

GUIDELINES FOR THE HONORS CONTRACT

The Honors Contract should create a partnership of mutual benefit to the student and faculty member. For the Honors student, the contract should provide a project or activity that takes one deeper into the course subject and perhaps connects student learning in different disciplines. For the faculty member, the contract should be an opportunity to try innovative or professionally interesting projects or activities that would be difficult to do for an entire class. In all cases, this contract work should replicate at least two of the possible characteristics of an Honors class:

- Utilize course materials in addition to or instead of a standard textbook. Primary sources may be part of these non-textbook course materials.
- Teach research skills, require in-depth reading, promote writing skills, and provide critical thinking opportunities.
- Utilize interdisciplinary connections or be paired with other classes.
- Explore the history or philosophy of a discipline.
- Involve student travel, public presentations, or service learning.
- Provide for close learning interaction between students and faculty.

The contract may be achieved in many ways (see #2 below) as long as the work is relevant to the subject of the course. Above all, the Honors Contract should never feel like “busy work” for either the student or the faculty member involved. **Questions regarding the nature of a specific contract are welcome and should be directed to the Honors Director.**

1. Any student enrolled in the Honors Program may negotiate a contract with a faculty member to take a non-Honors course for Honors credit. Students may count only one Honors Contract toward their total Honors credit hours, and, except for rare cases, an Honors contract cannot be used for a course that is being offered as Honors in another section. The faculty member alone shall determine whether or not he or she wishes to create a contract.
2. The Honors student’s engagement with the course material should be more rigorous than that expected of the other students in the class and should require a meaningful commitment on the part of the student. The student seeking Honors credit might, for example, undertake a more demanding research project, pursue a course assignment in greater depth or breadth, give a special presentation to the class, expand a term paper for presentation at a conference, work as a research assistant, design and implement a service learning project, create/show exceptional art work, give a performance or a concert, or some other significant work. Work done for the contract in most cases should not factor into the student’s grade for the course
3. The contract should state explicitly the work that the student will undertake to earn the Honors designation. The contract should also state specifically how the work proposed by the contract is different from that required of other students in the course. For example, a description such as “Michelle will write a research paper” will not merit approval. The description should detail the work to be done and how it differs from the general course: “For Honors credit, Michelle will write a 10-page research paper on a theory of ethics not covered in class. This writing assignment will require Michelle to use at least one primary source, and to apply in-depth research methods and critical thinking.” It is very important that the work be clarified before the submission of the contract.

4. Once the contract has been negotiated and signed by both the faculty member and the student, the student will bring the original contract for final approval to the Honors Director no later than the last day to drop a class. Should the Honors Director have any questions or reservations about the contract, he or she will first discuss these with the student and, if necessary, with the faculty member.
5. At the end of the semester, the faculty member will sign the completion portion of the contract if the student has completed the contract to the satisfaction of the faculty member. The student should then return the signed form to the Honors Director no later than seven days after the last day of class.