Honors Contracts

Description

An honors contract is an independent project that an honors student conducts in one of their courses. The contract is an agreement between the professor and the student that details how that student can get an honors experience from the chosen course. Upon completion of the contract, the course will be designated as “honors” on the student’s transcript.

Good reasons for students to perform honors contracts include the following:

- They would like to learn some of the course material more in depth
- They would like to widen their knowledge bases in an area
- They are thinking about writing an honors thesis in an area and would like to begin research
- They would like to get to know a professor in their respective disciplines better

Students are not required to take honors contracts and they do not fulfill any requirement in the Program. They are really designed to help a student to pursue learning beyond the classroom. Students should never take honors contracts for the sole reason of making the course an honors course.

Process

Because contracts generally need the entire semester to develop, students need to begin talking to their professors about a contract during the first two weeks of the course. The completed honors contract form, which all honors students have access to, should be completed by the professor and student together. It should be as detailed as possible, so that there are no misconceptions about the requirements.

We expect an honors contract to be the equivalent of 1-credit hour of work (45 hours of student work). There is no exact requirement as to what that work should be; however, it should not be “busy-work” or merely additional work. It should be an experience that creates a qualitative honors experience in the course.

Honors students defend their contract before an interdisciplinary panel of their peers. This defense is intended to norm the standards in the Program. The review is generally concerned with the following:

- Is the student clear as to why they are taking on the contract
- Is the language in the contract regarding requirements clear
- Is the workload similar to the other contracts in terms of time requirements
- Can the student articulate how this contract fits into their larger educational goals
- Is the contract appropriate for their educational level and background

Students whose proposals are rejected may re-defend in the following week and will be given clear guidelines by the committee as to how to improve the proposal.
At the completion of the contract, the student must have a contract completion form (again, the student has access to these) signed by the professor and returned to the Honors Program.

**Content Guidelines**

An *honors contract* should reflect an experience that is qualitatively different from that which non-honors students enrolled in the same course will have. The honors contract should contain an individualized set of assignments, experiences, and/or activities that provide some or all of the elements of the honors course experience to an individual student enrolled in a non-honors course. The completed contract form should identify these assignments, and state how they provide the elements of the honors course experience. It must be submitted by the date specified on the form.

Assignments for honors courses or contracts may require one or more of the following:

- Leadership in the classroom: leading study groups, leading class discussion, assisting faculty in delivery and preparation of instructional material;
- Research projects that include critical analysis, interpretation, and synthesis;
- Use of off-campus resources or consultants;
- Community-based experiences: field trips, interviews, cultural events;
- Investigation of an area of the discipline not covered in depth in the course content;
- Monitoring and analyzing current events associated with the course topic;

Some examples of assignments for honors courses or contracts include: Service learning projects with a course-related research component; original work in the form of a written thesis, public performance, musical score, dance, or other presentation; a research paper or undergraduate research project; design of a laboratory exercise, classroom activity; opportunities for publication, public presentation (to class, campus, or other audiences); experiential learning ("field") trips, including study abroad; a learning portfolio; structured debates.

**Directions for Students**

1. Contact your professor and say that you are an honors student and would like to contract their course for Honors Credit. The professor will have to decide what they want you to do to make the class an honors class.
2. Let them know that if they have any questions to contact the honors office at extension 7490 to talk to Carey Fells or the director of the program Dr. Sean Kelly.
3. Once the details are decided, you (not the professor) will go to Honors Program on ANGEL and fill out a CONTRACT with all the details needed. This will be submitted to the Honors office for approval by the Honors Director. The deadline is usually the 3rd Friday of the semester.
4. You will then be asked to defend your proposal to the contract committee. On the day of your defense you will be told if your contract needs revising or if it is approved. This is usually done on the 4th Friday of the semester.
5. After you have completed the requirements set by the instructor and the honors program director, **you** will need to fill out the COMPLETION form stating that you have fulfilled your contract with a minimum grade of an A or B.

6. Once the completion form has been signed by you and your professor, return it to the Honors Office.

7. Once the paperwork has been processed, the information will be forwarded to the registrar’s office and you will be given honors credit for the class.