Honors 499: The Honors Thesis

Part 2: How to carry out your thesis project once it is approved

Given the wide range of topics and approaches possible, it’s less possible to offer one-size-fits-all advice. Still, there are some strategies applicable to many if not all thesis projects.

- While HONR 499 earns three credit hours like regular classes, it is unlike a regular class in that you don’t have the built-in schedule of meeting that class and your professor 2-3 times per week. The more you treat it like a regular class, the better off you’ll likely be. Otherwise it can be easy to forget about your thesis project at times.
- First, draw up a timeline of due dates and discuss them with your advisor. What are the major parts of your project and when will you have them completed? Set up a series of mini-deadlines stating when parts of your thesis will be turned in for review by your advisor and when you will have a rough draft ready. Be sure your rough draft is ready for your advisor’s review a good 6 weeks before the Honors College deadline so that you can expect to receive that draft back with corrections in time to make the final copy ready for review and correction. These mini-deadlines help both of you stay on track. Staying on track makes it more likely you’ll be able to compete for the Trimmer Prize as well.
- Set your final draft due date well in advance of the end of the semester so your advisor has time to review it and recommend suggestions for improvement, giving you time to make those changes.
- Set aside an amount of time per week sufficient enough to move your project along and meet your scheduled due dates. Stick to it as if you were attending a class. It’s very easy to blow that time off in favor of more momentarily demanding tasks. Schedule the same time of day each week, at a time when you aren’t regularly interrupted by others or other tasks. That’s a proven writing success strategy.
- Set up a regular schedule of meetings with your advisor to review your progress. This helps both of you stay on track. It can be easy for professors to forget to check on thesis students because professors are also focused on their classes that have regular meetings. This is also true if you are collaborating with another student.
- Consider any special needs, tools, resources, etc., that you will need. Arrange for them early on.
- Consider visiting the new Research Design Studio on the 2nd floor of Teacher’s College. They can help you formulate your research questions, identify resources, and give you critical feedback on your research plan. For more information, visit their webpage at: http://espace.bsu.edu/rds/
- Think well ahead if you need to schedule collaborators (dancers for your choreography, actors for your one-act play, etc.)
- If you are planning a public performance of your thesis, think about scheduling a venue and related resources early on in your process.
- BACK UP YOUR DATA AND TEXTS! FREQUENTLY! IN MULTIPLE PLACES!
- When you get to the writing stage of your thesis, having a daily or weekly minimum of written words to meet can be helpful.
- At the writing stage, a writing handbook is your friend. Call on that friend.
• Avail yourself of campus resources such as The Writing Center, the research librarians at Bracken Library, and others.
• Remember that even though you have a formal advisor, that shouldn’t stop you from seeking out other professors or individuals who can help you with some aspect of your work.
• If you are working with a topic that requires IRB approval (see above), make sure you have this approval documented. You will need to include the IRB form in your thesis binder.
• Keep a journal of your progress, noting any roadblocks, sudden epiphanies, thoughts on how it’s going, etc. This will prove extremely valuable when you write your process statement.
• Thesis work, like much of academic life, can be stressful. Get plenty of sleep, eat well, and exercise regularly. Get a parent to call and pester you about this if these are problem areas for you if that would help you.

A note about academic honesty and plagiarism:

Be sure you are adhering to university policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated, and any violations of this policy may result in withholding of the Honors diploma, delay of graduation, academic sanctions, or other consequences. Remember that deficiencies of preparation are easily corrected. Deficiencies of character are much harder to correct.

Some common issues at this stage:

• What if I don’t finish in time and I have more semesters before I graduate?

You can ask your major professor for an Incomplete grade. That buys you more time to finish your project. Rules regarding Incomplete grades have recently changed, so read this carefully if this situation applies to you. An "I" grade awarded for an undergraduate course will expire as follows: if you were enrolled in HONR 499 during Fall semester, you have until May 1 of the following year to complete your thesis and remove the incomplete; for Spring and/or Summer enrollment you have until December 1 of the same year. Remember that’s the last date your grade can be changed, so the final copy must be approved by your advisor before that date. An exception is made when an extension on the timeline has been recommended by a department chairperson and approved by the appropriate dean. Should an instructor wish to extend the time frame, they may do so by submitting a request to the records area on departmental letterhead. The Registrar's Office will send an email reminder to the student and to the instructor of an "I" grade on the student record on or about the 15th of every month.

• What if I don’t finish and I’m about to graduate?

It depends on how far behind you are. You can graduate without finishing your thesis, as long as your advisor has given you a letter grade, but you won’t get the Honors Diploma. You can remedy that by submitting the thesis after you graduate. Consult with the Honors College Dean or Associate Dean in this situation.

Is everything finished and ready to be turned in? Great. Take a minute to bask in your accomplishment. Now you’re ready to prepare the thesis for submission.