Honors Contracts:  
The Definitive Guide

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August 2013
What is an honors contract?
An honors contract is an agreement between an undergraduate student and faculty instructor that allows the student to incorporate an honors project into a regular, non-honors course and to earn honors credit for completing that course. Submitting an honors contract form and form 23 with appropriate authority signatures represents a commitment by both the student and the faculty instructor.

What qualifies as an honors contract project?
Honors contracts may vary dramatically from one to another, depending on the subject matter of the course and the interests of the student and faculty member involved. In general, however, honors contracts allow the student to go beyond the material of the regular course and to produce more sophisticated work. When designing an honors contract, the student may delve more deeply into methodology, structure, theory, or application; they may perform additional research; they may develop a service project; they may present their findings to the course or publish them in some format. What matters most is that the student conducts work under the supervision of the instructor that presses a more engaged relationship to course topics from the honors experience.

How much work is involved in an honors contract?
Work load also varies depending on design, but it should remain within a reasonable minimum and maximum. One rule of thumb is the time it takes to research and write a 10-page paper (minimum) or a 20-page paper (maximum)—or the appropriate disciplinary equivalent. When combined, the workload for the regular course plus the honors contract work should equal approximately the work required for an honors-level version of the course.

What is expected from the partners in an honors contract?
Student and faculty partners are expected to develop a precise description of research, readings, and assignments, etc., required of the honors contract course and to establish specific deadlines for staged completion of the honors elements. Students are also expected to plan regular meetings with the faculty instructor throughout the semester to review and discuss the honors elements of the course.

Is honors contract work part of the course grade?
No, it is not. The student’s grade in the course should reflect all regular work in the course, excluding honors contract work. Honors credit will be awarded separately from course grade upon satisfactory completion of the honors contract.

Can an honors contract be dissolved?
Yes, up until the 9th week, using a form 23 to remove honors grade mode. The honors contract cannot be dropped after the 9th week of classes, past which a student must either complete the honors project to receive a grade in the course or file an incomplete for the entire course. There is no mechanism for separating the contract from the course after the 9th week of classes.
Honors Contracts—Rights and Responsibilities

Student’s rights and responsibilities:

1. To contact faculty instructors and communicate interest in an honors contract as early as possible in the semester.

2. To develop in consultation with the faculty instructor a precise description of research, readings, and assignments, etc., required of the honors contract.

3. To submit all signed paperwork (honors contract form and form 23) to the honors unit or representative of the college offering the course by the Friday of the 2nd week of classes.

4. To complete the assignments required of the honors contract in addition to the assignments required of the regular course as outlined in the course syllabus.

5. To meet with the faculty instructor regularly during the semester.

6. To be aware of university rules and regulations regarding schedule revisions that applies to honors contract courses and the honors grade mode. Specifically, see section F:

http://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/regulations_procedures/registration.html

Faculty instructor’s rights and responsibilities:

1. To accept or decline requests to work with honors contracts.

2. To develop in consultation with the student a precise description of research, readings, and assignments, etc., required of the honors contract.

3. To meet with the student regularly during the semester.

4. To evaluate objectively the student’s work in the course, including regular course assignments, exams detailed in course syllabus, and satisfactory completion of the honors elements.

5. To hold the student accountable to the honors contract agreement.
The Honors Contract Process—Step by Step

1. An honors-eligible student approaches a faculty instructor and asks if instructor is willing to supervise honors contract work. (The faculty member is under no obligation to agree.)
2. If the faculty instructor is willing, the student and faculty member decide upon a project and determine its specific components, along with deadlines and metrics (e.g. page length).
3. The student obtains: 1) the honors contract form from his or her honors unit office or relevant website; 2) a form 23 from the student’s advisor. The advisor must sign form 23 and write in the comment box, “H grade mode okay.”
4. Student and faculty member complete the project description on the contract form and both sign it.
5. The faculty member also signs form 23.
6. The student submits the signed honors contract form and signed form 23 to the honors unit office or honors representative of the college offering the course. These forms must be submitted by Friday of the 2nd week of the semester in which the contract is undertaken.
7. The honors representative approves or denies the contract.
8. If the contract is denied, the honors representative will notify the student and faculty supervisor.
9. If the contract is approved, the honors representative will:
   • Sign form 23 and submit it to the Registrar’s Office by Friday of the 4th week per university rules and regulations. (Please note: the Registrar’s Office will not accept form 23 directly from the student.)
   • Sign the contract, keep the original, and forward a copy to the Honors College for review.
   • Notify the student and faculty supervisor that the honors contract has been approved.
10. After receiving the form-23 paperwork, the registrar’s office will activate honors grade mode for the student. Honors will not appear in the title of the course until after the honors project is complete and the course grade submitted.
11. The student completes the honors contract work.
12. The faculty member evaluates the honors contract work, which must be completed to the standards detailed in the contract.
13. The faculty member assigns the student a grade for the course, at which point “honors” is inserted into the course title to reflect the completed honors contract.

Please note: graduate students cannot offer a contract course, and continuing lecturers may only do so only with the approval of the honors representative of the college offering the course. Lecturers must have the appropriate terminal degree within their field (e.g. Ph. D.; MFA; J. D.; etc.)
Honors Contract Procedures: For Students

An honors contract is an agreement between you and faculty instructor that allows you to incorporate an honors project into a regular, non-honors course and to earn honors credit for completing that course. Honors contract paperwork is due at the end of the 2nd week of classes.

There are two pieces of paperwork:

1. The Honors Contract Form, available from the Honors College Office or website, or the honors units of the disciplinary colleges
2. Registrar Form 23

Here is how the process works from your end:

1. You approach the professor of a course you are taking and ask if he or she is willing to undertake an honors contract with you. (Please understand that your professor is under no obligation to agree.)
2. If the professor is willing, you start discussing a project. Projects can look like many things, from traditional research papers to service learning projects. Some students do field or lab research, others compose or create. Use your imagination to develop a project that extends your learning in the course.
3. You make an appointment with your advisor to pick up a form 23, which your advisor needs to sign.
4. You take the signed Form 23 and the Honors Contract Form to your professor, who signs them both. You fill out the proposal together. A successful proposal is precise in terms of its expectations, outcomes, and deadlines.
5. You take both signed forms to the honors unit or honors representative of the college offering the course you are contracting. The deadline is the 2nd Friday of classes.
6. If your contract is approved, you will be notified by email. Once the honors grade mode has been processed in the Registrar’s Office, you will see an “H” instead of a “G” in the “honors grade mode” section of your detailed course schedule. (After the contract is fulfilled and the course completed, “honors” will appear in the title of the course and on your transcript.)
7. Work steadily on your contract assignments throughout the semester.
8. Meet regularly with your professor throughout the semester.
9. Meet all contract deadlines.
10. Please remember that you cannot drop the honors contract after the withdrawal deadline; you must instead take an incomplete in the course until the contract work is complete. (This is because honors grade mode is locked in after the deadline for last withdrawal; the H cannot be separated from the grade in the course after this point.)
Honors Contract Procedures: For Professors

An honors contract is an agreement between you and an undergraduate student that allows the student to incorporate an honors project into a regular, non-honors course and to earn honors credit for completing the course. It is an opportunity for you to mentor a student working at a sophisticated level. Honors contract paperwork is due at the end of the 2nd week of classes.

There are two pieces of paperwork:

1. The Honors Contract Form
2. Registrar Form 23

Here is how the process works from your end:

1. A student in one of your courses will ask you if you are willing to undertake an honors contract. (There is no expectation that you will agree—only hope.)
2. If you are willing, start discussing a project with the student, who will likely need guidance on this point. The best projects push strong students further into and beyond course materials through research and engagement. Projects can be quite creative and can be folded back into the regular course through student presentation. The design is up to you and the student.
3. The student will bring you a Registrar Form 23 and an Honors Contract Form; you sign them both. You fill out the proposal together. A successful proposal is precise in terms of its expectations, outcomes, and deadlines.
4. If your contract is approved, you will be notified by email.
5. Meet regularly with your student throughout the semester and make sure that he/she is making satisfactory progress towards completion of the honors contract.
6. As the withdrawal date nears, remember that a student cannot drop the honors contract after the withdrawal deadline; he or she must instead take an incomplete in the course until the contract work is complete.
7. At the end of the semester, evaluate the honors project. Please remember that this project is completely separate from the grade in the course; you should not adjust your grading scale to reflect it.
8. Grade the student’s coursework separately from the honors project. When you file a grade for the course, “Honors” will appear in the title on the student’s record.
9. If you do not receive an honors project or are not satisfied that the project fulfills the contract, you must file an incomplete for the course; the student cannot receive a course grade separate from the completion of the honors component.

PLEASE NOTE: If you intend to have multiple contracts in one course, you may save yourself time and effort by designing an honors contract template for interested students. The template would specify your expectations, assignments, and deadlines. Some faculty members include such a template in their regular syllabus.
Honors Contract Procedures: For Advisors

Honors contract paperwork is due at the end of the 2nd week of classes. In a change from previous practice, paperwork will now be processed within the college offering the course being contracted (not the Honors College or the college of the student undertaking the contract).

There are two pieces of paperwork:

10. The Honors Contract Form, available from the Honors College Office or website, the honors units of the disciplinary colleges, or from you.
11. Registrar Form 23

Here is how the process works from your end:

12. Students will begin the process in your office when they come to pick up a form 23. This is your opportunity to educate them on how to undertake a successful honors contract. They need to: be specific on the honors contract paperwork about the project they will produce (e.g. dates and lengths) and the number of times they will meet with their professor; understand that they can’t back out of the project after the add/drop date has passed; work with a faculty member (not a graduate student).

13. Verify that the student is honors eligible (3.0 G.P.A or above).
14. You sign form 23 and write in the comment box, “H grade mode okay.”
15. Take a copy of form 23; this will be your only paper record of the contract, which if it is approved will appear in the student’s detailed class schedule, in the “grade mode field.” Once the honors grade mode has been processed in the Registrar’s Office, you will see an “H” instead of a “G” in this field. (After the contract is fulfilled and the course completed, “honors” will appear in the title of the course and on the student’s transcript.)
16. Direct the student to collect the faculty signature on both pieces of paperwork and to take those two pieces to the honors unit or honors representative of the college offering the course for approval.
17. You may want to send a reminder to your students pursuing honors contracts as the withdrawal deadline approaches. The student cannot drop the honors contract after the withdrawal deadline but must take an incomplete in the course until the contract work is complete. (This is because honors grade mode is locked in after the deadline for last withdrawal; the H cannot be separated from the grade in the course after this point.)
Honors Contract Procedures: For Administrators

Honors contract paperwork—consisting of the Honors Contract Form and Registrar Form 23—is due in your office at the end of the 2nd week of classes. You will have 2 weeks to sign Form 23 and submit it to the Registrar’s Office. Students will not be registered for honors grade mode until Form 23 is approved by you and by the Registrar.

Here is how the process works from your end:

1. Consider sending a message to your faculty that outlines honors contract procedures. Don’t assume that they know anything at all about them.
2. If students pick up contract paperwork in your office, you have an opportunity to educate them on how to complete it properly. They need to: be specific about the project they will turn out (e.g. dates and lengths); specify the # of times they will meet with their professor; understand that they can’t back out of the project after the add/drop date has passed.
3. Students bring completed contracts and Form 23s (signed by both the student’s professor and advisor) to your office.
4. Verify that the student is honors eligible (3.0 G.P.A or above). Verify that the instructor is a faculty member. Graduate students cannot offer contracts and continuing lecturers can do so only with your approval.
5. Evaluate the proposal. If the proposal has merit and is both precise and reasonably sized, sign it. If the project is vague, too small, or too large, ask for more information or a revision from both the student and professor. This protects them both from trouble at the end of the semester. Ask yourself: what could go wrong with this agreement? Are all the important details (deadlines, lengths, etc.) explained? Is it clear where the course ends and the honors contract begins? Is the workload reasonable?
6. If you require more or different information, email both parties involved in the contract, since they need to agree on all revisions. (Both email addresses will be on the contract form.) Your goal is to produce an approvable contract.
7. If you get more information, print it out and attach to the contract.
8. Sign both the contract and form 23. Send your batch of form 23s to the Registrar’s Office by the 4th Friday of the semester. Send a copy of your contract forms to the Honors College.
9. Notify the student that the contract has been approved and send a thank you email to professors. Make sure you remind professors that the honors contract work is not part of the grade for the course. Faculty should not revise their grading scale to include this contract work.
10. Send a reminder to both students and faculty as the withdrawal deadline approaches. If the project sours after this date, the student cannot drop the honors contract but must take an incomplete in the course until the contract work is complete. (This is because honors grade mode is locked in after the deadline for last withdrawal; the H cannot be separated from the grade in the course after this point.)
Honors Contract Message to Faculty—1st Week of Classes (sample)

Dear Colleagues,

Honors Contracts for SEMESTER are due in my office on DATE, the 2nd Friday of the semester. You may already have been approached by an honors student hoping to pursue an honors contract with you.

I write to clarify a couple of important aspects of the contract:

1. An honors contract is SEPARATE from the course grade; it should NOT figure into the final grade calculation. The student's final grade should reflect only the standard work for the course.

2. Successful completion of an honors contract nets a student an "H" for the course. This "H" will be applied automatically when you file a final grade at the end of the semester.

3. A student cannot cancel an honors contract after the last add/drop deadline. If he or she fails to complete the work of the contract, the faculty supervisor files paperwork for an "incomplete" grade in the course. The student only receives a grade for the course upon completion of the contracted honors work. (While the grade and the "H" are separate, in other words, they are welded together by the contract.)

My top 2 tips for filling out the contract paperwork:

1. Nail down the specifics of the project quite clearly: exactly what shape will the finished project take? How long will the finished project be? Clear expectations at this stage protect you from heartache at the end of the semester.

2. Clarify how often you will meet with the honors student during the semester (e.g. every 2 weeks). The goal of the contract is to produce not only a project but also a mentor relationship.

Thanks in advance for considering supervising an honors contract. Our students love the experience of working closely with a faculty member—and they get a lot out of it.

SIGNATURE
Honors Contract Notification to Students (sample):

Dear Student,

I’m pleased to inform you that your honors contract for COURSE # with Professor X has been approved.

In the next few weeks, please check your detailed class schedule, where the honors grade mode notation should appear. Look at the “grade mode field”. Once the honors grade mode has been processed in the Registrar’s Office, you will see an “H” instead of a “G” in this field.

You should continue to work on your honors assignments and submit them to your faculty instructor as outlined in your honors contract proposal. You and the faculty instructor have made a binding commitment and are expected to fulfill the terms of the honors contract.

You may be released from an honors contract only with permission from both the faculty instructor and the honors representative of the college offering the course and only before DATE. After DATE you may not withdraw from the contract. To receive a grade in the contracted course, you must complete the honors contract work.

Please note that honors contracts are subject to the university rules and regulations regarding schedule revisions.

SIGNATURE

Honors Contract Notification to Faculty Instructors (sample):

Dear Professor:

I write to thank you for undertaking an honors contract with STUDENT in your COURSE #. I have very happily approved the contract, which will certainly be an enriching experience for your student.

Please remember that work undertaken for the honors contract is separate from the regular work in your course and should not be figured into the course grade.

SIGNATURE
Follow-up Message to Faculty (Week 7 or 8)—sample

Dear Professor,

I write to thank you for working with a student in an honors contract this semester. You are giving a student an experience that will enhance his or her experience of your course and this place.

Hopefully, everything is steaming along with the contract work. Your student should be meeting with you regularly and working towards the assignments outlined in the honors contract proposal.

Occasionally, however, a student does not fulfill the expectations of the contract, and in such a case may need to cancel it. A student may be released from an honors contract only with permission from the faculty instructor and the college’s honors representative, and only on or before DATE. After that date, a student may not withdraw from the contract.

I remind you that while the contract work is distinct from the regular graded work in the course, the student must complete the honors contract work to receive a grade in the course. After DATE, a student who does not complete the contract work will need to file for an incomplete for the course.

I very much hope that all is on track, and I thank you again for undertaking an honors contract. If you have any questions or concerns about contract procedures, please email or call me.

SIGNATURE
SAMPLE HONORS CONTRACTS

COURSE: ME 270 (BASIC MECHANICS 1)

Contract Objectives: To examine the mechanics of nanoscale and microscale structures. Specifically, the student will study:

1. The mechanisms by which geckos cling to smooth surfaces
2. The design of a transducer that measures the forces generated by cardiac myocytes
3. The mechanics of an AFM tip

Each of these three “modules” will last 3-4 weeks.

Satisfactory completion of honors elements includes these deliverables:

1. Attend weekly meetings with the professor
2. Develop Powerpoint presentations suitable for an ME 270 class that explain the relevant processes or mechanisms for modules 1 and 2 above
3. Develop an in-class demonstration of the AFM (module 3)

COURSE: CE 203 (PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF GEOMATICS)

Contract Objectives: To develop a better understanding of laser-scan modeling. Students will assemble a full 3-D model of the amphitheater at Slayter Hill, which will further develop skills learned in CE 230, Principles and Practices of Geomatics.

Satisfactory completion of honors elements includes these deliverables:

Our honors team will work to build the 3-D model through the following means

1. Learn how to set up and use tripod-mounted laser scanner, a device which is capable of using lasers to scan 360° to create a digital representation of the scanned environment.
2. Take scans from alternative angles to produce separate models which will be merged into a single 3-D model, ensuring that there are minimal blind spots that the scanner could not detect.
3. Learn how to use current software to manipulate scan data and assemble a 3-D model of the amphitheater.
4. Compare survey measurement from CE 230 lab sessions to corresponding measurements extracted from the 3-D scan model.
5. Prepare a report documenting procedures, archiving the data, analyzing the comparison of survey field measurements and scan data, and making recommendations for new CE 203 lab sessions using scanning technology.
COURSE: SOC 367 (RELIGION IN AMERICA)

OBJECTIVES: The objective is to analyze the role of religion in the upcoming presidential election. The focus of the research will be on Catholicism versus Mormonism, and how these religious affiliations affect the political stances and public support of the individual candidates, including Vice Presidential candidates. This project will allow me to apply the concepts I learn in class to real-life examples. I will analyze my findings in terms of Civil Religion in the modern-day political structure, and analyze how past presidents have shaped the contemporary view of Civil Religion in America.

From this project, I will gain a better insight into American politics. It will allow me to gain a better understanding of the two candidates running for President, and it will allow me to provide a critical analysis of my findings.

DELIVERABLES:

1. Archive news articles over the months leading up to the election
2. Research the role of religion in past presidential elections
3. Analyze the results of the election in terms of religion
4. Present my research to the class before and after November 6
5. Analyze all of my findings, and present in a final paper format (10 pp.)

TIMELINE

- Meet during office hours to keep up to date with research findings and project deliverables
- Remain in contact through email and meeting during office hours
- Present research to the class: November 1 and November 15
- Final project due December 6

GRADING SCALE

All grades as described on the syllabus will be factored into the final grade. The honors project will not factor into the predetermined grading scale. The honors designation will be added upon completion of contract requirements.
COURSE POL 360 (WOMEN AND THE LAW)

SAMPLE TEMPLATE FOR A COURSE WITH MULTIPLE HONORS CONTRACTS

Welcome to the Fall 2012 honors section for POL 360! We’ll meet 5 or 6 times for 50-minute meetings outside of the big class to talk about the material we’re learning in class, and to talk about the debates that you’ll be doing.

Members of the honors section will debate a number of cases in pairs in front of the large class on the day that we are scheduled to talk about each case (see syllabus). I have in mind a rather formal, structured debate, where one person argues pro, the other con; you will need to do the entire debate (both sides, all arguments clearly presented in 15 minutes. (This will take some practice.)

You’ll work in pairs, with each student doing 2 debates, working with a different partner each time. On one case you’ll argue a majority opinion, on the other the dissenting side(s). You will need to read the cases (and surrounding material) carefully, and if appropriate look up the full decisions and read them, too. You’ll write a short (2-3 pp.) paper on the issue presented by the case, in which you’ll carefully consider the arguments on each side of the decision, and then set out the strongest arguments and best rebuttals for the side that you’re going to argue in class. (You and your partner should agree between you ahead of time who argues for the plaintiff, who for the defendant.) One student will argue for each side, so your two papers will identify the same (or similar) key issues, but will take opposite points of view on them.

I advise you to speak with me about the case you’re going to debate ahead of time—while you’re reading, thinking, and writing your papers, and planning your oral presentation for the debate. This could be done at my office hours or by appointment, singly or as a pair. You might want to practice the actual debate ahead of time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael M. v. Sonoma Co</td>
<td>11 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAW v. Johnson Controls</td>
<td>27 September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geduldig v. Aiello</td>
<td>2 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill v. Colorado</td>
<td>6 November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U. S. v. Virginia</td>
<td>15 November</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From regular observation of children’s composing, teachers can document not only children’s growing sense of the variety of genres of literature, but also growth of written language, the mixture of talk, drawing and writing that children use for vocabulary, fluency, and complexity in their L2 use.

Procedure: Write a paper based on two literacy activities involving a single child in your TIP classroom: one in February (when we have our first whole-class TIP visit), and one in March. Each time, provide the same set of materials (e.g. blank paper, lined paper, large paper, markers, pencils, crayons). Ask the child to make whatever kind of text he or she wishes to make (e.g. a story, a list, a poem, a letter). Elicit texts in both L1 and L2. These can and should be different texts—not simply translations of each other. The text can include drawings or other art materials. The text can be either imaginative or factual. Record the child’s actions and talk while composing the text and (optionally) audiotape the event. Photocopy any graphic products you obtain.

In your paper, discuss what the child understands about literacy and can do, based on your two observations. What are the functions (e.g. Halliday; Britsch, 2002) and forms (e.g. Clay, 1975) this child uses in his or her L1 writing as compared to L2 writing? What changes do you see over time in the child’s L1 and L2 writing? Are there genres that typify the child’s L1 and/or L2 writing? Draw some conclusions about what you learned about this child’s literacy development in L1 as compared to L2.

In your discussion, please find and use 2 research articles that will help you to talk about your findings.

Form: Your paper must include the following sections:

a) Description gender and age of the child  
b) Description of your materials and your way of talking/working with child  
c) Summary of your results (simply what happened—just the facts)  
d) Your interpretation of the child’s actions, what you learned about this child’s literacy development in L1 as compared to L2.  
e) Reference to the research articles from which you draw (APA style)  
f) Appendices (Xeroxes of graphic products, transcripts, etc.—not audiotapes)

Your paper will be evaluated on the basis of:

a) Adherence to the assignment guidelines  
b) Careful comparison and in-depth discussion of what you observed  
c) Thorough understanding of the material  
d) Clear and thorough presentation of your results focusing on form and function

Due date: April 25
Revision of Honors Contract Procedures—Approved April 15, 2013
Honors College Governance Committee

1. The review process will be centralized at the college level to increase the clarity, efficiency, and quality control of the process.

2. The Dean of each academic college will designate those within the college who have the authority to approve honors contracts. These signers must be faculty members.

3. Students will submit honors contract proposals and Form 23 with necessary signatures to the designee of the Dean of the academic college offering the course being contracted by the Friday of 2nd week of the semester.

4. Each college will be responsible for reviewing and signing contract proposals and reviewing, signing, and submitting Form 23 to the Registrar’s Office before the semester deadline of the Friday of the 4th week of the semester.

5. After approval, the academic college should forward a copy of signed contracts to the Honors College for review. This review will take place retrospectively to assure norming across colleges. A representative of the HC will follow up with the academic colleges.