

Honors Contracts Information

As approved by the faculty on March 29, 1990, honors students who have completed the basic curriculum are eligible to **earn honors credit in regular upper-level courses** (courses numbered 250 and above) by means of contract arrangement with the course instructor. An honors contract is a mechanism for adding an “honors dimension” to a course or section which is not already an honors course. The contract project should add to the academic dimension of the course by introducing new material or by allowing the student to go into greater depth than normally required in the standard syllabus. There is no set standard for the amount of work that the contract should require, but a rough guide used by some universities is that the honors contract project should require from 20 to 25 hours of work during the semester.

The honors contract is designed to foster creativity in projects which are acceptable both to the honors student and the professor. Any regular upper-level course for which the teacher and the student are able to work out an appropriate honors project or activity schedule may be taken for honors credit. Students are especially encouraged to use honors contracts to enhance courses in their majors because these are the courses that should be most valuable to them in the future. The proposed contract, showing the changes to the course syllabus, must be approved by the Honors Council by the end of the third week of the semester. Plans are usually individualized, but may be standardized for several students taking the same course. Some students can do two contracts simultaneously, occasionally even using the contract projects to “connect” the two courses. Contracts are NOT an attempt to undermine the integrity of the teacher’s course plan, nor are they designed to allow a student to circumvent difficult projects or essential activities. The teacher retains complete control of the student’s grade for the course.

Contract Course Guidelines

Whenever possible, the honors project should include the following:

- a. **Learning** that matches the catalog course description. (The student is responsible for the basic content of the course.)
- b. Serious **reading or laboratory experimentation**. (Suggestions: readings in professional journals, a report on a classic book in the discipline, or the reading and reviewing in five paragraphs or less of a very recent book in the discipline.)
- c. **Writing** that demonstrates the ability to think and to use correct English. (A 10-page paper to be read, defended and discussed in class works well.)
- d. An **oral presentation**. (Often this will be presented to the class as a supplement to the lectures. The student may also present the work in other forums, such as a meeting of the Honors Association or departmental majors or a student or professional conference.)
- e. Evidence of **independent activity**.

The student need not (at the teacher’s discretion):

- a. Attend all class sessions (unless the teacher or department requires it).
- b. Take all tests and examinations. (If the project or activity substitutes for an exam, subjective evaluation should be sufficient for grading; conventional testing over the project material is discouraged.)
- c. Do all daily assignments and projects.
- d. Do more work than the regular student since developing a contract is not merely adding an additional assignment to the syllabus. Often, the student will be substituting a different type or level of work for that being done by the other students in the class. The emphasis should be on quality, not quantity. The work can be different or better without necessarily being “more.”

The quality (not the quantity) of the student's work should be the criterion for evaluation. The normal letter grading system should be used. The student's transcript will indicate that the course was taken for honors credit. Teachers should demand excellence, promptness, and professionalism from honors students. They will need to give guidance, naming specific goals or objectives that they want the students to achieve if achieving those goals is deemed part of the students’ grade, and to exercise patience as they work with the students. Teachers should remember that, although talented, honors students are still learning in their professions. If the teachers regard and deal with these students as responsible scholars, the honors students will likely respond as such. The teacher retains full control of the grade that the student receives in the class and reports it to the registrar in the normal process.

Contract Course Benefits

The benefits of honors contracts include the following:

- a. Opportunities for closer association between honors students and faculty members;
- b. Opportunities for students to work more closely with the specific faculty members who will later write their letters of recommendation;
- c. Additional experience in using the library in the student's discipline;
- d. Additional experience in researching, writing, and speaking in the student's discipline;
- e. Opportunities for guided, practical experiences in their professions;
- f. Opportunities for honors students to make important contacts in their major fields, including introductions to potential graduate programs and instructors;
- g. Valuable preparation for graduate or professional school application, for graduate work, and for a profession;
- h. Additional opportunities to present at professional or student conferences.

Suggested Contract Timeline

1. After pre-registering for next semester's classes, choose one for a contract.
2. Visit with the teacher of the class you are considering for a contract. Talk about the syllabus, the kinds of work done in the course, and possible projects that might interest both of you. Provide the teacher with the contract materials from the honors office, including this document. Either you or the teacher may also wish to visit with the dean of the honors college as you develop your plan for the contract.
3. Within the first week of the semester in which you are actually taking the course, get a contract application from the honors secretary or print the contract from the Honors website.
4. Work with the teacher to develop a clear statement of changes in the syllabus. Be sure to clarify what you are expected to do, how you are expected to do it, when you are expected to do it, and what changes will occur in the syllabus. If both you and your teacher are clear on the expectations, later conflicts can be avoided.
5. Both the student and the teacher should sign the finished contract.
6. File the application with the honors secretary.
7. When the application is approved by the Honors Council, you will be notified.
8. Do the work. Remember that you are earning honors credit for the course.
9. At the end of the term, the Honors College administrator will contact the teacher to confirm that the honors work met the established expectations. A grade of "A" or "B" must be earned in the course to qualify for the honors credit. The Honors College will contact the registrar to be sure that the course is noted for honors credit on your transcript.

Examples of Honors Contract Projects

Examples of honors projects include the following:

- a. a series of critiques of newspaper or journal articles or speakers on the course topic;
- b. participation in faculty research, followed by a written or an oral report;
- c. original computer program or project;
- d. review of additional readings (books, articles) related to the course;
- e. class presentation of research undertaken for the honors contract project, or recital of musical work;
- f. original musical composition, sculpture, theatrical script, or other work of art;
- g. additional laboratory experiments or mathematical problems, followed by written report;
- h. research paper (usually 8-12 pages) based on interviews or library resources on a topic related to the course;
- i. original poetry or other literary work;
- k. review of work on a foreign-language author (written in that language).

FOR SAMPLES OF ACTUAL PROJECTS OR FOR MORE EXAMPLES OF TYPES OF PROJECTS, SEE THE SECRETARY IN THE SEARS HONORS CENTER.

Fall 2009: Must be submitted to the Honors College office by 4 pm on Friday, September 11

HONORS CONTRACT APPLICATION

In submitting a contract for approval, both the teacher and the student should consider the following guidelines:

- The student is expected to complete the requirements agreed upon in this contract.
- Failure to complete the requirements will result in a forfeiture of the honors designation for the class.
The student must make an A or B in the class to earn honors designation for the class.
- Evaluation should involve both written and oral components. Some oral presentation, especially before peers and/or faculty, is encouraged.
- The teacher will assign a grade for the class as usual.
- The transcript will indicate that the upper-level course was taken for honors credit, *but the (H) will not show on the student's report card.*

Department _____ Date _____

Course Name and Number _____ Credit Hours _____

Teacher _____

Student _____ ID # H _____ Phone # _____

E-mail address _____

Mailing Address (HU Box # or local street address) _____

**** PROVIDE A BRIEF STATEMENT ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:**

*** THE SPECIFIC LEARNING ANTICIPATED IN THIS PROJECT:**

*** THE SPECIFIC SKILLS EXPECTED IN THIS PROJECT:**

READING

LABORATORY

WRITING

ORAL PRESENTATION

EXPERIENTIAL / PROFESSIONAL

****ON THE BACK OF THIS SHEET OR ON ANOTHER ONE, OUTLINE THE CONTRACT PLAN, INDICATING THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN HONORS CREDIT AND ORDINARY CREDIT IN THIS COURSE, INCLUDING WHAT WORK OR ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN DELETED FROM THE REGULAR COURSE SYLLABUS:**

[SIGNATURES] Student _____

Teacher _____

Dean of the Honors College _____

Date Approved by Council: _____