**Honors Thesis Guidebook**

Additional information taken from “Five Effective Strategies for Mentoring Undergraduates: Students’ Perspectives” *CUR Quarterly*, Spring 2013, Volume 33, Number 3

**Preliminaries: HON 301**

All Honors students are required to take Honors 301. Some students use the course to work on a thesis proposal and identify a supervisor. Others come to the course already knowing their subject and supervisor, in which case they can use the course to practice writing and discussion skills. The course is “hybrid” in order for students to practice online communication. There is a great distinction between social media communication and practices that are acceptable in the business and academic worlds, especially when you may be communicating with someone in another country/language. Students in the COE may want to use their senior design project as the basis for their individual thesis, in which case they have the option to submit a business proposal in HON 301.

At the end of HON 301 you will submit a formal proposal signed by you and your supervisor to the Honors office. Please make sure that your supervisor’s name is identifiable in case we need to find them.

You do have the option to change the topic at a later date. Simply summarize the changes in your progress report and submit a new dated and signed proposal form.

All students require a primary supervisor and at least one committee member. The role of the latter can vary from reading a final draft to functioning as a secondary supervisor. The Honors Program recommends that students keep their committee member “in the loop” in case of supervisor illness, etc.

**Requirements and the “IP”**

An Honors degree requires a minimum of 12 course credits, HON 301 (usually taken in the junior year), and a minimum of 3 independent research credits (thus a total of 18 credits).

If you take a two-semester course sequence for your research, then the first course will be listed as “IP” (in process) on your transcript at the end of the semester. However, please note that this then means that you will *not* be listed as being on the Dean’s or Chancellor’s list for that particular semester.

Here is the clause in the catalog: IP: In Progress. Notation used in special cases to indicate that academic progress covers more than one term; e.g., that a grade will be assigned on the completion of the task involved. The "IP" notation is replaced upon receipt of the official grade. Until or unless replaced by an official final grade, the notation "IP" will remain on the transcript. Academic Recognition (Dean’s or Chancellor’s List) for the semester cannot be considered until all “IP” grades has been replaced with the final grade.

Academic honors: Dean’s List: Following the completion of each semester, full-time undergraduate degree students (in both "day" and University Extension) who have completed at least 12 course credits, excluding courses taken under the pass-fail option and the Experience Program, and who have no "I" or "IP" grades outstanding, are considered for the Dean’s List for that semester. Those who achieved a grade point average of at least 3.200 will be named to the Dean’s List for that semester. This accomplishment will be noted on the student’s transcript. Chancellor’s List: Under the same limitations as for the Deans’ List, those who achieve a GPA of 3.800 or better for a given semester will be named to the Chancellor’s List rather than the Dean’s List. This accomplishment will be noted on the student’s transcript.
It is crucial that you enroll in a research course for your research credits. Remember that you pay per semester not per course, so the research course is not an additional expenditure. It is not possible to retroactively add into a course, and you risk graduating without an Honors degree if you do not ensure you are in a research course. Students taking HON 490 (and 491) should request permission numbers from the Honors director prior to the beginning of the semester. Students in, for example, PSY, BIO, or some COE departments should speak with their supervisor to ensure a course is available for them.

**Progress Reports**

A progress report is due to the Honors Center at 5pm on the Friday of the 8th week of each semester you are taking thesis credits (e.g., HON 490, HON 491). This means that if you complete your project in one semester, you need to turn in one progress report. If you work on your project for two semesters, you will need to submit two progress reports. The progress reports should include any changes to the project and progress made since the proposal or last progress report. Your supervisor and the Honors Director need to approve each progress report. If the Friday of the 8th week falls on a holiday, please submit the report the following Friday. *Students are encouraged to treat the progress report as an opportunity to reflect upon their work.*

**Submission of Research Project/Thesis**

You must file a copy of your thesis/project with the Honors Program, together with the original copy of the signed approval sheet by 5pm on the last day of the semester. If your project is not primarily a written document, then check with the Honors Director to see what other materials (recordings, photographs, etc.) to include.

If you think that you may need a short extension to file your work, please have your supervisor inform the Honors Director on your behalf.

All graduating Commonwealth Scholars are required to present a professional conference poster of their work at Honors Convocation in May. If submitted to the office in a timely manner (notices will be sent to the Honors e-mail list in the spring), then the program will pay for the cost of printing posters. This poster presentation is sufficient to meet the requirements of the Commonwealth Honors Program, although we hope you will present your work in other venues. *If you are in a discipline that may not lend itself well to the poster format, please talk with the Honors Director in February/March; for example, we would be happy to provide a display table for sculptures or 3D design projects.*

Once the Honors office receives the completed paperwork and the thesis, then the program will check your file. Assuming you have fulfilled the program requirements, we fill out a certification and send it to the registrar’s office. Graduating students in May will be wearing the gold sash as a way of identifying your status. Unfortunately, degrees cannot be certified in time for students to be listed in the program as Commonwealth Honors students.

**Conceptualizations**

You are not a “consumer.” However, you should take “ownership” of your education. This ownership brings with it both rights and responsibilities. You are responsible for contacting your supervisor or an Honors director if you are having difficulties with your research or for informing someone if you are having personal difficulties that prevent you from working (Student Affairs has trained people who can deal with the latter). You have a right to be treated with respect and without discrimination. Moreover, you have a right to be treated with professional courtesy. The Honors directors can act as your advocates,
and we can try to identify a replacement supervisor if your original supervisor leaves or the supervisory relationship breaks down.

**The Role of the Supervisor**

The most successful relationships are those when both partners have thought through their definition and expectations of mentoring prior to beginning the research experience. During the HON 301 course you will meet with your prospective supervisor at least once. You should use this meeting to discuss not simply the research topic but to talk about the mentoring process that works best for you to succeed: Are you self-motivated? Or do you require a supervisor who is pro-active? You can also use that time to work on an agreement to allow you to take ownership of your education.

Remember: if you have been paired with a stranger or strangers, this is a somewhat artificial way of establishing a relationship and means that, through no fault of the mentee or the mentors, some relationships may not gel as well as others. This possibility is much less likely if you begin your mentoring relationships with a frank and honest discussion about what you want and need, and have the mentors speak frankly about how they see the role of mentor.

One of the most valuable things the supervisor can offer is their time. Unfortunately, this is a limited commodity, and your supervisor will also need to use their time for their own research. One way around this difficulty is for a graduate student to be the immediate mentor, aided by the faculty member, thus allowing the faculty member to fulfill two mentoring roles at the same time.

Time spent in more informal interactions is also important. Faculty or graduate mentors are encouraged to meet with their students, even if only for 30 minutes. The Honors suite has a lounge area and a classroom that are often available. If your department does not already have one, consider creating a research community for the undergraduates, such as a journal club (maybe another task for a graduate student).

**Expectations**

We ask mentors to please be attentive to the student being mentored. Discuss the best way of communicating with your mentee if they seem to disappear. In addition, consider setting deadlines for certain tasks to break down the project into manageable chunks and create a structure. Finally, find out what part of the week your mentee does their work so that you can send a reminder e-mail.

**Miscommunication/lack of communication**

Students can be hesitant to “bother” their busy mentors with “silly questions.” Conversely, mentors who are not asked for help do not want to seem pushy and thus do not contact their mentees without express invitation. This concern for the mentoring partner’s freedom, time, and independence can lessen the impact and usefulness of the mentoring relationship. *It is important for you to be pro-active in your relationship with your mentor* so that you get the help you need. Your mentor(s) cannot begin to help if they do not know what your questions and concerns are.
Due dates:

1. Thesis proposal submission – last day of the semester
2. Progress report – Friday 5pm of the 8th week of the semester (unless it is a holiday, in which case 9th week)
3. Public presentation – arranged in conjunction with supervisor
4. Honors convocation poster session – April of each year
5. Completed project – due 5pm the last day of spring semester

Mentor agreement – can be individualized as required –

- Frequency of meetings
- Approximate length of meetings
- How will communication take place if the mentor is away?
- When is the best time of the week for mentees to do work or be reminded about missing work?
- What is the best way to locate a missing mentee?
- Can the mentor offer informal meetings or can they find ways for their mentee to interact with other research students?