Georgetown University

Description of Honors in Human Science

**Honors in Human Science** recognizes those Human Science students who pursue a high level of independent research (i.e., laboratory, archival, community) during their undergraduate years culminating in a senior thesis concurrent with the pursuit of a Human Science major.

**Eligibility for Human Science Honors:** Full-time human science students with at least a 3.0 science GPA at the end of their first year may apply.

**Application to Human Science Honors:** Prior to completing an application, the student should identify a thesis mentor. If a student chooses to work with someone other than one of the Human Science faculty mentors, then the student must determine a Human Science faculty member who will serve as the co-mentor for the thesis. The application from the student to the Human Science Faculty will include:

1. a proposed curriculum plan including Independent Research courses for at least one term, and the final Honors Thesis class
2. a description of the idea and general methodology of the proposed thesis work
3. a brief letter of support from the Human Science Faculty thesis adviser

The proposal should include a hypothesis, a research plan to answer the hypothesis, and the time frame in which the project will be completed. Proposals should be submitted to the Chair of the Human Science department.

Note: An honors proposal being submitted by a rising senior for the first time is due no later than August 15th prior to his/her senior year. A rising senior who wishes to do a thesis must have completed substantial work before the department will consider the application. The proposal will be considered and voted upon during the first faculty meeting of the academic year. All other (non-rising senior) students may submit their honors proposal at any time during the year, which will be considered by the faculty at the next regularly scheduled faculty meeting.

**Approval for Human Science Honors:** The Chair will circulate the application to the Human Science Faculty, who will vote on the proposal.

**Human Science Honors Curriculum:** Human Science Honors students will meet all Human Science major curriculum requirements in addition to the research course sequence. A student working on an Honors project will enroll in a minimum of one Independent Study research course following approval of the honors project. Enrollment in Independent Study may occur at any time, although it is suggested that the student enroll sometime prior to his/her senior year. Enrollment in Honors Thesis (HSCI-370) the final term of the project is required.

Proposed activities:

2nd year: Student will develop Honors project with approval of the student’s Honors advisor.

2nd or 3rd year: Student will build the idea for the thesis topic and formulate a question/hypothesis to study. Enrollment in Independent Study: Research during Fall or Spring Semester
3rd or 4th year: Student will write first draft of thesis consistent with the prevailing guidelines of the Human Science Honors program

4th year: Complete discovery project and thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 30</td>
<td>Thesis outline due to thesis mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31</td>
<td>Thesis references and updated draft outline due to thesis mentor</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 31</td>
<td>Revise and expand draft of thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 28</td>
<td>Initial thesis draft due to thesis mentor</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 31</td>
<td>Complete thesis draft due to thesis mentor, and committee members</td>
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<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Public defense of thesis (Note: thesis must be distributed to Human Science faculty two weeks prior to oral defense)</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 30</td>
<td>Completed thesis (i.e. after incorporation of changes suggested in public defense) due to Department</td>
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**Note:** Students who fail to adhere to the deadlines indicated above will not be eligible for consideration to graduate with honors with distinction.

**Preparation of written thesis:** The final thesis product should be formatted according to the standards of a scientific manuscript intended for submission to a scientific journal. The thesis structure and formatting should follow the guidelines outlined by that specific journal and the student should note on the thesis title page which journal formatting was followed. If no particular journal is picked, then the following structure of the thesis should be adhered to; references and citation formatting will be left to the discretion of the student and his/or advisor but should be organized and punctuated consistently throughout the thesis document:

- Title page: title, author, contact information, key words
- Abstract page: limit to 250 words
- Introduction
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Acknowledgements
- References
- Tables: table legends on top of the table itself (1 table per page)
- Figure Legends
- Figures (1 figure per page)

**Thesis Defense:**

**Committee:** Prior to the oral defense of the thesis, the student, in consultation with his/her faculty thesis advisor, should select a minimum of three (including the thesis advisor) or more members of the Human Science faculty to serve on the thesis committee.

**Preparing final draft:** Each committee member should be given a rough draft of the thesis and each member will provide the student with feedback. Once in acceptable form, a time and date will be determined for the oral defense. The final draft of the thesis must be distributed to all Human Science faculty members at least one week before the oral presentation.

**Oral Defense of thesis:** The student will present the thesis orally at a public venue, open to all faculty and students who wish to attend. Generally, the student should prepare a 20 minute presentation and expect the total defense time to last approximately 1 hour. The student should expect to be interrupted during the 20 minute presentation to answer clarifying questions posed by the audience. The goal of
the defense for the student is to generate a discussion of the topic and defend the strategy and results of the experiment(s).

**Grading the thesis:** Immediately following the oral defense of the thesis all non-faculty members in the attendance will be excused and the faculty remaining will determine if the thesis receives a “Pass” or “No Pass”. All faculty who have read the thesis and/or attended the oral defense are eligible to grade the thesis. Exceptional products will be marked as “Distinction.” No letter or other grade will be applied to the thesis. If the thesis project is deemed acceptable, then a notation will be placed on the transcript. Meritorious achievement also will be noted on the official student transcript.

**Thesis revision:** The student may choose to revise the written product of the thesis between the date of the defense and April 30th. This will be allowed to ensure that the best possible work is produced. The final (and last) draft of the thesis is due to the committee on April 30th. A final reading will take place and the committee (or all voting members present at the thesis defense) will determine whether any modifications in the grading of the thesis will occur (e.g., from “Pass” to “Pass with Distinction”).

Graduating with Honors in Human Science requires completion of the Human Science curriculum with the addition of a senior thesis. Students who complete an acceptable Honors Thesis and all other requirements for the Human Science major will graduate with a B.S in Human Science with Honors. A student thesis that is judged to be meritorious will be noted on the student’s transcript as a B.S. in Human Science, Honors with Distinction.

Approved by the Human Science Faculty Date: May 10, 2006
Clarifications approved Date: May 2, 2007
Clarifications approved Date: May 13, 2010
Modifications approved by Human Science Faculty Date: April 5, 2013

**COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**HSCI-370 - Honors Thesis**

*Spring of Senior year only
*Staff
During their last semester of the senior year, students in the honors program bring their research projects to conclusion, complete the written thesis for the faculty committee and make an oral presentation of the results to a seminar group of faculty and students. The student will be encouraged to submit the thesis for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Credits: 0
Prerequisites: A minimum of one (1) Independent Study: Research
Final Evaluation of Thesis by Faculty

Student name: __________________________________________ Date: ______________________

Thesis title: __________________________________________

To be completed by all faculty members who read the thesis and/or attended the oral presentation (see total points calculation below).

Questions will be scored as:
1. Limited (1 point)
2. Adequate (2 points)
3. Proficient (3 points)
4. Excellent (4 points) – this score is only available for questions 5, 7, and 10.

Questions (slightly modified from Julie A. Reynolds’ rubrics, Duke University, source: BioTAP):

Q1. Is the writing appropriate for the target audience/journal?
   1. Too much jargon or lacking in definitions/explanations.
   2. Includes some useful definitions/explanations, but some key concepts are still lacking.
   3. The thesis has sufficient definitions/explanations.

Q2. Is the thesis free of writing/grammatical errors?
   1. Thesis contains excessive errors or is unprofessional.
   2. Thesis contains some errors.
   3. Thesis is virtually free of obvious errors.

Q3. Does the thesis make a compelling argument for the significance of the student’s research within the context of the current literature?
   1. Does not present adequate review of the literature OR does not make significant connection.
   2. Thesis presents literature review, but either does not present the student’s research within the context of the scientific research, or does not specifically present argument for significance.
   3. Reviews literature, demonstrates how the research fills a gap, and presents compelling argument for broader significance of research.

Q4. Does the thesis clearly articulate the student’s research goals?
   1. Explicitly stated
   2. Question/goals articulated, but not always clear.
   3. Clear and articulate
Q5. Did the student convey an understanding of how his or her portion contributed to the larger effort for which it was a component?

1. Did not convey sufficient knowledge of the greater project or it was unclear what the student contributed and/or what specific methods the student utilized.
2. Was able to speak in general terms about the greater project but did not have the fluency to understand how the presented work added value.
3. Conveyed an understanding of how his or her labor was an essential and specific contribution to this project, and demonstrated the methods utilized were appropriate.
4. As in 3. plus student was able to clearly articulate future directions for the project and their potential impact on the field.

Q6. Are the tables, figures and graphs clear, effective and informative?

1. Many of the tables/figures are misleading, incorrect, unclear or inappropriate or the captions are unclear.
2. In general, clear and appropriate.
3. Exceptionally well-constructed, and the captions clearly describe visual elements.

Q7. Is the data analysis appropriate, accurate and unbiased?

1. Analysis was inappropriate, inaccurate, or biased.
2. In general, analysis was appropriate, but there are some biases, inaccuracies and/or errors.
3. Analysis was appropriate, accurate and unbiased.
4. Analysis was not only appropriate, accurate and unbiased, but the approach was also particularly insightful or proposed creative new approaches for future research.

Q8. Does the thesis skillfully present and interpret the results?

1. Little to no attempt to interpret/explain results.
2. Provides reasonable interpretation of results and mentions, but does not delve into alternative explanations.
3. Interpretation is insightful and explains implications/inconsistencies.

Q9. Is the literature review accurate and complete?

1. Inconsistent citation formatting, missing citations, or unprofessional presentation.
2. Some minor errors or inconsistencies.
3. Consistent and appropriate.

Q10. Was oral presentation well-organized, clear and cohesive?

1. Presentation was confusing
2. In general clear, but with some problems in organization, clarity and/or cohesiveness.
3. Presentation was well-organized, clear and cohesive. Student was able to address some appropriate questions with insight and intelligence.
4. Presentation was well-organized, clear and cohesive and student was able to address all appropriate questions with insight and intelligence.

Total number of points will be calculated as follows:

i) Faculty members serving as thesis mentors, thesis readers (i.e. members of the thesis committee), and faculty who have thoroughly read the thesis will grade questions 1-9, and the total score will be divided by the number of faculty submitting a scoring sheet. This will provide an average score for questions 1-9.

ii) All faculty members attending the oral defense of the thesis will grade question number 10, and the total score will be divided by the number of faculty submitting a scoring sheet. This will provide an average score for question 10.

Grades (out of 33 points):

- < 20 points  (< 60%)  FAIL
- 20 – 30 points  (61-91%)  PASS
- > 30 points  (> 91%)  PASS with distinction