

# THE HONORS THESIS HANDBOOK

UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM • NICHOLLS STATE UNIVERSITY

Spring 2019 Edition

The *Honors Thesis* is the report of your independent and original scholastic contribution to the major field of your undergraduate study. This report is a narrative manuscript constructed in a format consistent with and suitable for publication in the literature of the field of study, as well as archiving in the university library. The Honors Thesis is the capstone product of the University Honors Program, and its successful completion, together with completion of all other requirements of the program, will earn the student the University Honors Award and Certification at graduation. The *Honors Prospectus* is intended to help you prepare and plan to conduct and complete research for the Honors Thesis. This *Handbook* contains directions, guidelines, and advice for producing a successful Honors Prospectus and Honors Thesis.

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HONORS THESIS SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

### **I. MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR THE PROSPECTUS (HONR 401).**

The Honors Prospectus is a manuscript consisting of a comprehensive literature review and bibliography on the background of a thesis topic, together with a detailed plan of ensuing work designed to complete the thesis. The Prospectus explains the novelty and originality of the thesis study in the perspective of the existing literature. The purpose of the Prospectus is to inaugurate and direct thesis study. Specifically, the thesis facilitates (1) planning and development of the study, serving as a guide to the student, the Major Professor, and the Honors Director (2) understanding the study and student needs to complete it, (3) determining the originality of the study, and (4) assessing the potential quality of the study and alignment with the academic standards of the honors program. A good Prospectus is crucial to the successful completion of thesis study, which the student will undertake, conclude, and defend in HONR 402.

### ***Specific Requirements of the Prospectus.***

- (1) The manuscript must bear (a) citations and a References Cited list or (b) footnotes and an intrinsic or ending bibliography, according to the style of the major investigative journals in the student's field of study. In the case of references cited lists and bibliographies, all entries must include a complete title. All other textual requirements should be followed according to the major investigative journals in the field.
- (2) There is no maximum length limitation. Minimally, however, the body of the Prospectus must be comprised of at least 2500 words of text, and this number excludes words in the bibliography, footnotes, endnotes, figures and legends, tables, and any appended materials. (See also **V. Special Note on Word Count.**) In all cases, and regardless of word count, the Prospectus should be appropriately "comprehensive and complete" to direct your specific subject and its background. Toward this end, the manuscript is expected to be substantive.
- (3) The typeface should be Times New Roman at 12 pt. Margins should be 1" on all dimensions. The manuscript should be printed on only one side of high-quality white paper, and the text (but not footnotes, endnotes, or bibliography) should be double-spaced. A title page containing the information below should cover the manuscript. All pages should be numbered.

Title of Thesis  
Your Name  
Honors Prospectus  
Semester Year

- (4) You must submit to the Director three final, Major Professor-approved copies of your Prospectus manuscript—two printed and one electronic—by the deadline specified in ***Course Contents*** of the semester course syllabus. Your Major Professor will specify the number and types of copies he/she requests. Each printed copy can be bound by a paperclip, a bulldog clip, or a manila folder, but special presentation folders should not be used.
- (5) The Prospectus manuscript should have these sections and headings:

***Abstract***—Summarize the information in the prospectus, with emphasis on the study and its originality in the field. The abstract should be brief but comprehensive and information-rich. It should be the last part of the Prospectus written.

***Introduction***—Introduce the specific topic of your study. Begin with a general background and continually focus into the specific area you will be studying. This section should include a substantive literature review, complete with citations, that describes the specific area of the proposed Thesis study.

***Rationale***—In imperative narrative, answer the following questions: Why will you be undertaking this study? How is this study an original contribution to your field of study? What is the usefulness of the results of your study?

***Timeline***—Using the table in Course Content above, determine major goals of your project (literature review, readings, experimentation, analysis, writing, etc.) and the dates you'll have them accomplished.

**Materials, Tools, Supplies**—project the items required for completion of your project. How will you obtain them?

**Methodology**—Describe the overall procedure and specific techniques you'll undertake to complete this study.

**Major Findings/Creative Work Description**—What do you predict will be created or achieved at the completion of this study and publication of the Honors Thesis?

**Manuscript Format & Documentation Style**—State which styles of format and documentation will be employed in this and the Thesis manuscript (CSE/CBE, MLA, APA, Chicago, or a journal-specific style). Choose a style consistent with your field of study.

**Bibliography**—Using the chosen style listed immediately above (including complete titles), provide a list of references cited in the Prospectus manuscript.

## II. MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR THE HONORS THESIS MANUSCRIPT (HONR 402).

In all cases, the thesis study will be accompanied by a written exposition (the Honors Thesis manuscript) that meets or exceeds these minimum standards. In general, most theses fall into two categories, (1) *the pure exposition*, in which the student interprets, analyzes, synthesizes, reconstructs, or evaluates work from primary and secondary resources, and (2) *the product exposition*, in which the thesis describes a product (data and analysis, meta-analysis, creative work(s)) developed by the student as a function of thesis study. The minimum requirements of these two thesis types differ: the pure exposition will be a minimum of 7500 words of narrative text and the product exposition must be a minimum of 5000 words of narrative text. These numbers exclude words in the bibliography, figures and legends, tables, and any appended materials. (See also **V. Special Note on Word Count.**)

### *Specific Requirements of the Thesis.*

(1) The manuscript must bear (a) citations and a References Cited list or (b) footnotes and an intrinsic or ending bibliography, according to the style of the major investigative journals in the student's field of study. In the case of references cited lists and bibliographies, all entries must include a complete title. All other textual requirements should be followed according to the major investigative journals in the field.

(2) There is no maximum length limitation. Minimally, however, there are two lower limits—7500 words for a pure expository thesis and 5000 words for a product expository thesis. These numbers exclude words in the bibliography, footnotes, endnotes, figures and legends, tables, and any appended materials. In all cases, and regardless of word count, the Thesis should be appropriately "comprehensive and complete" to direct your specific subject and its background. Toward this end, the manuscript is expected to be substantive.

(3) The typeface should be Times New Roman at 12 pt. Margins should be 1" on all dimensions. The manuscript should be printed on only one side of high-quality white paper, and the text (but not footnotes, endnotes, or bibliography) should be double-spaced. A title page as specified should cover the manuscript. All pages should be numbered.

(4) All figures and graphics, including documentations of experimental procedures, works of art, and other important visual components of the study, must be digitized and incorporated into the text of the manuscript. The entire manuscript must be “camera-ready” for reproduction.

(5) An unnumbered title page, with the format of the model page below, should precede the thesis manuscript.

Title of Thesis  
—about eight line spaces—  
A Thesis  
—about eight line spaces—  
Submitted to the University Honors Program  
of Nicholls State University  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
of the University Honors Award  
—about eight line spaces—  
By  
Your Name  
anticipated Bachelor degree, anticipated semester and year  
of Bachelor graduation  
—about eight line spaces—  
Semester and Year of Thesis Completion

I hereby certify all aspects of this thesis document, as well  
as all work it reports, as my original work.  
*John P. Darrick*

(6) A statement certifying the authenticity and originality of all aspects of the manuscript, with the format and wording of the model page below, must accompany the manuscript immediately following the title page. If copyrighted graphics are used, the student must provide proof of permissions to use.

(7) Use of subheadings as a means to help the reader navigate through the thesis manuscript is encouraged.

(8) You must submit to the Director three final, Major Professor approved copies of your thesis manuscript—two printed and one electronic—by the deadline specified in Course Contents of the HONR 402 syllabus. Your Major Professor will specify the number and types of copies he/she requests. Each printed copy can be bound by a paperclip, a bulldog clip, or a manila folder, but special presentation folders should not be used.

### III. RELATIONSHIP OF THE PROSPECTUS AND THE THESIS.

The Prospectus is completed in the HONR 401 course as a prelude to the Thesis, which is completed in the HONR 402 course in a subsequent semester. The Prospectus is designed to help you deeply consider, plan, and prepare for the Thesis. The relationship between the two manuscripts is more than conceptual,

however. Certain sections of the Prospectus can be revised to serve as sections of the Thesis. For instance, the *Introduction* to the Prospectus, where you “introduce the specific topic of your study” and construct a “general background” of your topic is intended to be used as part of an Introduction section of your thesis. The *Rationale* of the Prospectus could be revised and also included as part of the Introduction. If your Thesis is a *product exposition*, then a revision of the *Materials* section and the *Methodology* section of your Prospectus could serve as a Materials and Methods section of your Thesis. The *Bibliography* you create in your Prospectus will very likely also be used in the Thesis, and you will have entries of these sources typed out in the proper style in the Prospectus.

It is important to note that as your Thesis evolves and seeks its final form, your ideas and the Prospectus sections that first reported them may need revision. The same is true of the *Bibliography*, for which you will undoubtedly find more sources during development of the Thesis and also likely find that some Prospective sources are no longer useful. Therefore, although some Prospectus sections are suitable to use in the Thesis, it is likely that they will need to be revised for the Thesis.

Despite this close and useful relationship between the manuscripts, the Prospectus as a whole does not become part of the Thesis. For instance, the sections of the Prospectus that are exclusively for your planning, like *Timeline*, parts of *Materials*, prediction of *Major Findings*, and description of *Manuscript Style*, should not appear in the Thesis. The *Abstract*, which is a summary of the contents of the manuscript, will be different.

In summary, the Prospectus is both a conceptual and a compositional prelude to the Thesis. You should expect, however, that sections of the Prospectus suitable for the Thesis will need to be updated for the Thesis.

#### **IV. DIRECTIONS & EXPECTATIONS FOR PROGRESS REPORTS.**

Progress Reports should be *substantive* explanations of specific, measurable achievements that allow the student, the Major Professor, and the Honors Director the opportunity to assess progress. Progress Reports should not only inform the Major Professor and the Honors Director of your progress toward the Prospectus or Thesis but also inform you about your own progress.

Each progress report should be a document containing your name, the working title of your thesis project, the name of your major professor, the name of the course (either **HONR 401** or **HONR 402**) and the document title (as in **Progress Report 1** for the first report). At minimum, questions to answer in each progress report should include:

- What, in brief and descriptive terms, is the subject of your Honors Thesis?
- Specifically, what have I accomplished to date?
- What are the major accomplishments since the last report?
- Is my progress aligned with timelines and the **Student Assignment Schedule**? (see syllabus)
- What are the major impediments (if any) to progress?
- How am I ensuring that my study will create an original contribution to the field?
- Does the focus of my study need adjustment or further refinement?
- Specifically, what remains to be accomplished?

- What else do I need to communicate to my Major Professor and the Honors Director?
- What is my current list of bibliographic references (including new references discovered since the previous progress report)?

As the last question indicates, it's a good idea to include your growing and up-to-date list of references (i.e., your current bibliography) *in each Progress Report* to keep the Major Professor and the Honors Director informed of the suitability of your background materials. For this reason, you should probably decide on ***Manuscript Format & Documentation Style*** (see “Minimum Standards for the Prospectus” above) before the first progress report so that your bibliographic references can be typed in the proper format.

Please note that the Honors Prospectus and Thesis process is ***directed, independent study***, and as such the student is expected to make continuous progress through the semester regardless of the timing of meetings with major professor.

Progress Reports should clearly explain progress made up until the deadline date. In general, it is expected that ***each successive progress report*** (1) describes the subject of your Honors Thesis subject with greater understanding and accuracy, (2) describes the increased amount of work you've accomplished toward reaching the final requirement of the course, (3) shows a growing bibliography of background information from the professional literature of the field, (4) provides clear, unambiguous, substantive, and meaningful answers to each question listed above.

## V. SPECIAL NOTE ON WORD COUNT.

Meeting or exceeding the word count minimums is an absolute requirement of both the Honors Prospectus and the Honors Thesis. These minimums exclude words in the bibliography, figures and legends, tables, title page, acknowledgements, and any appended materials. In other words, the minimum word counts exclude anything that is not a normal paragraph. Word processing software such as MS Word is capable of reporting word counts, but these counts include all words in a document as well as numbers separated by spaces. To accurately determine the word count as required by the Prospectus or the Thesis, you should (1) save a second copy of your manuscript under a different name, (2) in that copy delete the bibliography, the title page, all figures, all figure legends, all tables, any appendices, and anything else that does not represent or appear as a normal paragraph, and (3) obtain a word count on the resulting manuscript with those deletions. This is the procedure that will be performed by the Honors Office when your drafts are submitted, and so you should do it in advance to ensure that you meet the requirements.

## VI. ABOUT YOUR THESIS TITLE

Ideally, your title should tell exactly the content and conclusion of your thesis research. Practically, however, it needs to be concise and word-limited, particularly because it will become part of printing on your presentation slides as well as the published program for the Honors Thesis Defense Symposium. For this reason, the final title of your Honors Thesis should be no longer than 15 words. Despite any challenge you may perceive in meeting the 15-word limit, be assured that your major professor and the Honors Director can help you fashion a properly concise title. In addition, each noun in your title should

be capitalized, and each special or foreign-language term (like genus and species) should be italicized. Special typography associated with terminology in your specific discipline can also be used.

## **VII. MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION CHECKLISTS.**

To help ensure you that you're meeting all of the above requirements for the Honors Prospectus and Honors Thesis documents, checklists are provided at the end of this *Handbook*. ***A completed checklist must accompany each draft of a document, either the Initial Draft or the Final Draft.*** By signing the checklist, you are confirming that each checked requirement has been met. A final draft for which any requirement is not completed is not accepted.

## **VIII. MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR THE THESIS DEFENSE (HONR 402).**

Defense of thesis research before a public audience is a requirement of HONR 402 and the University Honors Award. In general, Defenses are during the annual Honors Thesis Research Symposium, held each April or May for Spring semesters or December for Fall semesters. When no Fall symposium is scheduled, students completing course requirements in a Fall semester are expected to return the following Spring semester to participate in the symposium, even if they have graduated in the Fall semester ceremony.

Typically, the defense is comprised of an oral presentation followed by fielding questions from audience members. Students will be expected to defend their thesis on stage for typically 15-20 minutes (but could be as long as 30 minutes) and field questions for an additional five minutes. Students are expected to attend the entire symposium to both encourage their colleagues and to participate as audience members. In the case of product-expository theses, projection graphics are effective and are encouraged. Specific requirements for the annual symposium of thesis defenses is provided at the end of this handbook.

## **IX. THESIS STUDIES USING HUMAN SUBJECTS.**

Research using human subjects is required to undergo advance review and approval by the Nicholls Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB). "Research using human subjects" includes all projects that require interaction between a Nicholls investigator and one or more human subject(s), either physically (such as through a tissue sampling), forensically (such as through investigating records containing identifying information) or communicatively (such as through an opinion survey). You and your major professor will need to complete specific forms that explain to this Board precisely how you intend to interact and use data collected from the interaction. For more information, visit <http://www.nicholls.edu/hsirb/>. In addition, each member of the project, including you and your major professor, will need to complete *Protecting Human Research Participants*, an online training course offered by the NIH Office of Extramural Research, to be certified to conduct human subjects research at Nicholls. The training is free and takes a minimum of about one hour to complete. According to Nicholls HSIRB guidelines, the certification lasts for only one year and must be renewed thereafter for continued research or projects exceeding one year in duration.

## X. THESIS STUDIES INVOLVING SURVEYS

Nicholls owns a subscription to a survey software application called Qualtrics. Students conducting collecting data for their thesis projects may use Qualtrics with permission of the major professor. To apply for use, please contact the office of Assessment and Institutional Research in 318 Ellender Library or by calling (985) 448-4180. In addition, some students conduct surveys through Google Forms, which offers a free trial. In either case, you must receive HSIRB approval in advance of conducting a survey.

## XI. EXAMPLES OF THESIS STUDIES.

Examples of studies that can serve as an Honors Thesis include any form of scholarly study suitable for publication. Ideally, the Thesis is designed to utilize the student's breadth of undergraduate experience in the major field of study. Occasionally, a student may elect to conduct a Thesis in the minor field or in a combination of fields (a "hybrid" thesis). In all cases, the topic and method of Thesis study must be approved by a major professor and the Honors Program. Thesis study will culminate in the creation and presentation of an original product that will manifest as a manuscript and a defensible oral presentation before a public audience. Examples of products include:

- discovery research in the sciences
- an annotated or narrated portfolio of creative work in the fine arts
- an annotated or narrated description of invention or creation of novel product or procedure
- surveys answering useful and critical questions
- syntheses, reconstructions, meta-analyses of prior knowledge
- literature reviews on previously unreviewed topics or on topics updated by new information

## XII. IMPORTANT AND USEFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.nicholls.edu/ellender/ellender.htm>

**The Ellender Memorial Library Homepage.** This is the University library's homepage, and it contains multiple search engines for its own holdings as well as those of the statewide LOUIS system of academic libraries. Access to the University's electronic subscriptions is also available here.

<http://illiad.louis.lsu.edu.illiad/Ins/logon.html>

**ILLiad.** This is the University's and the LOUIS system's new electronic interlibrary loan system. Fast and highly reliable.

## XIII. ADVICE FROM THE DIRECTOR

- Plan your project well.
- Work as hard as you can early in the semester because too many things become due toward the end. Don't make your Thesis one of those many things, and don't allow it to impede your other studies and work at the end of the semester.
- Don't depend on major holidays to do all your thesis work. Do your work early in the semester and at a regular pace so that you use the holidays for fine-tuning and revising and otherwise for rest and relaxation.
- Abide by submission due dates. Don't postpone. You'll lose points.



- Ensure the originality of your study by checking the literature in your field on a regular basis.
- Meet with your professor weekly to discuss readings, writing, focus, and progress. Don't miss. Don't postpone.
- Keep important books and files regarding your study at the top of your study desk.
- Read and write if only a little bit every day. Avoid long periods without activity on the study, as this causes loss of focus and delays.
- Back-up all electronic documents pertaining to the study on a regular basis.
- Don't plan to read and research and write at the last minute.
- Be responsible for your work. Self-assign readings and writing tasks. Although this is a "directed" study, it is an independent study.
- Use the semester break between HONR 401 (Prospectus) and HONR 402 (Thesis) wisely. Do not neglect the project during this period of time.
- Produce good research and produce a good Thesis manuscript. The Thesis will become a library holding and represent you forever. It may also be requested for viewing by potential employers or admissions committees.
- Take pride in making this a premium intellectual and creative endeavor—the greatest thing you will accomplish at Nicholls.

# Honors Prospectus Submission Checklist

Your Name:	This Semester & Year:
Email address where you can be contacted with questions about this manuscript:	
Phone where you can be contacted with questions about this manuscript:	
Title of Your Honors Prospectus:	
The accompanying document is my <input type="checkbox"/> INITIAL DRAFT or my <input type="checkbox"/> FINAL DRAFT.	

The following checklist of Prospectus document requirements is derived from *The Honors Thesis Handbook*. A completed checklist must accompany both the Initial Draft and the Final Draft of the Honors Prospectus, and each checked item must be a true representation of the completion of that requirement.

- The margins are one-inch on all sides.
- The typeface is Times New Roman at 12 pt.
- The manuscript is printed only on one side.
- The manuscript is printed on high-quality paper.
- The text is double-spaced.
- The footnotes, endnotes, figure legends, and bibliography are single-spaced.
- The pages are numbered.
- The manuscript is covered by a title page containing Title of Thesis, Your Name, Honors Prospectus, and the Semester and Year of submission.
- The text of the manuscript is at least 2500 words, and this number excludes footnotes, endnotes, figures and figure legends, bibliography, tables, and any appendices.
- The text of the manuscript bears citations corresponding to references in the bibliography.
- The citations and bibliography follow guidelines of one specific style (CSE/CBE, MLA, APA, Chicago, or a journal-specific style).
- Each reference in the bibliography has a complete title.
- The manuscript has sections and headings according to directions in the *Handbook*, including Abstract, Introduction, Rationale, Timeline, Materials-Tools-Methods, Methodology, Major Findings/Description of Creative Work, Manuscript Documentation & Formatting Style, and Bibliography.

***By signing below, I confirm that I have completed all requirements checked above.***

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Your Signature

# Honors Thesis Submission Checklist

Your Name:	This Semester & Year:
Email address where you can be contacted with questions about this manuscript:	
Phone where you can be contacted with questions about this manuscript:	
Title of Your Honors Thesis:	
The accompanying document is my <input type="checkbox"/> INITIAL DRAFT or my <input type="checkbox"/> FINAL DRAFT.	

The following checklist of Thesis document requirements is derived from *The Honors Thesis Handbook*. A completed checklist must accompany both the Initial Draft and the Final Draft of the Honors Prospectus, and each checked item must be a true representation of the completion of that requirement.

- The margins are one-inch on all sides.
- The typeface is Times New Roman at 12 pt.
- The manuscript is printed only on one side.
- The manuscript is printed on high-quality paper.
- The text is double-spaced.
- The footnotes, endnotes, figure legends, and bibliography are single-spaced.
- The pages are numbered.
- The manuscript is covered by a title page according to the format described in the *Handbook*.
- A statement according to the format described in the *Handbook* and certifying authenticity and originality of all aspects of the Thesis follows the cover page.
- The text of the manuscript is at least 5000 words for a product expository thesis or 7500 words for a pure expository thesis, and these numbers excludes footnotes, endnotes, figures and figure legends, bibliography, tables, and any appendices.
- All figures and graphics are digitized and camera-ready.
- The text of the manuscript bears citations corresponding to references in the bibliography.
- The citations and bibliography follow guidelines of one specific style (CSE/CBE, MLA, APA, Chicago, or a journal-specific style) as presented in the Prospectus.
- Each reference in the bibliography has a complete title.

***By signing below, I confirm that I have completed all requirements checked above.***

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Your Signature