

Chairing a Senior Honors Thesis

During an Honors student's junior year, he or she is required to submit a thesis proposal, which involves the following:

1. selecting a committee of 3 faculty members, 2 of whom must have a doctorate or terminal degree, including the thesis chair; two committee members need to teach in the student's major; one must be outside the department or school.
2. writing a 4-5 page thesis proposal
3. writing a one paragraph abstract
4. assembling a 20-source bibliography

Next, the student begins the preliminary research and writing of the thesis over the next year. Lastly, the student takes HONR 495-Senior Honors Thesis the last semester, but that course is designed primarily for revision and editing of the thesis, since the first draft is due about 3 weeks after the first day of class.

The chair's responsibility is:

1. Assist in developing a sound thesis proposal. Thesis advisors will know better than an honors director whether a given topic is substantial enough for an advanced undergraduate to explore, manageable, yet narrow enough to be completed by the student's anticipated graduation date. The development of the proposal is the student's responsibility, but the thesis chair will always need to provide input and direction to assist in the process.
2. Establish some sort of timeline to keep your student on track and progressing in their work. The thesis student should not need constant handholding but he or she should be meeting with the thesis advisor on a regular basis and completing something for each deadline. A thesis cannot be completed in a frenzy of activity at the end of a semester, nor will students benefit from a relationship with the thesis advisor without regular interactions.
3. Read at least 2 separate drafts of a student's thesis, and require him or her to revise and edit it until the chair is willing to give it a grade. With all that said, there is literally only about one month out of the semester when a chair is actively engaged in helping a student with his or her thesis--from about mid-February through mid-March. After that, the HONR 405 professor takes over and helps the student with minor issues like formatting and style.

Fall Junior Year

- Begin selection of thesis chair by informal discussion of topics with professors and department chair

Spring Junior Year

- February: select chair, topic and establish timeline
- April: select committee; discuss thesis proposal & their participation
- Submit thesis proposal by March 1

Summer

- Data collection and/or literature search
- Begin writing rough draft. Outline due to chair by September

Fall Senior Year

- September: discuss data/progress with thesis chair, set up monthly meetings
- November: Final meeting with chair prior to the end of semester. Meet with committee members to update them on your progress and ask for feedback.

Spring Senior Year

- February (1st week): **First Draft** to thesis chair
- March (1st week): **Second Draft** to committee & thesis chair
- April (1st week): **Third Draft** due to HONR 495 professor with signatures
- April (4th week): **Final Draft** due to Honors office