The Honors College
Contracting for Honors Credit

Course contracts enable students to earn Honors credit by incorporating an Honors component within a regularly offered class taught by a tenured or tenure track faculty member. Honors contract courses ideally require something qualitatively different rather than something quantitatively more. Enhanced substitutions for the normal course requirements are preferable to more of the same. The component should be designed to incorporate a "consolidating experience," a written paper or report (possibly including a class presentation) that serves to bring the experience together. Where longer papers, additional reports, etc., are called for, the added work should be designed to fulfill a larger learning objective. Teaching one or more classes and doing special research projects (especially in the STEM fields) have been especially beneficial. Wherever possible, Honors students should share the results of their work with the class in the form of an oral presentation, a poster session, or some other means. Other suggestions are detailed below.

1. Where the course calls for a research paper, an Honors paper might use primary sources, incorporate a substantial literature review that connects the topic to the broader issues in the field, include primary data derived from student research (oral histories or other interviews, statistical analysis, laboratory experimentation), etc. Honors research papers are typically 8-10 double-spaced pages. If yours is shorter, explain why.

2. Where additional readings or reports are indicated, it is best that these readings or reports be synthesized as part of a larger Honors component. For example, an essay involving a comparison/contrast of regularly assigned readings with the specially selected seminal readings would be appropriate.

3. The Honors component might include a substantial programming project or extended fieldwork or laboratory experience, concluding with a final report of at least 8-10 double-spaced pages, including a narrative part of at least 5-7 pages, outlining the experience and the conclusions reached or experience gained.

4. Where teaching one or more classes is indicated, it is best for the professor to provide guidance in organization and content to insure that the material enhances and supports the intention of the class. In this case, the written component would typically consist of a report of 5-7 pages on the topics covered in the lectures.

5. Where the course is a cross-listed undergraduate/graduate-level course (where the undergraduate and graduate courses are taught by a single instructor at a common time), the student may complete the graduate-level syllabus in order to meet the qualitative, culminating Honors experience that is expected when contracting a course.

Getting your Honors Contract Approved

Students are expected to enroll in Honors sections of the core courses when these courses are regularly offered, since the group experience that characterizes the Honors Core courses is preferable to the contract approach in the beginning years. In special circumstances, taking an Honors Core course may not be possible and contracting may be the only route to meet the student’s overall academic objectives. In these cases, the student must inform the Honors office of the decision to contract by updating their Honors Plan of Study on file in the Honors College office and then continue with the following steps to complete an Honors Contract.
Step 1: Discuss your idea with the professor, who must be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member. This step should ideally be undertaken during the semester prior to enrollment, as you are developing your course schedule for the next semester. If not, begin discussions with your professor during the first week of the class.

Step 2: Following your initial discussion, formalize your ideas with your professor by developing answers to the following questions. The answers to the questions will compose the contract that your professor submits online.

- Describe the Honors component of the course, discussing the nature of the project, how this project constitutes “Honors,” and the nature of the “consolidating experience.” Be as specific as possible in describing what you will do, including references to specific readings and/or methodologies where appropriate, lengths of required papers or reports, number and nature of presentations, etc. Research papers are typically 8-10 double spaced pages but certain other projects may include a shorter report (see above).

- How does the Honors component differ from normal course expectation? A copy of the course syllabus may be submitted, if needed to illustrate. Address if the Honors component will be factored into the final grade in the course and, if so, what the grading expectations will be.

Step 3: To start the Honors Contract Workflow process, contact your Honors Advisor to explain which class you want to contract and confirm that you have already spoken with your professor. Email your professor the answers developed in step 2 so he/she will be prepared to submit the contract.

Step 4: After your advisor starts the Workflow process, your professor will receive an email requesting the submission of the contract details. Once the professor submits it, you will then receive an email asking you to confirm the contract online. The contract will then be submitted to the department head for approval. **Contracts must be completed by the 15th day of classes.** It is to your advantage to complete this step as soon as possible (perhaps even during the prior semester), since you may be required to make revisions in the contract. Contracts that appear to be last minute efforts to gain Honors credit, rather than well-conceived Honors plans, will not be well received. Late contracts will be considered only under truly exceptional circumstances.

Step 5: The Honors Director makes the final recommendations no later than the end of the third week of classes. Copies of approved contracts are sent through Workflow to student, instructor, and department head. Contracts that must be revised are returned to the student with suggestions from the Director.

Step 6: Final completion of your contract will be verified by the instructor through Workflow. Failure to submit final certification for the course contract will result in no Honors credit being awarded for completion of the course.