Framingham State University
Commonwealth Honors Program

Honors Project Guidelines
Updated Spring 2020
Introduction

To fulfill the requirements for the Framingham State University Commonwealth Honors Program students must complete a one-semester honors thesis. This project is discipline-specific and allows students to pursue a focused topic of special interest to them grounded in research, scholarship, and/or the creative arts.

The honors project has the potential to be an exciting and rewarding academic activity for upper-level students. In the process of planning and carrying out this project, the goal is for students to hone valuable skills in their discipline and also to provide a foundation for their next career step, be it employment or graduate school. But most of all, the goal is for students to enjoy the process of inquiry, learning, discovery, and creativity.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What do I write about?
The Honors Thesis may be on any subject of interest to you. It can be in your major, interdisciplinary, or even outside of your major. Your intellectual interests should guide your choice of topic. Often times students discover their topic in upper-level classes in their major. Others will pursue a topic that has been a life-long interest. Still others will develop a topic out of conversations with professors. As you take advanced course work, pay attention to which issues catch your interest. Ask yourself about which courses, professors, or topics were captivating to you during your college years. You might even consider keeping a journal or brainstorming a list of ideas. As you review these notes you will probably find that they fall into two or three main categories. Start to focus on these areas.

Who will be my thesis supervisor?
Any tenure-line professor at FSU can serve as your thesis supervisor. Often times, this means a professor in your major, but it can also be a professor outside of your major with whom you have developed a relationship during your time at FSU. If your thesis is interdisciplinary, then in lieu of one thesis supervisor, you may consider two supervisors: one from each area of expertise. The thesis supervisor should be someone you feel comfortable partnering with for the length of this project. The professor will essentially oversee your independent study.

What is the role of the thesis supervisor?
The tenure-line faculty member who supervises an honors thesis assists the student in making a semester-long schedule for the project at the beginning of the semester. Ideally, this process will involve regularly scheduled meetings. The professor then oversees the research and writing process. The student is responsible for the research, but the supervisor should offer guidance toward useful resources and questions/themes. The supervisor will help with issues of clarity, documentation, organization, and style, and is the sole grader of the project. The supervisor will establish deadlines. Final grades are traditionally due seventy-two hours after the last final exam day of the semester. A deadline should be established so that the project can be graded with this deadline in mind.
**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 the signatures of your thesis supervisor, the Chair of your major department, and lastly, the Director of the Honors Program. (The director’s signature should be the last signature you obtain because a copy of the form must be filed at the Honors House). This form must be submitted to the Registrar’s Office before or during the add/drop period. The course number for the honors thesis is HNRS 480.

The thesis registration form can be found here: https://www.framingham.edu/academics/honors-program/honors-program-forms/index

**What is the recommended length of the thesis?**
The length of the thesis is discipline specific and should represent a full semester’s worth of work in the discipline in which it is completed. The thesis should be roughly the same length as a major scholarly article in your field. In traditional humanities fields, for example, honors theses are likely to be at least 50 pages in length. In laboratory sciences, where lab work is integrated into the research, in social sciences where field work and data collection are integrated into the research, and in the artistic pursuits where the production of art work is the goal, the written and productive results of this kind of work will likely be less than the traditional humanities thesis. The thesis should be written in the format required by the department/discipline in which it is undertaken. Make sure you know the appropriate method required for citations as you start assembling your reading list.

**How is the thesis evaluated?**
The thesis supervisor is the sole person responsible for grading the work. The supervisor will submit the grade to the Registrar as a professor would for any other class.

**Must I publically present the results of my thesis?**
Yes, honors students must present their work publically. Many students present at the Massachusetts Undergraduate Research Conference at UMass Amherst which is run each April. However, there are also many opportunities at FSU to present your research in departments for example, and these public presentations are perfectly acceptable.

**What do I do upon completion of the thesis?**
After your thesis has been accepted by your supervisor and after you have made all final edits, you should arrange for two bound copies of your thesis in pdf format to be printed at the Copy Center located in Whittemore Library—one will be for the Honors House and the other for the library archives room. The Honors Program administrative assistant will pick up the copies at the Copy Center. All you need to do is arrange to have it printed.

You must also complete, with appropriate signatures, the Honors Project Completion Form, which can be found here: https://www.framingham.edu/academics/honors-program/honors-program-forms/index. The form is for Honors Program records, so it only needs to be dropped off at the Honors House.
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. Reviewing the pertinent 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 - Arrange to have two bound copies made at the Copy Center (the Honors Program administrative assistant will pick up the copies and distribute to library archives and Honors House)
Honors Thesis Checklist

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

_____ Select a thesis supervisor 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 your thesis supervisor to discuss the project and obtain the professor’s agreement to work with you.

_____ Fill out the registration form available from the Honors Director’s Office or online (https://www.framingham.edu/academics/honors-program/honors-program-forms/index) with signatures of student, thesis advisor, and the Chair. Then obtain the Director’s signature. (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 thesis supervisor on a regular basis. It is recommended that you set up a schedule of how many hours per week you will work on the project.

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

_____ Students must email the penultimate copy of the thesis to the Faculty Director of the Honors Program, by the last scheduled day of classes.

_____ Once the thesis has been approved and all final edits are made, the student must arrange to have two bound copies made at the Copy Center. The Honors Program administrative assistant will pick up the printed copies and distribute them to the library archive and to the Honors House.

_____ Student must complete Honors Project Completion Form (https://www.framingham.edu/academics/honors-program/honors-program-forms/index) and drop off the completed form at the Honors House. This is for Honors Program records.