



Honors Thesis/Project Proposal Guidelines

General Standardized Format and Advice

- ❖ Please include the *Honors Thesis Proposal form* (found at honors.byu.edu) when you submit your proposal to your Honors Thesis faculty advisor, faculty reader, and Department Honors Coordinator. Completely fill it out and obtain **all** signatures before submitting it to the Honors Program Office. The Honors Program will accept email approvals (in lieu of handwritten signatures from thesis committee members only if the email is sent directly to Honors Program personnel (vika_filimoeatu@byu.edu, julie_radle@byu.edu, honors@byu.edu). Approvals must not be forwarded by the student. And the email MUST include in the subject line the student's full name (First and Last) and preferably Net ID. Language must be included in the email to the effect that: "I have read and reviewed (student's name) proposal, agree it meets the criteria as outlined on the thesis submission form, and hereby approve it for submission to the Honors Program."
- ❖ If your discipline has identified any standardized formats or features for research proposals, please adhere to them in your proposal. Your faculty advisor and your Department Honors Coordinator can help you know how to do this appropriately.
- ❖ The finished thesis should achieve greater depth and complexity than an excellent term paper or senior capstone project, though it may not necessarily reach the level of a Master's thesis. Even if not published, the final work should be of such quality as to *merit* publication.
- ❖ Your proposal and final thesis should demonstrate independence as a researcher. You are the driving force and key player in your thesis project. While some projects may stem from or be integral to ongoing faculty research projects, your piece must show initiative, independent thought and action, and self-driven results. In other words, your thesis cannot rely solely on the work of co-authors or researchers and your individual contribution should be evident.
- ❖ A variety of sample thesis proposals are available for review on the [Honors website](#) or the Honors Advisement Center (102 MSRB).
- ❖ Students who joined the Honors Program Fall 2020 or later are required to register for *HONRS 499R* for 3 at least 3 credits, after their proposals have been approved. Any students who joined the Honors Program prior to Fall 2020 and wish to work on their thesis independently after their proposals have been approved can register for *HONRS 499R* and can earn up to 6 credits.

Thesis Defense Attendance Policy

- ❖ Students defending a thesis must be physically present on campus for the defense. The advisor must also be physically present, together with the student, at the defense. Either the faculty reader or the Honors Coordinator can zoom or call into the thesis defense. Having a committee member (reader or Honors Coordinator) not in attendance should be rare, and must be approved in advance by all members of the thesis committee and the Honors Program office. Appropriate facilities should be used for the zoom and teleconference to assure quality interaction – not just a laptop screen.

Please follow these guidelines, keeping in mind any discipline-specific standards:

- ❖ **Working title:** Provide a working title for your thesis that adequately identifies your topic.
- ❖ **Project Purpose:** A succinct statement that identifies the central topic or question of the thesis/project and summarizes what it is you want to accomplish in this thesis.
- ❖ **Project Importance:** Briefly explain the need or justification for researching the topic/question in light of current scholarship in your field.
- ❖ **Project Overview:** This section is the “main body” of the proposal. Discuss the research you’ve already done—what you’ve gathered from reading primary and secondary sources, lab work, field research, etc.—that has led you to the argument or the hypothesis you will put forward in the thesis/project. Explain more fully, but not exhaustively, what you want to accomplish in your work, why your focus matters in the first place, and how you’re going to go about doing your research, including any methodological details that your readers would need to know if they are to approve your proposal. Footnote any sources you refer to or cite.
- ❖ **Thesis Committee:** You are required to have three members in your committee, faculty advisor, faculty reader, and an Honors Coordinator. In the event your advisor is also the Honors Coordinator, you will need to identify an appropriate “second faculty reader” for your committee.
 1. **Faculty Advisor:** The faculty advisor is chosen by you and he/she must be a tenure track BYU faculty. Advisor’s role is to supervise the development of the thesis. He or she will determine if the topic shows sufficient depth and promise for an Honors thesis. The topic must also be properly narrowed and focused so that you can complete the work in the time available. The advisor will offer comments and suggestions about what to say and how to say it. Your advisor will approve the thesis proposal and final thesis. It’s critical that you have regular, scheduled meetings with your advisor throughout the life of your Honors thesis project. When you are ready to defend your thesis, your advisor will sign the Defense form indicating you are ready to defend your thesis. He/she will chair your defense, and, in cooperation with other committee members, determine whether you pass or not the defense and indicate it in the Thesis Submission form.
 2. **Faculty Reader:** The faculty reader is chosen by you and preferably a BYU tenure track faculty. In any case you want to use a BYU adjunct or non-BYU faculty member, you will need to get an approval from Honors Program first. We suggest that you carefully select a faculty member to serve as another expert in your field of research to act as a reader. Often this person represents a second discipline in an interdisciplinary thesis or another faculty member from the same or a similar department as your advisor. His or her role is much simpler than that of your advisor, i.e., he or she reads your thesis proposal and signs the submission form at the beginning of the process and then reads your finished thesis and participates on your thesis defense committee. You will want to choose someone who is supportive, but who will also be qualified enough to be objective in his/her analysis of your thesis.
 3. **Honors Coordinator:** The Honors Coordinator is assigned by your major and is a faculty member from your major department or college who regularly works with the Honors Program and is qualified to advise students on the Honors thesis topics. He or she should know the faculty in your discipline as well as their general research interests and may be able to refer you to possible mentors. He or she will also be familiar with what makes a good thesis in your field and can assist in identifying possible thesis topics. If your topic is interdisciplinary in nature, the Honors Coordinator in your major may also refer you to the coordinator of the other discipline relevant to your thesis. A current list of Honors coordinators is available on the Honors website at <http://honors.byu.edu> under *Current Student* tab and *Department Coordinators*.

- ❖ **Qualifications of Thesis Committee:** Identify the faculty advisor, faculty reader, and Department Honors Coordinator of the thesis/project. For your advisor and reader, please provide a brief summary of their qualifications, background, and why they are the right people to guide your work, including what kind of relationship you have had with them to this point in the project (e.g., worked in his/her lab, wrote a paper on this topic in his class, etc.).
- ❖ **Project Timeline:** Sketch the timetable you've set for producing the thesis/project, including when you aim to finish.
- ❖ **IRB or IACUC Approvals (Optional):** When it's required, provide evidence that you have received the approval of BYU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for studies involving human subjects, or approval from the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee for studies involving animal subjects. Proposals can be endorsed pending IRB or IACUC approval.
- ❖ **Funding:** You may request up to \$1200 in research funds from the Honors Program to support your research, if the funds serve a *bona fide* research purpose. Please work closely with your advisor to develop a budget, and specify how you will use Honors program funding. If you request Honors funding, please identify any *other* sources of funding you will use (or hope to use).
- ❖ **Culminating Experience:** Please include your goals for publication and/or conferences at which you may present your research. While not mandatory, the Honors Program encourages you to share your project beyond the campus community. In any case, your final project should be of "publishable" quality. Additional funding up to \$1000 is available through the Honors Program to help facilitate attendance at conferences or to off-set publication costs. This requires separate application and the form can be found on the Honors website at <http://honors.byu.edu> under the *Current Student* tab and *Honors Forms*.
- ❖ **Conclusion (optional):** Include here anything else your approvers will need to know that is not covered above (special circumstances, limitations, etc.) and/or anything you feel needs to be said to bring the proposal to a satisfying conclusion.