

BYU Honors Program

THESIS GUIDELINES



Contents

What Is an Honors Thesis?	1
Benefits of an Honors Thesis	1
Essential Elements of an Honors Thesis	2
Creative or Performance Based Projects	3
People Involved	4
Honors Program Executive Committee:	4
Honors Student Advisors:	4
Thesis Committee:	4
Thesis Committee Chair:.....	4
Faculty Reader	5
Honors Coordinator:	6
Thesis Timeline	7
Freshman Year – Explore Options.....	7
Sophomore Year – Get Involved	7
Junior Year – Identify Thesis Project, Submit Prospectus and Begin Research	8
Junior/Senior Year – Thesis Research, Writing, Defense and Publication	8
Deadlines	8
Honors Thesis Tracker	9
Steps in the Thesis Process	9
Explore Potential Topics and Research Areas.....	9
Attend Honors Thesis Workshops.....	10
Meet with Honors Coordinator.....	10
Identify a Thesis Committee Chair and Faculty Reader	10
Write a Thesis Prospectus.....	10
Institutional Review Board (IRB)	11
AA/LLM Policy for Honors Theses.....	11
Academic Freedom Policy.....	11
Submit Thesis Prospectus	12
Register for HONRS 499R.....	12
Conduct Research/Project	12
Write the Thesis	12
Schedule Thesis Defense.....	13
Defend the Thesis	13
Create and Present Thesis Poster	14

Other Culminating Presentations	15
Publish the Thesis	15
Thesis Funding	15
Research.....	15
Culminating Experiences.....	16
Thesis Forms	16

What Is an Honors Thesis?

The Honors thesis represents the culminating project of your BYU Honors experience. A thesis is not just another research or term paper; it is a much more substantial piece of scholarship completed under the supervision of a faculty thesis committee. The Honors thesis represents independent, original research or creative work of superior quality that merits publication, presentation, or distribution beyond the campus community. This hallmark of academic excellence should exhibit high standards of quality in its ideas, methodology, accuracy, clarity, reasoning and presentation. The thesis should be the most developed research or creative effort of your undergraduate years.

Honors students typically complete the thesis requirement during their junior and senior years (2-4 semesters) after they have obtained sufficient training in their major to conduct research in a specialized academic field. The thesis process acquaints students firsthand and in depth with the type of scholarly work that characterizes the field they intend to pursue professionally. For these reasons, only under rare circumstances is an Honors thesis topic outside the major area approved. (In most cases, students who complete a thesis outside the major do so in a field cognate to their majors or in a minor.)

Many students report that writing their Honors thesis proved to be both the most rigorous and the most rewarding academic experience of their college years. Students learn to develop proficient research and rhetorical skills within their discipline while enhancing their academic or professional credentials and making an original contribution to their field.

Benefits of an Honors Thesis

- GE Credit: Together with HONRS 320, HONRS 499R (Honors Thesis) is certified to meet the University GE Advanced Writing & Oral Communication requirement;
- Provides a bridge between academic work and professional work in the field;
- Develops independence as a self-motivated individual who can manage and complete a non-structured project;
- Develops self-knowledge and personal resources;
- Provides hands-on preparation for graduate study or employment;
- Provides tangible evidence for graduate schools and potential employers of a students' skills and abilities;
- Builds mentoring relationships with skilled faculty.

Essential Elements of an Honors Thesis

Content and sections within an Honors thesis will vary by individual disciplines and fields. However, there are common characteristics and required elements to all Honors theses:

- Substantial written component: As a significant piece of undergraduate research, quality matters more than length - which varies widely across different fields. The thesis should make a substantial contribution to the student's chosen discipline. A minimum of 30 pages (excluding appendices and sources) is expected for most Honors theses. Creative projects require 15-20 pages of written analysis and background to accompany the creative work (see next page).
- Advanced level work that focuses on an explicit thesis: a question to be answered, a problem to be solved, an analysis of central issues, or a position to be explained;
- Self-directed, original research or creative work;
- Incorporates previous study and learning; may build or expand on capstone projects or senior papers, but moves beyond typical expectations;
- Documentation according to professional standards in the field;
- Demonstrates mastery of a specific subject matter, familiarity with practices and conventions in a discipline, and qualifications for future independent work;
- Superior undergraduate work that merits publication, presentation, or distribution beyond the campus community;
- Public presentation, including oral thesis defense, poster session, and publication. Culminating presentations at appropriate professional meetings or academic conferences are strongly encouraged.

A scholarly Honors thesis typically includes:

- Abstract
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables and Figures
- Introduction
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion or Analysis
- Conclusion
- Appendices
- References, Bibliography or Literature Review

Creative or Performance Based Projects

Students may choose a creative or performance-based work as their thesis project, which combines an original work (exhibition, performance, digital product, composition, etc.) with a written component. Many students in theater, film, art, music, creative writing, dance, communications, design or digital media, for example, choose this option. While such a project can form the basis of a thesis, it must be accompanied by a substantial written portion (15-20 pages) of background and analysis. *The essential elements of a thesis listed above also apply to creative projects.*

A Creative or Performance Based thesis typically includes:

- Abstract
- Table of Contents
- Introduction or Literature Review: this provides background and a framework for the project, placing the project or performance within a larger context for the field. It often includes research that informed or led to the project itself;
- Methodology: describes the performance or project including the development, approaches, rationale, and the procedural steps to create or implement the project;
- Project Presentation: this is the heart of the project itself and may include a creative writing piece (essays, short story, poetry), images, a score, script, recordings, or other digital links to film, podcasts, multi-media, etc.
- Results, Discussion, or Analysis: here students present and discuss the results of the project, including successes, shortcomings, potential for future research, or recommendations for action. The ability to view one's own work critically and objectively is essential for all fields of scholarly research, and a thorough discussion of findings or results demonstrates a standard of scholarship expected of all Honors students.
- Conclusion
- Appendices
- References or Bibliography

Note: Individual departments may have departmental thesis guidelines, deadlines, and policies particular to their department or discipline that supplement Honors Program guidelines. Students should confer with Department Honors Coordinators to ensure their thesis meets both departmental and Honors Program requirements.

People Involved

While the thesis is a self-directed, student-driven project, a team of support staff and faculty are in place to help direct, facilitate, and mentor students through the process.

Honors Program Executive Committee:

Collectively, the Honors Program Directors and Advisement Supervisor oversee the Honors thesis requirement, policies, and process. This committee reviews all Honors thesis prospectuses and must approve a prospectus before the student begins research or receives thesis funding. The Executive Committee retains authority over the final acceptance and approval of Honors theses for University Honors graduation requirements and publication.

Honors Student Advisors:

Our Honors student advisors are available to talk about program requirements, deadlines, graduation requirements, event details, or other general information about the thesis. Honors student advisors are located in the Honors Program Office in 102 MSRB. You can reach them by phone at (801) 422-5497, by email at honors@byu.edu, or in person from 8–5 M–F (except during devotional hour).

Thesis Committee:

The thesis committee is comprised of a Faculty Chair, a Faculty Reader and the Department Honors Coordinator. *In the event an Honors Coordinator is serving as the Faculty Chair on a student thesis committee, a second faculty reader is required.* There must always be a minimum of three faculty members on a thesis committee.

Honors Policy Note: Honors thesis committee chairs must be BYU full-time, tenure-track faculty. Honors Coordinators are, by nature of their assignment, also full-time faculty. Whenever possible, faculty readers should also be full-time faculty; however, the faculty reader(s) may be visiting/part-time/adjunct if their expertise is important to the thesis research. Outside experts (non-BYU personnel) may be included as a fourth member of a committee. Students should clearly articulate an adjunct's role, their qualifications, and importance to the thesis project in their prospectus. All members of the committee should be available through the complete thesis process, including the final defense, so students should avoid including committee members who do not plan to remain at BYU. (Adopted March 2017)

Thesis Committee Chair:

- Selected by student in consultation with Department Honors Coordinator
- Full-time, tenure-track faculty
- Lead member of thesis committee
- Files for IRB approval on behalf of the student when required

A student's thesis committee chair supervises the development of a student's honors thesis from inception to completion. The student-faculty chair relationship is therefore key to a successful thesis experience – even more so than the topic itself. Students may consider faculty from whom they have had courses, whose scholarly research coincides with their interests, or others recommended by the Honors Coordinator or Honors Program. *We encourage students and faculty to focus on a good mentoring relationship first, and a specific thesis topic second.* Both may need to be flexible and willing to explore options before settling on a specific area of research; however, it is up to the thesis committee chair (not the student) to determine if a topic shows sufficient depth and promise for an Honors thesis based on Honors Program guidelines and discipline-specific standards. The topic must also be of an appropriate scope to allow students to complete the work in a reasonable timeframe (usually 2-4 semesters).

The committee chair works with the student to develop a prospectus and approves it via the Honors Thesis Tracker. Other members of the thesis committee then add comments and grant approval when the prospectus meets expectations. Once all committee members have approved the prospectus, it proceeds to the Honors Program for final approval.

It is critical that students have regular, scheduled meetings with their committee chair throughout the Honors thesis project, and we expect students to demonstrate initiative and follow-through in keeping their chair and other committee members informed of their progress. When the chair and other members of the thesis committee have read revised drafts and agree the thesis is ready to defend, each committee member certifies readiness. The student then coordinates with the committee to schedule a suitable date and time for the defense. The chair conducts the defense, and, in cooperation with other committee members, determines whether the student will pass the defense. The chair is responsible for entering the decision of the committee and summarizing committee comments on the Honors Thesis Tracker.

Faculty Reader

- Selected by student in consultation with faculty committee chair
- Full-time faculty recommended; may be visiting or adjunct faculty
- Member of thesis committee
- May represent secondary field expertise

With the help of the thesis committee chair, students select a faculty member to serve as another expert in their field of research and act as a third reader. Often this person represents a second discipline for an interdisciplinary thesis or another faculty member from the same or a similar department as the chair. A reader's role is usually simpler than that of the chair; he or she reviews and must approve the thesis prospectus at the beginning of the process, and then reviews the final thesis and participates in the thesis defense. Students should consult with faculty readers more regularly where their input and expertise is valuable to the thesis research

or writing process. Regardless of their day-to-day level of involvement, students should keep faculty readers apprised of progress throughout.

Students will want to choose someone who is supportive, well qualified, and who can be objective in their analysis of the thesis. While we strongly encourage students to select full-time faculty members to serve as readers, *visiting faculty or adjunct faculty may be selected when their area of expertise is valuable to the thesis topic, and the faculty member will be available (at BYU) through to completion of the thesis.*

Honors Coordinator:

- Appointed by department and approved by Honors Program
- Full-time, tenured faculty
- Major/Field-specific mentor for Honors students
- Member of thesis committee
- Honors representative at department level

The Honors Coordinator serves as the departmental liaison between the Honors Program and students in the various disciplines across campus. Appointed by each department and approved by the Honors Program, Honors Coordinators are full-time, tenured faculty members who regularly work with the Honors Program and are qualified to advise students on the Honors thesis. The Coordinator should know the faculty in their discipline and their general research interests in order to better refer students to possible mentors and field experts. We strongly encourage Coordinators to facilitate introductions between students and other faculty. He or she is also familiar with what makes a good thesis in their respective field and can assist students in identifying possible thesis topics. If a chosen thesis topic is interdisciplinary in nature, the Honors Coordinator in a student's home major may also refer them to the Coordinator of the other discipline relevant to the thesis. A current list of the Coordinators for each major is available on the Honors website: <http://honors.byu.edu>.

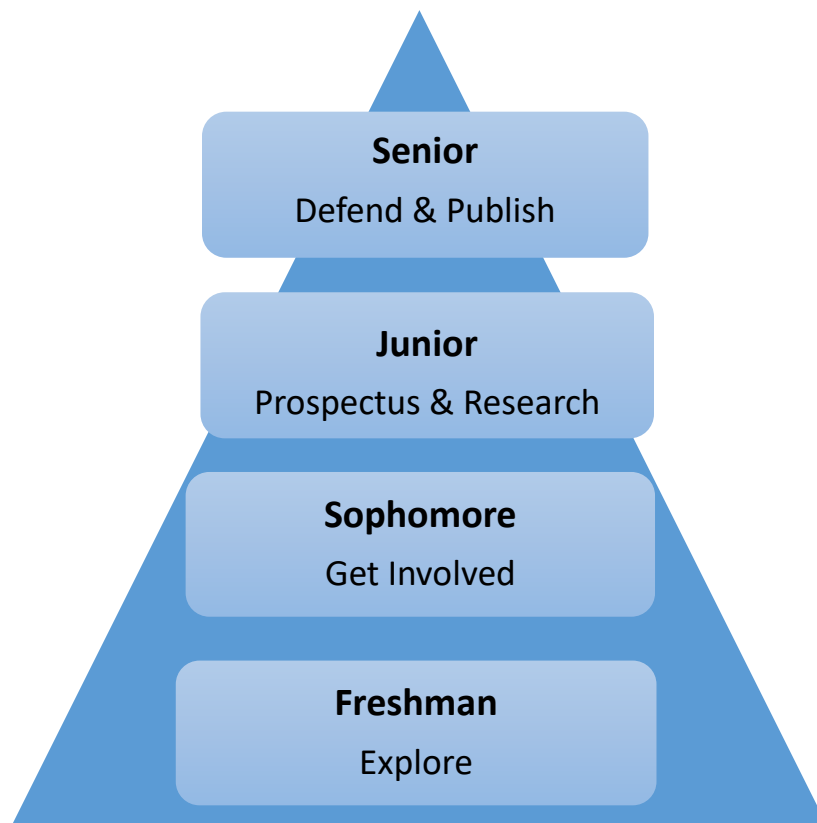
As the representative of Honors in each department, the Honors Coordinator gives approval for Honors thesis prospectuses in their department. Coordinators must read each thesis prospectus, work through any concerns or issues with students and faculty chairs, and grant approval before the prospectus moves to the Honors Program for final approval. The Honors Coordinator helps the faculty committee and the Honors Program determine whether students have demonstrated a sufficient knowledge of the subject, if their focus and methods are appropriate, and whether their research will need IRB approval to proceed.

Coordinators serve as the third member of the student's thesis committee going forward, and therefore we anticipate Coordinators will be in touch with students from the prospectus stage, through the research and writing process, to the final defense. Throughout this process, Coordinators work with the thesis committee chair and reader. These three individuals together

comprise the student's thesis committee. Therefore, as a member of the thesis committee, Honors Coordinators attend and participate in the thesis defense and act as the Honors Program representative in granting final thesis approval at the department level.

Thesis Timeline

Successful Honors theses begin with good planning early in an undergraduate's career. While students may not identify a specific project until the junior year, those who engage with faculty, ideas, and research throughout the Honors experience are better prepared for this culminating experience. Students who delay their thesis project, or who try to squeeze it in at the end, often fail to meet deadlines and are unable to graduate with University Honors. We encourage students to follow this general timeline:



Freshman Year – Explore Options

Students should pay attention to courses, topics and fields that pique their interest. We encourage students to participate in a wide variety of activities and events, and to get to know faculty in their major, explore research programs and opportunities, and talk to more advanced Honors students about their thesis experiences.

Sophomore Year – Get Involved

If they haven't already, students should look for opportunities as research assistants, teaching assistants, or lab assistants. Students can talk to faculty in their departments, meet with Honors

Coordinators, and actively seek ways to become involved in research or projects. Other students join clubs, service groups, honors societies in their majors, or participate in leadership development experiences, internships, or study abroad programs.

Junior Year – Identify Thesis Project, Submit Prospectus and Begin Research

During their third (or second to last) year, students narrow and identify their thesis project. They work closely with the Honors Program and faculty thesis committee to develop, write, and submit a prospectus. Students then begin their thesis research in earnest.

Junior/Senior Year – Thesis Research, Writing, Defense and Publication

Once a thesis prospectus is approved, the student begins work on their thesis project. Thesis projects include extensive research, and may also involve travel, interviews, survey data, etc. Students are advised to follow a detailed timeline with interim steps and checkpoints, and to coordinate regularly with their committee chair throughout the research and writing period. Typically, students spend two to three semesters completing the project and revising multiple drafts of the written thesis. Students must then complete a successful oral defense, create and present a thesis poster, and submit the final approved thesis for publication.

Deadlines

All program deadlines, including required thesis forms and submissions, are published on the Honors Program website and are determined by anticipated date of graduation. Deadlines vary only slightly year to year. Students and faculty should be aware that Honors Program deadlines are firm and have been extended as far as possible in order for the program to comply with University graduation deadlines. **Note: Individual departments may have earlier deadlines so students should check with Department Honors Coordinators and faculty thesis chairs well in advance.** Throughout the process, students should be respectful of their committee members' time and allow ample time for review and feedback. **Faculty are not expected to compensate for delays or last-minute requests on a students' part.**

*Honors Policy Note: Honors Program deadlines are firm. Students submitting materials after posted deadlines will be considered for graduation the following semester, once the student has officially changed their graduation date with their academic advisement center. Honors students may only extend graduation by **one semester** beyond completion of their major and other university requirements for the purpose of completing Honors requirements. (Adopted April 2019)*

Honors Thesis Tracker

The Honors Thesis Tracker is integrated in the on-line University Honors Progress platform. Students, faculty, and Honors personnel use this digital system to facilitate each step in the thesis process below, from forming the faculty thesis committee through to publication and graduation. **All requisite information, drafts, and approvals are uploaded, entered and recorded electronically.** Students can access the Honors Progress platform from the Honors website (<http://honors.byu.edu>). Faculty serving on Honors thesis committees will receive automated emails with links to their individual student's dashboard on the tracker.

Steps in the Thesis Process

Explore Potential Topics and Research Areas

Ideas often come from lectures, discussion groups, conversations with faculty or friends, clubs and service groups. Sometimes a timely article, current event, or book can spark an idea or question that leads to a thesis topic. We encourage students to participate in a wide variety of activities and events sponsored by the Honors Program and the campus community more broadly. We also encourage students to get to know faculty in their major, explore research programs and opportunities, and talk to more advanced Honors students about their thesis experiences. As students continue to explore ideas through courses and other activities, they begin to narrow topics and subfields of particular interest to them.

By the sophomore year, we encourage students to seek opportunities as research assistants, teaching assistants, or lab assistants. Students can talk to faculty in their departments, meet with their Honors Coordinator, and actively seek ways to become involved in research or projects. Other students join clubs or service groups, honors societies in their majors, participate in leadership development experiences, internships, or study abroad programs that can lead to exciting thesis projects. Students should identify fields and several topics of interest, then work with their Honors coordinator and faculty committee chair to identify a specific project.

Students should complete significant course work within the thesis field (usually at least 30 credit hours, several of which are from 300- or 400-level major courses).

Honors Policy Note: The thesis should acquaint students firsthand and in depth with the type of scholarly work that characterizes the field they intend to pursue professionally. For these reasons, only under rare circumstances is an Honors thesis topic outside the student's major area approved. (In most cases, students who complete a thesis outside the major do so in a field cognate to their major or in a minor.)

Attend Honors Thesis Workshops

Students should attend at least one Honors thesis workshop, and are encouraged to attend all three workshops as they work through the thesis process:

- How to Find a Topic
- How to Write a Prospectus
- Defense & Publication

Multiple sessions of each workshop are offered each semester. Students can find details on upcoming workshops in the weekly Honors newsletter, on the Honors website, or by contacting the Honors Program office.

Meet with Honors Coordinator

Students should meet and introduce themselves to their department Honors Coordinator early in their program. In fact, an initial meeting is a recommended component of HONRS 110, the introductory Honors course required of all incoming Honors students. Interactions should not be limited to this one meeting, however. Coordinators are excellent resources to help students identify research opportunities, obtain advice about preparation for a thesis within that field, meet other faculty, and more.

Identify a Thesis Committee Chair and Faculty Reader

Once a student has identified a general area of research interest, we encourage students to consider carefully the expertise and research focus of faculty who may be willing to serve as chair of their thesis committee. Often, students are familiar with faculty from whom they have taken one or more courses and have begun to foster a working relationship. Other times, students have worked on research projects or in a lab with a faculty member. Honors Coordinators know the faculty in their discipline and their general research interests, and often refer students to possible mentors and field experts. Department web sites and faculty directories often provide research profiles that can also facilitate a student's search. *We encourage students and faculty to focus on a good mentoring relationship first, and a specific thesis topic second.* It is problematic if students identify too narrow of a thesis topic on their own and subsequently find there are no faculty with the requisite interest or expertise to support their research. Students should consult with potential committee members individually prior to extending official invitations through the Honors Thesis Tracker.

Write a Thesis Prospectus

After a faculty member has agreed to serve as chair of the thesis committee, the student should meet with them to narrow the topic or research question to a manageable scope and identify an appropriate hypothesis or thesis question. Both student and faculty chair may need to be flexible and willing to explore options before settling on a specific area of research; however, it is up to the faculty chair (not the student) to determine if a topic shows sufficient depth and

promise for an Honors thesis based on Honors Program guidelines and discipline-specific standards. The student then works with their committee chair to write a thesis prospectus; this may require multiple drafts before the chair and student agree it is ready for review by the other thesis committee members. Committee members will offer comments and suggestions about prospectus content and parameters. Multiple drafts may be required and students should expect to revise the prospectus based on committee feedback. Students and committee members should refer to the [Honors Thesis Prospectus Guidelines](#) for prospectus requirements. Sample thesis prospectuses are also available on the Honors website.

[Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#)

The faculty chair and other committee members should determine whether Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is required for the project and submit the appropriate application on behalf of the student. ***If a project warrants IRB review, approval must be obtained and the IRB number recorded in Honors Thesis Tracker before the prospectus is submitted to the Honors Program for final review and approval.*** Students and faculty chairs must comply with all university IRB guidelines and policies, including requisite CITI training. Refer to the university IRB website for training, application, and additional resources (<http://irb.byu.edu>). If students plan to conduct surveys as part of the research process, they must also comply with [BYU Survey Policy](#).

[AA/LLM Policy for Honors Theses](#)

Generative AI use must be approved in advance and in writing by the student's committee and disclosed in the final product, including an explanation of their use, the tool(s) used, full text of prompts, and full texts of responses. The following guidelines apply:

- a. If you copy language verbatim from a Generative AI tool, you must use quotation marks and provide a citation note to indicate that the words used were not your own that includes the prompt.
- b. If you paraphrase output from a Generative AI tool, you must provide a citation note indicating that the idea, format, and syntax were not originally your own.
- c. Failure to provide proper attribution and citations violates the academic honesty policies and will result in a student being subject to disciplinary measures.

[Academic Freedom Policy](#)

Honors theses and their authors are subject to the [BYU Academic Freedom Policy](#). Individual freedom of expression is broad, presumptive, and essentially unrestrained except for matters that seriously and adversely affect the University mission or the Church. Every university places some limitations on academic freedom, and at BYU reasonable limitations are in place for behavior or expression that:

- contradicts or opposes, rather than analyzes or discusses, fundamental Church doctrine or policy;
- deliberately attacks or derides the Church or its general leaders; or

- violates the Honors Code because the expression is dishonest, illegal, unchaste, profane, or unduly disrespectful of others.

Submit Thesis Prospectus

Once all thesis committee members have reviewed the prospectus and the student has completed any required revisions, committee members approve the prospectus in the Honors Thesis Tracker. The prospectus then moves to Honors Program personnel for Executive Committee review and approval. *Do not wait to submit a prospectus after completing a project or major portion of it. The prospectus must be submitted beforehand.* The Honors Program will notify the student and thesis committee with approval – typically within two weeks of submission.

Register for HONRS 499R

While students are actively engaged in the research and writing stages of their thesis, they must complete an HONRS 499R contract to enroll and complete at least 3.0 and up to 6.0 credits of HONRS 499R, working under the direction of their thesis committee chair. This is a variable credit (1-6 credits), independent, pass/fail course, and requires an approved thesis prospectus prior to registration. Students receive a “T” (temporary) grade until after they have successfully defended their thesis (grade changes to a Pass) or have graduated without completing the thesis (grade changes to a Fail). Together with HONRS 320, HONRS 499R is certified to meet the University GE Advanced Writing & Oral Communication requirement for students who complete both courses (including a successful defense).

Conduct Research/Project

Once a thesis prospectus is approved, the student begins work on the thesis project. It will necessarily involve research and may involve collaboration with peers or research subjects. It will certainly involve collaboration with and tutelage by faculty on the thesis committee. Research methodologies are necessarily specific to each field of research and topic. Students should adhere to all discipline-specific norms, requirements, style guides, and protocols. Students are advised to follow a detailed timeline with interim steps and checkpoints, and to coordinate regularly with their faculty committee chair throughout the research and writing period. Typically, students spend 2 to 3 semesters after the prospectus is approved completing the project and revising multiple drafts of the written thesis.

Write the Thesis

Writing the first draft of a thesis can be the most challenging aspect of the whole research process as students pull all of their work and experiences together to create something meaningful. Prior preparation and organization will pay off here. Students upload drafts in the Honors Thesis Tracker as they complete each part, keeping in mind that faculty may require numerous intermediate drafts. Faculty committee members, the chair in particular, provide

feedback, request revisions and add comment to drafts. It is the student's responsibility to upload revised drafts to the Thesis Tracker throughout the process, and keep the committee informed of progress. We recommend regularly scheduled meetings at intervals determined by the faculty chair.

When the thesis committee chair is satisfied with the thesis draft, other members of the thesis committee review the thesis. Additional revision may be required before all committee members agree the thesis is ready to defend. With that in mind, **students should allow ample time ahead of defense deadlines for multiple drafts and be mindful of committee members' time and schedules. Remember, departments may have earlier deadlines than the Honors Program and faculty are not expected to compensate for delays or last-minute requests on a students' part.** Students (particularly those planning to graduate in June or August) should also be aware that faculty may not be readily available during spring and summer terms and plan accordingly.

Schedule Thesis Defense

Once all members of the thesis committee have read and approved a complete thesis draft, students should coordinate a suitable date, time and location with their committee members. Then students schedule the oral thesis defense through the thesis tracking system and enter the agreed-upon details. Students must upload a finalized draft of the thesis to the thesis tracking system at least one week prior to the defense. No additional changes can be made to the thesis during the interim period until the defense.

Defend the Thesis

At the oral thesis defense, a student presents their research and findings in a meeting with their thesis committee. Thesis defenses are open to the university community, and students may invite guests to attend. The thesis committee members examine the students' work by asking detailed questions pertaining to the project. As prelude or postlude to the actual thesis defense, we encourage the committee to take 5-10 minutes to briefly review the student's overall Honors experience.

While most defenses last between 60-75 minutes, participants are encouraged to schedule 90 minutes so that the proceedings will not be rushed. The thesis committee chair conducts the defense and is free to make any modifications to the agenda as necessary.

A typical Honors thesis defense proceeds as follows:

- Introductions and Opening Prayer
- Opening Presentation by the student (approximately 10-15 minutes)
The student may use this time to talk about their interest in the project and give an overview of their research and findings. Some students use PowerPoint presentations,

etc., but a visual presentation is not required and should not overshadow the Q&A discussion.

- Questioning by the thesis committee members

The Q&A is the heart of a defense designed to test the quality of the student's research and writing, as well as the limits, conclusions, or implications of the thesis. It provides an opportunity for the student to respond to the committee's questions and think critically through the complete thesis process in a culminating experience.

- Dismissal of candidate and other guests while committee deliberates
- Committee Decision and Summary

The committee may make one of three judgments:

- Pass: The thesis is complete and meets the full expectations of the examiners (minor revisions or corrections are permitted);
 - Pass with Qualifications: Thesis will be accepted upon completion of agreed upon revisions.
 - Recess: Major revision needed; requires the defense be reconvened.
- Review of Students' Honors and/or undergraduate experience (5-10 minutes)

*Honors Policy Note: Unless restricted by University policy (i.e., Covid-19 protocols), students defending a thesis must be physically present on campus for the defense. Students away from campus as they are finishing up a thesis are expected to return to campus to defend the finished thesis. The committee chair must be physically present, together with the student, at the defense. Only the faculty reader **or** the Honors Coordinator may participate remotely. 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 teleconference to assure quality interaction. (Adopted December 2018)*

Once the defense is complete, the faculty chair submits the decision and summarizes the committee comments in the Honors Thesis Tracker. If the decision is Pass with Qualifications, the chair notes any required revisions and grants final approval once the student has completed the changes. Other committee members then add their approvals to the final thesis.

Create and Present Thesis Poster

During their last year before graduation, students are required to create a thesis poster (32"x 40") in accordance with [Honors Poster instructions](#) and participate in the Honors thesis poster session, usually held in March. Not all students will have completed their thesis or have defended prior to the poster session, so posters may represent completed work or projects still in the final stages. The poster session provides an opportunity for students to share their research with the broader Honors community in an informal, reception-type setting – complete with refreshments and more. Other students, staff, faculty and university administrators browse through the displays, and get to interact with the presenters to learn more about the projects represented. The thesis posters are retained by the Honors Program for a rotating display in the Honors Commons (first floor of the Maeser Building) for the following year.

Other Culminating Presentations

While not mandatory, the Honors Program encourages you to share your project beyond the campus community. Many students present their research and/or final thesis results at applicable academic conferences in their field. Other opportunities include regional and national Honors conferences (WRHC, NCHC, etc.), and the statewide Utah Conference for Undergraduate Research (UCUR). Alternatively, students may opt to publish research in disciplinary journals or publications. Funding up to \$1000 is available to help facilitate attendance at conferences or to off-set publication costs. Students must file a [Conference Funding Request Form](#) to apply for this support.

Publish the Thesis

Following a successful defense and completion of any final revisions, students must take the following steps to complete the thesis requirement:

- Correct and format the thesis. Make the final corrections in the thesis required by the thesis committee and format the thesis as detailed in the [Thesis Formatting Guidelines](#). Students must follow these formatting instructions carefully, which include model pages illustrating format for required pages. Students should also follow style guidelines specific to their discipline. The thesis committee chair is the ultimate reference on the style used in a specific field.
- Submit final thesis for digital publication. Students submit their final thesis to the Electronic Thesis/Dissertation system (ETD) through the Honors Thesis Tracker. Once approved by the Honors Program, it is then published digitally in ScholarsArchive. ScholarsArchive is an international, institutional repository for the scholarly and creative content produced by the Universities. ScholarsArchive makes research, publications, data, and journals available to a global research audience. Students should follow detailed instructions provided by the Honors Program office, including [Thesis Formatting Guidelines](#) and [Scholars Archive](#) instructions.
- Print Editions: Students may choose to print and bind hard copies of their thesis through BYU Print & Mail services *at their own expense*. The Honors Program no longer requires printed copies nor subsidizes the cost.

Thesis Funding

Research

Students may request **up to \$1200 in research funds** from the Honors Program to support thesis research. Students should work closely with their thesis committee chair to develop a

budget. Funding requests must be included in the thesis prospectus, serve a bona fide research purpose, include an itemization of expenses, and be pre-approved. **Funds will NOT be approved retroactively.** Eligible expenses may include materials (including lab supplies), research participant incentives, software, acquisition or access fees, required travel expenses, or equipment rental (not purchase). Wages, tuition, or compensation (other than participant incentives) are not eligible for funding. Approved funding is distributed to faculty research accounts or student financial accounts (student must be enrolled in a minimum of 2.0 credits). Students work with the Honors Program office to access funds and provide any additional documentation required (i.e., student travel authorizations, etc.). We also encourage students to seek mentored learning grants or other funding through their home departments or colleges where possible.

[Culminating Experiences](#)

Students presenting thesis research at academic conferences, or seeking off-campus publication venues, may request **up to \$1000 in additional support funds**. This requires a separate [Conference Funding Request](#) form.

[Thesis Forms](#)

Thesis Prospectus Guidelines
HONRS 499R Fall/Winter Contract
HONRS 499R Spring/Summer Contract
Defense and Sample Agenda
Thesis Poster Instructions
Thesis Formatting Guidelines
Conference Funding Request