

**UMASS DARTMOUTH HONORS PROGRAM
GUIDELINES FOR HONORS CONTRACTS
2009-2010 Academic Year**

What is an Honors Contract?

An Honors contract is a negotiated agreement between a student, a course instructor, and the Honors Director that enables the student to take a non-Honors course for Honors credit. The Honors contract is a useful alternative to regular Honors courses for students with particularly inflexible schedules and/or few elective courses. The contract also enables the student to undertake more advanced study than the constraints of the course normally allow.

A course contracted for Honors credit carries the same number of credit hours as the non-Honors version of the course. However, "Honors" appears on the transcript, and all credits earned count toward graduation as a Commonwealth Scholar, provided that the final course grade is B or better.

The work assigned as a result of the contract does not determine the final course grade. Final grades reflect the quality and content of all of the student's work in the course. In other words, the fact that a student is working for Honors credit does not necessarily guarantee a high grade.

The following restrictions apply:

- **No more than six credits of Honors contract coursework may be counted toward the minimum 15 hours of Honors coursework required for graduation as a Commonwealth Scholar.** Exceptions must be approved in advance by the Honors Director.
- **100-level courses cannot be contracted for Honors credit.** Exceptions must be approved in advance by the Honors Director.
- **Do not select the pass/fail grading option.** Like all Honors courses, courses contracted for Honors credit must be completed with a grade of B or better in order to count towards graduation as a Commonwealth Scholar and good standing in the Honors Program.
- **Once an Honors contract has been approved by the Honors Director, it cannot be "undone."** There are no exceptions. Students may withdraw from a contracted course by the withdrawal deadline, but this requires withdrawal from the *entire* course, not just the contracted portion. Failure to complete contracted assignments to the satisfaction of the course instructor and Honors Director may result in a grade of incomplete, a lower final grade, or a failing grade for the course, as determined by the course instructor.

The Honors contract process involves four stages:

- 1) Negotiation of an individualized syllabus with the course instructor
- 2) Submitting the contract for approval by the Honors Director
- 3) Completion of the agreed-upon assignments and activities
- 4) Submission of the completed work and Honors Contract completion form

Stage One: Negotiating the Honors Contract

The Honors Contract is a mutual commitment to a learning experience above and beyond normal course requirements. This undertaking involves regular interaction between the student and the instructor. While the details of contracted assignments and activities vary greatly, possible course enhancements include:

- Collaboration with the instructor on a joint research project.
- An analytical, research, or policy paper, in addition to or longer than those assigned in the “regular” syllabus, and/or more reliant on primary or original source material.
- A service learning experience or internship related to the course focus.
- An audio/video project, performance, or artistic work related to the course focus.
- Curriculum development projects, such as assisting the professor with the development and implementation of new teaching tools or class activities.

Much like the Honors thesis/project, the Honors Contract is a product of negotiation. **Instructors are under no obligation to supervise Honors Contracts.** They are much more likely to agree to do so if the enriched assignment or activity is of interest or use to them. You should therefore be prepared to modify and adapt your proposed contract to suit the interests and needs of the instructor.

The Honors contract is intended to enrich the quality of education rather than simply increasing the workload. Nevertheless, it will involve more hours of student work. Generally speaking, an Honors contract in a 3 credit class should involve 20-30 hours of additional work over the course of the semester; 30-40 hours for a 4 credit course; and 15-20 hours for a 2 credit course. These estimates include meetings with the supervising instructor outside of class.

The student and instructor must also agree on the criteria for evaluating the project. This includes agreement on whether the project will be graded, and the extent to which the project grade will factor into the final course grade. If the project will not be graded, then the student and instructor should agree upon the criteria by which it will be judged satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Stage Two: Submission of the Contract Proposal

The Honors contract proposal consists of three parts: (1) the cover sheet, which must be filled out completely and signed by both the student and the instructor; (2) a copy of the original course syllabus; and (3) a brief (two to three page) description of your proposed project. A copy of the cover sheet is attached to these guidelines.

All Honors contract proposals must be submitted to the Honors Director **no later than the end of the third week of classes**, counting forward from the first day of the semester. For the 2009-2010 academic year, the deadlines are as follows:

Fall 2009: **3:00 PM on Tuesday, September 22**

Spring 2010: **3:00 PM on Friday, February 12**

Unless you make alternative arrangements, completed proposals should be placed in Professor Darst’s mailbox in the Political Science Department, Liberal Arts 316.

What should you include in the project description?

(1) State precisely how your project differs from the regular work of the class.

(2) Make very clear WHAT you're doing, WHY you're doing it, HOW you're doing it, WHEN you're doing it, and what the tangible OUTCOMES (or products) of your project will be. It may help to think of your proposal as a question or problem that you wish to answer or solve, or at least to shed more light upon.

(3) Include an explicit timetable for meetings with the course instructor and the submission of the components or drafts of the project, and a deadline for the completion of all of the work involved. The final deadline for completion can be no later than the scheduled final examination period for the course, and in most cases will be earlier.

(4) Include an explicit statement of the criteria that will be used to evaluate the contracted work. Will the project be graded? If so, what percentage of the course grade will the contracted work constitute? If the project will not be graded, what are the minimum requirements that the work must meet in order to be judged acceptable?

What happens next? The Honors Director may approve your proposal as written, reject it, or request more information before making a decision. Once your proposal is approved, the Honors Director will sign it and send a copy to both the student and the instructor. The Honors Director will then ask the registrar to create an individualized Honors section of the course, designated with the next available section number and the letter "H." This new section will meet at the same time, in the same place, and with the same instructor as the original section, and will carry the same number of credit hours. It will have the same course title, with the addition of the word "Honors" at the end.

Stage Three: Completion of the Contracted Work

Once the contract is approved, work will proceed according to the timetable established in the contract. Like all creative work, your project will change and grow as you work on it and learn more about the subject and the resources available to you. This is entirely normal, and few completed projects wind up exactly as envisaged in the proposal.

In some cases, there may come a point at which you and the instructor agree to alter your project so substantially that the approved proposal is no longer an adequate guide for the completion and evaluation of your work. If so, you should submit an amended Honors contract proposal describing the new criteria for completion and assessment. Both you and the course instructor should sign the amended proposal before submitting to the Honors Director for reapproval. If you are unsure whether you need to file an amended proposal, discuss the matter with the Honors Director.

Stage Four: Submission of the Completed Work and Contract Completion Form

If a presentation or performance is part of your proposal, invite the Honors Director to attend. As soon as the contracted work is complete and approved by the instructor, you must submit a copy of the work and the Honors Contract Completion Form to the Honors Director. These must be submitted no later than 3:00 PM on the last day of the final examination period.



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HONORS CONTRACT PROPOSAL COVER SHEET

Name: _____ Major: _____

UMass ID: _____ Expected graduation date: _____

Campus/Local Address: _____ Phone: _____

_____ E-mail: _____

Term: Fall _____ Spring _____ Intersession _____ Summer _____

Course Department, Course Number, and Section Number: _____

Course Title: _____

Course Instructor: _____

Project Title: _____

On a separate sheet, describe your project in consultation with your course instructor. Please consult the **Guidelines for Honors Contracts** for instructions.

When you have completed writing the contract, submit this form, signed by you and your instructor, to the Honors Director, Professor Robert Darst. **Attach a copy of the course syllabus to the contract.** All materials must be submitted by the following deadlines:

Fall 2009: **3:00 PM on Tuesday, September 22**

Spring 2010: **3:00 PM on Friday, February 12**

Unless you make alternative arrangements, completed proposals should be placed in Professor Darst's mailbox in the Political Science Department, Liberal Arts 316.

STUDENT'S SIGNATURE: _____

COURSE INSTRUCTOR'S SIGNATURE: _____

HONORS DIRECTOR'S APPROVAL: _____



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HONORS CONTRACT COMPLETION FORM

SECTION ONE: to be completed by the student

Name: _____ Major: _____

UMass ID: _____ Expected graduation date: _____

Campus/Local Address: _____ Phone: _____

_____ E-mail: _____

Term: Fall _____ Spring _____ Intersession _____ Summer _____

Course Department, Course Number, and Section Number: _____

Course Title: _____

Course Instructor: _____

Project Title: _____

SECTION TWO: to be completed by the instructor

The quality of the work submitted for this Honors contract was

_____ satisfactory _____ not satisfactory

COURSE INSTRUCTOR'S SIGNATURE: _____

Submit this form, signed by the course instructor, to the Honors Director, Professor Robert Darst. **Attach a copy of your written, recorded, or visual work.** The signed form and accompanying materials must be submitted by the following deadline:

Fall 2009: **3:00 PM on Wednesday, December 23**

Spring 2010: **3:00 PM on Wednesday, May 19**

Unless you make alternative arrangements, the contract completion form and accompanying materials should be placed in Professor Darst's mailbox in the Political Science Department, Liberal Arts 316.