

# A Guide to Writing Honors Proposals, Theses, and Defenses

Although a thesis is a large process that requires attention to detail, many of the most important points can be boiled down to a few key ideas.

## Thesis Proposals

- Every thesis student must complete HNRS 3500, resulting in a thesis proposal of 10 pages (sans references, appendices, etc.). You are providing a “roadmap” to your project – not writing a term paper.
- Each proposal should include a general introduction, a brief review of the relevant literature that clearly lead the reader to the proposed project, and a detailed methodology of what you will do and how. The proposal should have no opinions or findings following the methodology section.
- Proposals will be defended in front of a committee that includes two people from the students’ field of study and an outside member who is unlikely to be an “expert” in the proposed field (could be the Associate Dean of Honors). Thus, proposals should be written so that “non-experts” can understand them.
- Grammar and syntax matter. The expectation exists that Honors graduates should demonstrate above average writing ability.

## Theses

- Grammar and syntax matter (see above 😊)
- Following the successful defense of the thesis proposal, students will enroll in the 4951 class in their discipline.
- While there is no single correct format for a thesis, the dictates of your field should guide the writing/presentation. Regardless, each student will submit a fairly lengthy written document—a process journal for those doing creative thesis projects—to satisfy the Honors thesis requirement.
- Choose the style manual most relevant to your field of study and then use it assiduously.
- Assume that you will make changes before the thesis is completed and submitted to the Honors College.

## Proposal and Thesis Defenses

- Oral defenses are an opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to talk intelligently in an academic setting.
- Thesis proposals = Students should provide a brief (10-15 minute) overview of their project. Then the floor will be opened for questions.
- Although questions will generally focus on the research project, students may be asked to assimilate other relevant information (e.g., relation of their research to the “real world”) into the thesis defense.
- Defenses typically last between 45-60 minutes.
- Final thesis defenses, which must be done no later than three weeks prior to the end of the semester in question, will include the same committee members who served on the proposal committee. The Associate Dean(s) of the Honors College may participate in the defense, but is a non-voting member.
- If a student has technical requirements (e.g., power point, DVD player) for the defense, the Associate Dean of Honors should be notified as early as possible.
- Certain majors and disciplines may benefit from different defense formats (e.g., music, photography). If you and your advisor believe that this may be the case please contact the Associate Dean of the Honors College to discuss the matter.

## A Timeline for the Thesis Process

### Step 1

*As early as possible in your UNT career*

#### **Begin to consider and develop potential thesis topics.**

Read up on and/or enroll in courses related to topics that interest you. Get to know the experts in these fields on campus. Your thesis does not have to be done in your major. However, most people do the thesis in their major area for obvious reasons (e.g., familiarity with and interest in material; graduate school admissions).

### Step 2

*As early as possible in your UNT career*

#### **Enroll in HNRS 1500 Introduction to Research, or major Equivalent**

Please contact the Honors Academic Counselor regarding equivalent introduction to research courses in your major.

### Step 3

*At least 3 semesters before graduation*

#### **Choose an advisor.**

This is the single most important step in the process. There are numerous things to consider in making this choice. Is the person knowledgeable in the area that you want to pursue? Is their personality a good match with yours? Does their working style complement yours? Do they have the time to commit to the thesis process?

### Step 4

*2 or 3 semesters before graduation*

#### **Enroll in HNRS 3500 and write your thesis proposal.**

### Step 5

*1 or 2 semesters before graduation*

#### **Enroll in the requisite section of 4951.**

4951 is the Honors Thesis class. Register for the course in the discipline in which your thesis advisor teaches. Keep in mind that completing your thesis will take longer than you expect. A thesis experience is not designed to be a one-semester, single-class project.

### Step 6

*1 semester before graduation*

#### **Defend your thesis.**

At a minimum, aim to defend your thesis a full semester before you graduate. (Spring graduates should defend in the Fall; Fall graduates should defend in the Spring.)

### Step 7

*Your final semester at UNT*

#### **Graduate as a Distinguished Honors Scholar Award winner!**

(This award also requires a cumulative GPA of 3.5)

**DO NOT USE THIS WORD FOR WORD! USE YOUR OWN NAME AND YOUR ADVISOR'S NAME!!**

## Honors Thesis Proposal Coversheet

Dr. Victor Frankenstein – Advisor  
Eager McLearner – Honors Scholar

In order to fulfill the responsibilities of advisor and scholar in the preparation of an Honors Thesis, we propose the following:

- I. That we will meet once a week during the **WHICH** semester of **WHAT YEAR, SPECIFY DAY OF WEEK AND TIME**
- II. That we will pursue a study of the possibility of creating a sentient being out of recycled human elements, during which the student will attempt to gain an understanding of and insight into the ethics of such attempts, giving special attention to the responsibilities of the scientist towards the being that she has animated, **BE SPECIFIC ABOUT THE SUBJECT OF YOUR STUDY, YOUR PRIMARY AVENUES OF INQUIRY AND YOUR GOALS**
- III. That the student will read works suggested by the advisor and other works that the student may find relevant to the study, **BE AS EXPLICIT AS YOU CAN ABOUT THIS READING LIST**
- IV. That during weekly discussions the student will relate understandings, opinions, and elaborations on readings; the advisor will question, clarify, and criticize the student's efforts, **BE PRECISE REGARDING WHAT THE ADVISOR EXPECTS FROM YOU AND WHAT YOU NEED FROM YOUR ADVISOR**
- V. That our goal in the thesis preparation course will be for the student to develop a thesis statement, and a draft of a research proposal with annotated bibliography in preparation for the Honors Thesis. **BE SPECIFIC ABOUT ANY OTHER GOALS YOU AND YOUR TUTOR SET**

### Student Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ UNT ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Faculty Mentor Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_