver a lengthy oral presentation and a short ‘elevator pitch,’ to design a quality poster, and to use PowerPoint effectively. HNRS 4458 will teach students how to use the drafting and revising process effectively and will provide extensive feedback on your writing from both peers and the instructor.

### **Financial Support**

Students are automatically eligible for up to \$150 in thesis support. To apply for these funds, students should submit the *Application for Honors Thesis Support* along with their thesis proposal. Students may request more than \$150, but support greater than that amount is not guaranteed. Students may also ask their department for financial support.

### **Honors Thesis Tracks**

Students may choose to complete one of five types of theses. Students should consult with their honors thesis advisor about this decision and choose a track that aligns both with their own interests and future career goals. The paper lengths described below are guidelines only; a thesis should be as long as it needs to be. More precise expectations regarding length should be discussed with the thesis advisor as these will vary greatly by discipline and thesis type.

#### **Empirical or Analytical Research**

This type of thesis is ‘traditional’ academic research. Students in the sciences and social sciences pursuing this type of thesis would propose hypotheses and design experiments, studies, or surveys to test those hypotheses. Students in the humanities, on the other hand, would construct academic arguments on the basis of primary sources (works of literature, historical documents, works of art, pieces of music, etc.), while situating those arguments in the context of past research by other scholars.

A thesis of this type would consist of a 25-50 page research paper supported by original experimentation and/or citations to primary sources and secondary literature. Citations should be in the format appropriate to the discipline of the thesis. Students should consult with their advisors about thesis length and citation format.

### **Creative Thesis**

In this type of thesis a student in a creative field would produce an original creative work (a work of visual art, musical composition, play, short story, etc.) and write a 15-20 page reflection paper that explains the decisions that went into creating the work, discusses the concepts being explored, and connects the thesis project to the work and/or theories of other artists and scholars. The paper should be supported by references to relevant scholarly literature in a format appropriate to the field. Students should consult with their advisors about thesis length and citation format and read the appendix on critical reflection below.

### **Service Learning Thesis**

For this type of thesis, students would apply their knowledge, skills, and scholarly research in their field to help the local community. The thesis paper would describe the community organization being worked with and the nature of the problem, analyze scholarly research to help understand and solve the problem, describe the solution proposed by the student, explain ways in which the proposed solution was modified after collaborative discussions with organizational leaders, and reflect on the results of the project. The service-learning project must be conducted after the acceptance of the thesis proposal and should run during the student's last two semesters at the university. Students engaged in such a project must demonstrate a regular and ongoing commitment to the organization through service; while the nature of this service will vary widely depending on the nature of the local organization and the specific project students should spend at least two hours per week working with the organization during the project period.

The final paper should be 25-50 pages in length and be supported by references to scholarly literature in a format appropriate to the student's discipline. Students should consult with their advisors about thesis length and citation format and read the appendix on critical reflection below.

To pursue a service-learning thesis, the student must complete HNRS 4459 and submit the thesis proposal form **before** the service-learning experience.

To identify community organizations that would welcome projects of this type, students should plan to meet with the [Office of Academic Service Learning](#) well in advance of submitting the thesis proposal (no later than the Spring of junior year). The thesis advisor may also have useful contacts to community organizations. Prior experience with service learning is advisable, but not required.

### **Study Abroad Thesis**

Students who are completing a Study Abroad program (either in Prato or elsewhere) of at least one semester in length during their junior or senior year may choose to complete a Study Abroad Thesis. For this type of thesis, the student would conduct scholarly research on a problem, concept, or theory related to the experience of inter-cultural exchange. Students would apply that research to their own experience while abroad and reflect on that application. The thesis paper should be 25-50 pages in length and should explain the problem, concept, or theory being studied, analyze scholarly literature related to that problem, concept, or theory and reflect on how the student's own experiences could be interpreted or understood in light of the scholarly literature or on how those experiences offer new insights and/or represent a challenge to older theories. Students may of course pursue traditional research while abroad, but those projects would fall into the empirical/analytical category described above.

The paper should be supported by citations to relevant scholarly literature in a format appropriate to the student's discipline. Students should consult with their advisors about thesis length and citation format and read the appendix on critical reflection below.

To pursue a Study Abroad thesis, a student must complete HNRS 4459 and submit the thesis proposal form **before** the Study Abroad experience and should consult with the [Office of International Education](#) well in advance of submitting the thesis proposal (no later than the Spring of junior year for a student going abroad as a senior). Students who wish to use a junior-year study abroad experience as the basis for the thesis should take HNRS 4459 in their sophomore year.

### **Professional Thesis**

For this type of thesis, students would apply their knowledge, skills, and scholarly research in their field to help solve a need in a local business, situate academic work in a real-world context, or apply the scholarly literature on a needed professional skill to a specific experience. The thesis paper would describe the problem, need, or skill, the context in which the student worked, analyze the scholarly literature on the topic, and provide a critical reflection of the student's experience. The professional experience that forms the basis of the thesis work should take place during the student's final two semesters at the university. Students who are unsure if a professional experience would be appropriate as a basis for the thesis should consult with the Honors Program Director. The final paper should be 25-50 pages in length and be supported by references to scholarly literature in a format appropriate to the student's discipline. Students should consult with their advisors about thesis length and citation format and read the appendix on critical reflection below.

To pursue a professional thesis during an internship, the student must complete HNRS 4459 and submit the thesis proposal form **before** the internship experience. Students who wish to pursue this kind of thesis in the context of an internship must also secure the host organization's approval prior to submission of the thesis proposal. Student's considering using an internship as the basis for their thesis work are strongly encouraged to consult with the [Career Development Center](#) and/or the internship coordinator in their home department. Thesis work will be in addition to the requirements for the internship as

determined by Career Development and/or your home department's internship coordinator.

## **Guidance**

Your thesis advisor will be the best resource for developing a successful thesis proposal and implementing your project. However, you may also want to acquire a book on writing undergraduate theses. The following book is recommended:

- Charles Lipson, *How to Write a BA Thesis: A Practical Guide from Your First Ideas to Your Finished Paper*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (University of Chicago Press, 2005). ISBN: 978-0226481265

## **Forms**

All the forms for the thesis process can be found on the Honors Program [website](#). These include the *Honors Thesis Proposal Form*, the *Application for Honors Thesis Support*, the *Honors Thesis Progress Report*, the *Library Submission Form*, and the *Honors Thesis Title Page*.

## **Dates and Deadlines**

\*Note that the dates and deadlines below are for the Honors Program. Some departments have developed their own set of guidelines for honors thesis students. Students are expected to comply with those additional requirements and should defer to the department guidelines if there is a conflict with the general guidelines here. Consult with your advisor and the department to see if there are additional guidelines for you to follow. Students in Criminal Justice, in particular, should carefully consult the Criminal Justice Honors Thesis Guidelines, as they differ in important ways from what follows.\*

For Students Graduating in May:

- Find a thesis advisor and notify the Honors Program of the selection by the end of the Junior year.

The *Honors Thesis Proposal Form* and *Application for Honors Thesis Support* are due no later than October 15th of the senior year.

- Students who will be collecting data from human or animal subjects must also secure approval from the IRB (for human subjects) or IACUC (for animal subjects) prior to any data collection. Students should consult with their advisors about the procedures for securing these approvals.
- The *Honors Thesis Progress Report* is due no later than February 28th of the senior year.
- Submit a rough draft of the thesis to the thesis advisor by the end of February or early March.
- The final draft of the thesis must be submitted to the thesis advisor by April 15th.
- Once the thesis advisor has given his or her final approval of the document, submit the final paper copy, along with the signed Honors Thesis Title Page, and a PDF file of

the thesis to the Honors Program. This should be submitted sometime between April 15th and the last day of exams.

- Prior to the end of the Spring semester, give a presentation of your research.

For Students Graduating in December:

- Find a thesis advisor and notify the Honors Program of the selection by the end of the Fall semester of the Junior year.
- The *Honors Thesis Proposal Form* and *Application for Honors Thesis Support* are due no later than March 15th of the senior year.
- Students who will be collecting data from human or animal subjects must also secure approval from the IRB (for human subjects) or IACUC (for animal subjects) prior to any data collection. Students should consult with their advisors about the procedures for securing these approvals.
- The *Honors Thesis Progress Report* is due no later than September 30th of the Senior year.
- Submit a rough draft of the thesis to the thesis advisor by the end of September or early October.
- The final draft of the thesis must be submitted to the thesis advisor by November 15th.
- Once the thesis advisor has given his or her final approval of the document, submit the final paper copy, along with the signed Honors Thesis Title Page, and a PDF file of the thesis to the Honors Program. These should be submitted sometime between November 15th and the last day of exams.
- Prior to the end of the Fall semester, give a presentation of your research.

### **Honors Thesis Presentation**

To complete the honors thesis process, each student must present his or her results. Students may either give a traditional oral presentation or may participate in the Honors Program Poster Presentations, held in late April or early May. However, students may only substitute the poster presentation for the oral presentation with the approval of their thesis advisor and major department. Students may of course do both. A student who will give an oral presentation should schedule it in consultation with the thesis advisor and notify the Honors Program about the date, time, and location of the presentation. Typically oral presentations last twenty minutes and are followed by ten minutes of questions. Guidelines for the poster presentations can be found in Appendix II below.

### **Copies**

Once the thesis is approved and you have presented your results, you should prepare one final paper copy, including the signed Honors Thesis Title Page, and a PDF file. The paper copy should be submitted unstapled and unbound in a folder. The Honors Program will bind the thesis for you. Be sure to submit the Honors Thesis Library Submission Form to the Honors Program Director along with your final thesis copy if you want your thesis to reside in the University's Marvin K. Peterson Library. PDF files should be emailed to [honors@newhaven.edu](mailto:honors@newhaven.edu).

## Length, Format, and Style

The style and form of the honors thesis will be dictated by the norms appropriate for each particular academic discipline. Students should consult their thesis advisor if they have questions about these issues. All honors theses must include the *Honors Thesis Title Page*, available on the Honors Program website.

Format:

- Double-spaced;
- Use page numbers;
- Left margin should be 1.5 inches (necessary because final copy will be bound);
- Right margin should be 1 inch;
- Font: 12 point Times New Roman;
- Figure legends in at least 10-point font

Organization:

The organization should follow the customs of the discipline, but the following is an example of how an honors thesis might be organized:

1. First Page: Official Honors Thesis Title Page (with signatures)
2. Table of Contents
3. Abstract (summary of the project; less than one page)
4. Introduction and Background
5. Literature Review and Methods (as appropriate for discipline)
6. Main Body
  - a. An empirical/analytical thesis would include a results section with figures/charts as appropriate (number figures/charts; provide a legend).
  - b. A thesis in the humanities would use this section to articulate and provide evidence to support the paper's main argument.
  - c. Creative, service learning, study abroad, or professional theses must include a critical reflection.
7. Conclusion
8. References: For method of citation appropriate for your particular academic discipline consult with your thesis advisor.

## Appendix I: Critical Reflection

*I say that it is the greatest good for a man to discuss virtue every day and those other things about which you hear me conversing and testing myself and others, for the unexamined life is not worth living.*

Socrates, *The Apology*, 38a.

While the honors thesis will not necessarily require the student to discuss virtue (although it couldn't hurt!), the process is motivated by the same conviction that drove Socrates – that examination, analysis, contemplation, and reflection are the essence of a valuable and interesting life. Four of the thesis tracks (creative, service-learning, study abroad, and professional) require the student to engage in critical reflection. According to John Dewey, reflection is an “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supported form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it” (Dewey, 1933). One major goal of reflection in the professional world is to “make professional practice more accountable through ongoing scrutiny of the principles upon which it is based” (Fook, 2015); it offers one the chance to bridge the gap between theory and experience.

For the student, reflection provides an opportunity to observe how academic scholarship or theory applies to the real world. Reflection involves making observations, asking questions, analyzing concepts, evaluating experiences, and deriving new meaning and knowledge from those experiences. For example,

- A student in the arts might employ a particular theory to create an original work of literature/art/music and use reflection to explain his/her decision-making and comment on their experience attempting to apply the theory in practice.
- An engineer might use reflection to comment on the economic, social or ethical assumptions made during the design process for a particular product.
- A business student might use reflection to comment on how theories of teamwork or leadership applied to an internship experience.
- A student in the social sciences might use reflection to comment on how a chosen set of sociological or psychological literature was applied to help solve a problem in a community organization.

Students who engage in critical reflection are better able to apply knowledge in specific contexts, to improve their own professional practice over time, and to recognize that knowledge is mediated by one's own subjectivity as well as historical and structural contexts (Fook, 2015).

Best practices for critical reflection:

- Articulate the goals of the project before it begins. These should be clearly articulated in the thesis proposal.
- Keep a weekly journal. Use the journal to describe experiences objectively, give personal reactions to experiences, and relate experiences to disciplinary knowledge/scholarship on the relevant topic.



- Discuss with your advisor how to structure both your weekly reflections and your final paper.

### DEAL Model for Critical Reflection – Describe, Examine, and Articulate Learning

There are many models for reflective writing, and your advisor may have a preferred method. Students, may, however find the following model useful for structuring their own approach to reflective writing.

#### Part I: Describe the experience objectively

- Sample questions: Where was I? Who else was there? When did this take place? What was said? What was done? Why was I there?

#### Part II: Examine the Experience

- Personal examination: What assumptions or expectations did I bring to the situation? How did past experiences affect my behavior or attitude? What personal strengths or weaknesses were revealed? What personal skills did I draw on? Did the experience reveal any of my own attitudes or biases?
- Civic/Social examination – What was I trying to accomplish? What roles did I and others play? Did I act unilaterally or collaboratively? Did I reinforce or challenge an assumption or social system? In what way did power differentials emerge and what were their effects? How did leadership emerge in this situation? What would be the effect of the situation on the common good? On the good of individuals? What kind of trade-offs had to be made? What changes are needed?
- Academic examination – how did I apply my disciplinary skill or knowledge to the situation? How did I apply the scholarly literature, concept or theory to the situation? Was the academic concept or theory able to explain the experience? Was there a conflict between theory and practice? Did the experience reinforce or challenge my understanding?
- This is the place to consider how well the theories you have researched (be they scientific theories, theories of conflict, communication, gender, leadership, learning, organizational or individual behavior, human psychology, cultural exchange, visual design, literary criticism, musical structure, etc.) apply to the situation you experienced. In the process of reflecting on how the theory applies to the experience, you should be sure to seek evidence to defend your claims - be mindful about how you know what you know.

#### Part III – Articulate Learning

- Sample questions: What did I learn? How did I learn it? What were some challenges? Why is it important? Who will benefit from this project? Who might oppose this project? What will the long-term impact be? What could you apply from this experience to other contexts? How has my thinking changed? What would I do differently?

For more information on the DEAL model see,  
[http://www.ncsu.edu/cece/resources/deal\\_model.php](http://www.ncsu.edu/cece/resources/deal_model.php).

### Sources

Robert G. Bringle and Julie A. Hatcher, "Reflection in Service Learning: Making Meaning of Experience," *Educational Horizons* (Summer 1999), 179-185.

John Dewey, *How We Think* (Regnery, 1933).

Jan Fook, "Reflective Practice and Critical Reflection," in *Handbook for Practice Learning in Social Work and Social Care*, Third Edition, edited by Joyce Lishman (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2015)

## Appendix II: Honors Thesis Poster Guidelines

1. Posters should be electronically generated and printed in advance of the presentation day. Please check to see if your department has access to a printer. If you do not have access to a printer and you need assistance printing your poster, email your poster in a pdf format to [honors@newhaven.edu](mailto:honors@newhaven.edu). When printed on campus, the posters cannot exceed 36 x 42 and must have a white background. Posters must be received at least 10 days prior to the Poster Presentation day.
2. The recommended maximum size for posters is 36" x 48" (36" x 42" if you have your poster printed on campus).
3. Your poster will be on display for a 2 hour time period. You will need to have your poster set up before the start of the session. Allow yourself plenty of time for the set up in order to be prepared when visitors begin to arrive. Although it is possible for you to circulate among the other posters during your session, you are expected to be at your poster as much as possible during the session to react to questions concerning your poster. You are also responsible for the removal of your poster at the end of the session.
4. Your poster should be constructed so that it presents the desired information in a self-explanatory manner.
5. Keep your poster simple and brief. A poster is not a place for you to tack up your entire body of research for people to read. Instead, think of a poster as a series of highly efficient, organized "panels" (a storyboard) upon which appear synopses of the relevant information you want to convey – just enough to get your point across.
6. Organize your poster materials using headings, such as "Introduction", "The Research Question", "The Methodology", and "Findings". These headings will help establish a logical flow to your poster.
7. Use large enough fonts so people will not have to squint to read the material. For headings, use at least a 48-point font. For text, use nothing less than 18-point.
8. Make your poster visually appealing. Have fun. Be creative. Incorporate color. Use photographs, graphs, charts, maps, and the like. Simplify charts and figures to include only relevant information. Be attentive to the layout and placement of your materials.
9. Place the title of your work in a prominent position on your poster. Include your name and your major. You may wish to have handouts and a way to collect names and contact information for anyone interested in receiving more details about your research.
10. Do not plan on using any audiovisual equipment. None will be available, and if you bring your own, you will be responsible for the safety of it. If you do bring equipment that requires an electrical outlet, please notify the Honors Program.
11. Your poster represents you, your academic program, and the University of New Haven. Take great care to plan and organize it well. Make sure it communicates the intended information in an interesting, visual manner. Ask your thesis advisor to proof your work.