Framingham State University
Honors Program

Honors Project Guidelines
Introduction

To complete the Framingham State University Honors Program, every student must complete a one semester honors thesis grounded in research or a creative project. This project allows you to pursue a focused topic that especially interests you.

Your honors project has the potential to be the most exciting and rewarding academic activity you undertake as a college student. In the process of planning and carrying out this project, you will acquire valuable skills. A good honors project can also be a stepping stone to the next stage of your career when reviewed by a potential employer or a graduate school admissions officer.

Most Frequently Asked Questions

What do I write about?
The Honors Thesis may be on a subject within your major or interdisciplinary. You will live with this topic for an entire semester, so be sure to choose something you really care about. Take some time to find it. You will be well served to think about a thesis topic early in your junior year. As you take advanced course work, pay attention to which issues catch your interest. What do you want to learn more about? Keep a journal or make a list of ideas and then brainstorm ideas with no idea too vague, ambitious, or “dumb.” As you review these notes you will probably find that they fall into two or three main categories. Start to focus on these areas. A good foundation to your thesis is research papers for courses in your major.

Who will be my advisor?
By late in your junior year you should start thinking about your advisors. You will select an advisor and a second reader from your major department. (If your thesis is interdisciplinary, then in lieu of an advisor and a second reader you should select two advisors: one from each department.) The thesis advisor should be someone you feel comfortable partnering with for the length of this project. He/she will essentially oversee your independent study.

What is the role of the thesis advisor?
You are responsible to organize your research and writing. The advisor oversees the research and writing process. You and your advisor develop a schedule of deadlines along with a schedule of regular meetings—ideally once a week. You are responsible for the research but the advisor should offer guidance toward useful resources and questions/themes. The advisor will help with issues of clarity, documentation, organization, and style. The advisor is the primary grader.

What is the role of the second reader?
The second reader meets with you and the primary advisor to help develop the topic. You should meet with the second reader periodically during the semester, and provide him/her with all drafts. He or she will contribute to the final grade.
**How do I register for the thesis?**
You will fill out the registration form either before or during the add/drop period at the beginning of the semester in which you plan to do the thesis. This form requires a brief description of your project and signatures of your two advisors, the Director of the Honors Program, and the Chair of your major department. This form must be submitted to the Registrar’s Office during the add/drop period. The course number for the honors thesis is HNPT 480 01X.

**What is the recommended length of the thesis?**
The thesis should be roughly the same length as a major scholarly article in your field. Most honors theses are at least 50 pages in length. The thesis should be written in the format required by your major department. Make sure you know the appropriate method required for citations as you start assembling your reading list.

**How is the thesis evaluated?**
In consultation with your thesis committee, your primary thesis advisor assigns a grade. Your thesis committee includes your advisor, your second reader, and the Director of the Honors Program (ex officio); the Director may also consult the Chair of your major department with field-specific questions. After your thesis has been accepted by your advisor, two clean copies must be submitted to the Director of the Honors Program – one for the honors files and one for the library archives room. Once the advisor has ensured that all appropriate copies of your work have been submitted, the advisor will submit the grade to the Registrar.

**What are important steps to consider in completing the actual thesis project?**
The thesis project is a scholarly effort and should reflect a high degree of sophistication. The thesis should be well-written in terms of development, style, grammar, and mechanics. Students should follow their academic department’s recommendations in producing such a work, but typically speaking, a thesis involves:

1. Conducting a review of the literature.
2. Determining an area of inquiry that would extend knowledge of the topic (as determined by the literature review).
3. Conducting original research or analysis following an outline or other plan for approaching the topic.
4. Drawing conclusions that relate one’s original work to existing literature and recommending areas for future study.

A quality thesis project will be developed using a “writing as process” approach:

1. Brainstorm
2. Draft
3. Review (peer or faculty)
4. Revise (based on faculty feedback)
5. Revise based on any insights gained from making a presentation
6. Edit for clarity, style, and grace (consult style manual of academic discipline, dictionaries, handbooks for writers, etc.)
7. Publish (submit to thesis advisor, second reader, and Director of the Honors Program)
Honors Thesis Checklist

_____ Choose a thesis topic the semester before beginning the thesis.

_____ Select a thesis advisor and a second reader from your major (or a second advisor from the appropriate department if your project is interdisciplinary). This should also be done the semester before beginning the thesis.

_____ Meet with both advisors to discuss their role in your project and obtain their agreement to work with you.

_____ Fill out the registration form available from the Director’s Office or online with signatures of student, thesis advisor, second reader, and the Chair. Then submit to the Director. Once the application has been approved, the Director will submit it to the Registrar’s Office. (This must be done before the end of the add/drop period of the semester in which the honors thesis will be completed.)

_____ Meet with your advisor on a regular basis. Set up a schedule of how many hours per week you will work on the project.

_____ Students must present at the Massachusetts Undergraduate Research Conference in the spring or at an alternate event approved by the Director.

_____ Students must hand in the penultimate copy of the thesis to the advisor, second reader, and Director by the last scheduled day of classes.

_____ Once the thesis has been approved, the student must submit two clean copies along with the Honors Project Completion Form to the Director of the Honors Program: one for the Honors Center and one for the archives room of the Whittemore Library.