

## **The Senior Honors Project**

### **Information for Advisors**

John Carroll University

Honors Program

The Senior Honors Project requirement may be completed either by enrolling in the three-credit HP450 course, as an elective in the student's major field if approved by the hosting department or program (for example, BL399), or in tandem with a capstone research project required for a student's major (such as PO401). In all of these circumstances, the primary advisor plays a crucial role in the Senior Honors Project (SHP).

The advisor works closely with the student and maintains an on-going relationship with him or her from the inception of the project through its completion, submission, and final approval. The student, in turn, must take responsibility for meeting the deadlines associated with each step of the Senior Honors Project. For more information on the Senior Honors Project in general and the proposal in particular, please see the "**General Project Overview**" and "**Proposal Guidelines**" online on the Honors Program "Forms" page at <http://sites.jcu.edu/honors/>.

It is also important that there be a clear and cooperative relationship between the primary advisor and the Honors Program. The following procedures are designed to assist the advisor and to provide some parameters within which the project is to be undertaken.

The main steps in completing the Senior Honors Project include the following:

- 1) Identifying the Topic and Advisor** (Due by the End of Week One). Before the semester in which the student will complete the SHP, the student should consult with a prospective advisor to identify a research question suitable for a SHP (and other capstone or project requirements, if applicable) with respect to content, rigor, and scope. The SHP must be framed academically. The intended project must be approved by the Director of the Honors Program before substantive work commences. While students may use data gathered off-site, the primary project advisor must be a full-time member of the John Carroll faculty unless other arrangements have been approved by the Director of the Honors Program. Students should plan to complete the SHP during the fall of their senior year. They will only be allowed to complete the project in spring with approval of the primary advisor and the director.
- 2) Preparing the Proposal.** The initial role of the advisor is to see that the project is well considered and clearly articulated in the proposal. Since it must be approved by the Director or Honors Program Reader, and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences or the Boler School of Business (depending on the student's chosen discipline), the proposal should demonstrate to a non-specialist audience the student's preparation to undertake the project and complete it successfully.

- 3) Assessing the Process and Final Product.** The Senior Honors Project Assessment Rubrics are available online. They should guide an ongoing conversation between the student, primary advisor, and the Honors Program regarding students' work during the process, provide concrete criteria for assessing the final project, and ultimately offer meaningful feedback to the Honors Program. Some recommendations for using the rubrics are to:
- a) use them as a point of departure for discussing **expectations of the process and product** to students and advisors. Before significant work starts on the project, students and advisors should review the rubrics and relate the standards to the discipline and project in question. As they consider what constitutes high-quality, independent undergraduate research in the chosen discipline, the primary advisor is asked to articulate any criteria not included in the rubrics and add them accordingly;
  - b) help advisors **monitor students' progress** during completion of the project and **provide constructive feedback**. At regular intervals in the execution and completion of the SHP, advisors should confirm that students are meeting the articulated expectations or how to remedy areas needing attention. If significant issues arise, the student or advisor is encouraged to consult the Director of the Honors Program;
  - c) **assess the completed Senior Honors Project** and submit a brief report to the Director of the Honors Program (see item 10 below) regarding how well the student met the articulated expectations and therefore whether the final work should earn a B+ or better;
  - d) **guide the Honors Program reader's assessment** of the final project;
  - e) **offer feedback to the Honors Program**. After final approval by the Honors Program reader, please submit a completed copy of the rubric to the Honors Program office. Input on improving the rubric or the Senior Honors Project process is welcome at any time.
- 4) Submitting the Proposal** (Due by the End of Week Three). After having identified a topic, the student will submit a draft of the proposal to his or her primary advisor for comments. Once the student has revised the proposal to incorporate these comments, the **second draft** of the proposal will be submitted to the Director of the Honors Program. The Director will then offer feedback to the student and advisor. Because the proposal represents the SHP in microcosm with respect to quality and rigor, students are expected to submit high-quality work or revise the proposal until it meets that standard within the timeframe outlined.
- 5) Gaining IRB/IACUC Approval or Waiver** (Due by the End of Week Five). A proposal which includes any form of human experimentation (including surveys) must be approved by the JCU Institutional Review Board (IRB) before it can be submitted to the appropriate dean for approval. In addition, a student who intends to do any form of animal experimentation must file a protocol review form with The Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee (IACUC). Information on the IRB and IACUC is available online on the Honors Program website at

<http://sites.jcu.edu/honors/> on the “Forms” page under “Submitting Proposals to the Institutional Review Board.”

- 6) **Assignment of an Honors Program Reader.** After the Director of the Honors Program has reviewed the SHP proposal, she will appoint an Honors Program Reader, usually in an area related to the student’s chosen discipline.

The Honors Program Reader provides an additional resource to help the student meet the high level of quality in the proposal and the final completed project required by the Honors Program. It must be stressed that the Honors Program Reader is not intended to second-guess the primary advisor or to question the advisor's ability or knowledge, but rather to provide additional input and support. By reviewing the student’s SHP proposal, the Honors Program Reader becomes involved early in the process and can articulate Honors Program expectations of the final work. In order to ensure consensus and that a uniform message is conveyed to the student, the Honors Program Reader should submit all comments on students’ submissions to the primary advisor. If the primary advisor agrees with the Honors Program Reader’s assessment, the comments should be then forwarded to the student.

- 7) **Submission to the Dean** (Due by the End of Week Five). Once the primary advisor and Honors Program Reader approve the SHP proposal, the student will complete the “Application Form” (available on the “Forms” page) with signatures from the advisor and reader and submit it to the Honors Program Office. It will then be forwarded to the respective dean.
- 8) **The Project in Process.** The advisor should articulate expectations to the student. If meetings are to be held, it is best to agree upon a schedule in advance. If there are specific procedures or arrangements that the advisor requires, these too should be spelled out in writing with the student. Most important of all, the advisor monitors the student’s progress. The student is welcome to seek input from the Honors Program Reader during the drafting process, but is not required to do so.
- 9) **Submitting the Completed Project** (Due by the End of the Penultimate Week of the Semester). The final, completed project is due to the primary advisor and Director of the Honors Program no later than one week before the last class day of the semester in which the student is registered for HP450 or for a project in a department. Any exception to this deadline must be approved by the primary advisor *and* the Director of the Honors Program.
- 10) **The Primary Advisor’s Review.** The Honors Program expects that the student’s finished product would merit a B+ or higher according to the criteria outlined in the Senior Honors Project Rubric (available online). When the student submits the completed project to the Honors Program Director, the primary advisor submits an evaluation of the project with respect to these criteria to the director. Electronic submission is acceptable.

**11) Review by the Honors Project Reader.** The SHP is forwarded to the Honors Program Reader for review. The reader is asked to respond with comments within a week of receipt of the project. All comments should be submitted to the primary advisor for consultation before they are forwarded to the student. The Honors Program Reader's evaluation should similarly focus on the criteria articulated in the rubric "**Senior Honors Project (Final Product)**" available online.

As with the proposal, the Honors Program Reader relies primarily on the advisor to evaluate the work that was done and to approve the final completed project. Nevertheless, it is an established and valued convention to require outside reviewers to assess the merits of major academic work. In this vein, the Director of the Honors Program or the Honors Project Reader determines final approval of the Senior Honors Project.

**12) Final Approval.** Only when both the advisor and the Honors Director have approved the project will it be considered officially approved. If the project is completed for HP 450, the Honors Director, in consultation with the advisor, will then submit a grade (high pass/pass/no pass) to the Registrar. Any appeal by the student, advisor, or Honors Director will be handled by the Associate Academic Vice President for Student Learning Initiatives and Diversity.

This set of guidelines should help the advisor to direct the student and to oversee the final product and will avoid any potential conflict between the integrity of the advisor and responsibility of the Honors Program. In any case, questions and clarifications should be directed to the Director of the Honors Program (x4193; jkarolle@jcu.edu).

[Revised 7 November 2014]