

Missouri University of Science & Technology (effective Fall 2012)

Honors Academy Senior Thesis Project Guidelines

A Senior Thesis Project, in the form of research or creative work, is required for graduation as an “Honors Academy Fellow” distinction at Missouri University of Science & Technology. The completed form must be approved by the faculty member supervising the work, the Honors Academy director and be received by the Office of Academic Support by the last day to add courses posted on the Academic Dates and Deadlines Calendar to be considered for approval.

General Information:

The idea of doing an “honors senior thesis project” sounds formidable but, hopefully, exciting as well. While an honors project does require greater depth and breadth than a typical course related research project, these characteristics are the natural outcomes of much that you have already done. Your honors academy seminars and courses have prepared you to think broadly and to look at issues in different disciplinary contexts. You have also reached a point in your academic career at which you are adequately immersed in your studies to recognize particular issues and problems that are intellectually interesting to you. Choosing a topic in which you already have a good deal of background and experiences will be of great assistance. The work on the project will also be made more pleasant by planning ahead thus allowing more time for background reading, research, and writing. That is why you are encouraged to start thinking about a project topic once you have sufficient exposure to a discipline you enjoy. You should also develop a working relationship with a faculty member(s) in your field of interest.

The Honors project is not meant to be the test of your long-term intellectual brilliance and maturity. Rather, the greater depth and breadth required by the project and the association with faculty/researchers in your field will contribute to that intellectual growth and maturity.

As a participant in the Honors Academy, you are required to complete a Senior Thesis project during the senior year. The senior project is the capstone experience of the Honors Academy, and, as such, incorporates and expresses the Academy’s commitment to individualized and enriched instruction, independent study, close faculty-student relationships, and the rigorous development of intellectual skills, including the ability to

think critically and to communicate with clarity and style. The project brings together your honors preparation and your education in a particular discipline or combination of disciplines.

However, some students may wish to develop interdisciplinary projects or a project that utilizes their co-op experience. Projects are usually in the student's major field of study, but are not limited to the major. Discussions with your academic advisor and project mentor will help to focus the project and gain required approvals.

Project Content:

Since the Honors Academy is university wide, there will be considerable variation in project content and format. Nevertheless, all projects will emphasize analytical thought and be characterized by greater depth and breadth than is commonly found in undergraduate research reports and other writings. This will require a more thorough understanding and familiarity of the literature relevant to the topic. Additionally, some preliminary research, experimental and/or library, on the topic will also be required before the project is commenced. This is why you are encouraged to start thinking about your project early on.

All projects culminate in a scholarly, typed, double-spaced, bound thesis. Again because of the diverse disciplinary scope of the Honors Academy, much variation will exist on how the thesis is presented. Generally the rule-of-thumb for the written portion of the thesis is to follow the normal format used by the discipline in which you are doing the project. As an example, a scientific publication varies considerably from that of literature and music. Likewise, an article in biology differs from one in physics, as a short story varies from an essay. The final written presentation of your work will come from discussions with your project mentor. I encourage you to consult a writing guide or style manual to observe the style of writing that is appropriate for the different disciplines.

These guides are available at the bookstore or the library.

Generally the content of the thesis is organized as follows and should contain a semblance of the following components:

1. **Abstract must precede all information.** This can be what you originally wrote or a modification thereof.
2. **Introduction or prologue** describes the project and contains the objectives and/or statement of the problem.

3. **Literature review** may follow in some cases, depending on the discipline.
4. **Methods used to perform the project.** Structure of this component will vary depending on the discipline.
5. **Results or findings.**
6. **Discussion.** Do the results answer the questions you originally posed, and how do they compare with the information and knowledge found by other investigators?
Textual material, illustrations, and tables may comprise some or all of the results of some of the theses. Arguments are presented and substantiated. In some disciplines the results, findings, and discussion can be integrated.
7. **Conclusions.**
8. **Acknowledgement.** The opportunity to thank all that assisted in your project.
9. **Literature cited, references, or bibliography.**
10. **Placement of graphics.** Illustrations and tables can be interspersed within the thesis or arranged immediately following the bibliography, literature cited, or references.

Credit for your Thesis.

The thesis project may be given course credit in those disciplines that have a course to cover independent study at the undergraduate level, e.g., courses designated as Research, Special Topics, Technical Design, Experimental Design, etc. These courses become part of the students major or minor and the Project Mentors assign the grades. An A - F letter grade can be issued for these independent study courses.

Completed Projects.

The original and one copy of the final written draft of the project are to be delivered to the Honors Program Office before final examination week of the fall or spring semesters. The student encumbers the costs. Honors students completing their projects will have an opportunity to present their research to the Honors Committee. In addition, students are encouraged to present in a public exhibition or forum and to submit their findings to the National Collegiate Honors Council Conference, a meeting that brings together scholars from honors programs throughout the United States.