

The Basics & Getting Started

To graduate with Latin Honors in the College of Arts and Sciences, you *must* write an honors thesis.

Visit www.colorado.edu/honors/graduation for all the information about writing an honors thesis.

Find out which professors are responsible for honors theses in your major department here:

<http://www.colorado.edu/honors/honorscouncil>

1. We recommend that thesis students be juniors or seniors who have a topic or idea to explore

The most important initial step toward writing a thesis is coming up with a topic or idea, then narrowing it down as much as possible. Having specifics to focus on will help you clearly present your thoughts and goals when meeting with a prospective thesis advisor and other committee members.

2a. Students in the College of Arts and Sciences who want to pursue honors in their major should contact their department's Honors Council Representative

Most students (around 95%) choose to write and defend a thesis on a topic within their major - that's what we call *Departmental Honors*. As your major department will provide you the bulk of the support throughout the honors process - and may require to you take thesis-related courses - it's critical that you communicate with them if you are interested in pursuing Departmental Honors. The professor responsible for honors theses in your major department is called the Honors Council Representative.

2b. Students in the College of Arts and Sciences who want to write an interdisciplinary thesis which is broader than their major can pursue General Honors

General Honors thesis projects are designed to demonstrate a student's ability to conduct original creative or scholarly research of a broad interdisciplinary nature which cannot be contained within one single major offered by the College of Arts and Sciences. This path is not done through your major department, but directly through the Honors Program. For more details, please see: <https://www.colorado.edu/honors/interdisciplinary-honors>

3. Register online and upload the required documents

After getting your thesis project approved by your Honors Council Representative, please [register online](#) by the thesis registration deadline listed in the appropriate [thesis deadlines document](#) (generally in April or October prior to the semester you're defending in).

The online registration is not an application; your Honors Council Representative approves your thesis project. You'll be contacted by the Honors Program to verify that your online registration is complete, and your committee is approved, but the Honors Program *does not* approve the subject and content of your thesis project as part of the registration.

We require that a completed prospectus, timeline, and initial bibliography be uploaded as a single **PDF** during the online registration process.

- A **prospectus** is like an abstract. Many disciplines require a prospectus or abstract be around 150 words, but your department may differ. If you've prepared a prospectus or other short piece of writing for a departmental honors seminar, we will happily take that as your prospectus (no more than 15 pages, please).
- A **timeline** is needed to make sure that you have adequately planned enough time to complete your project by the assigned deadlines, and to keep you on task. At a minimum, your timeline should include the deadlines for presenting your defense, turning in a defense copy, and uploading your final paper to CU Scholar. You may also want to schedule tentative deadlines for submitting drafts of your paper to your committee or for completing research goals. Check with your major department for additional departmental requirements.
- The initial **bibliography** should contain at least a few initial sources for your research. *All projects* require a bibliography, whether it is a creative or scholarly work.

You can usually defend your thesis in spring OR fall semester. Check with your major department for details.

Writing an Honors Thesis in the Arts and Sciences: Timeline

Here are some actions you can take each year to work towards completing an honors thesis by the time you graduate (the timeline assumes you defend your thesis and graduate in spring of your senior year, but this is not required):

Freshman & sophomore year:

- Think about what topics you are interested in and why.
- Meet faculty in your major or topic and find out about their research.
- Apply to be a research assistant or work in a lab during the school year or over the summer.
- Read about the topics you are interested in (outside of class – ask a professor for a reading list).

Junior year:

- Take upper-level courses on topics you are interested in.
- Decide on a general research topic (broader than your final topic, but narrower than the discipline).
- Talk to your department's Honors Council Representative to find out deadlines, details, and requirements for writing a thesis in your department, or talk to the Honors Program about doing an interdisciplinary project. There may be specific classes that you must take, or early internal deadlines you need to meet, so have this conversation early to give yourself time to schedule and prepare.
- Ask a faculty member to be your advisor (usually someone who specializes in what you are interested in – be sure to confirm the faculty member is eligible first). Learn more about building a faculty committee here: <https://www.colorado.edu/honors/building-your-thesis-committee>
- Design your research project.
- Apply for funding for your research. An excellent source is the [Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program](#) (UROP). Check their deadlines; it's usually February for the following academic year – plan ahead!
- Read more about your topic and start your research.
- Take notes on everything you read; consider using a bibliographic database to keep track of what you have read and to cite sources (e.g. Zotero www.zotero.org).
- If you are ready, start writing parts of your thesis (e.g. methods, sections of literature review).
- You may need to secure approval from the [Institutional Review Board](#) (IRB) if you are doing research on human subjects. Be sure to check IRB's website for submission deadlines.

You are welcome to take our Advanced Honors Writing Workshop: Honors Thesis/Research Writing (HONR 3220-880) in your junior or senior year (preferably spring of your junior year or fall of your senior year, OR during the semester you plan to write your paper). Your major department may also offer class(es) to assist you in the thesis process.

Senior year:

- Ask two other professors to join your thesis committee *before* you register your project (1 Honors Council Representative & 1 person outside of your department – be sure to check the [Honors Thesis webpage](#) for committee eligibility requirements).
- Some departments may offer optional or required thesis class(es) during your senior year. Check with your Honors Council Representative for details and enrollment deadlines.
- Complete your Honors [registration online](#) by the specified deadline.
- Start writing your thesis under the direction of your advisor.
- Send drafts to your advisor and meet with him or her every few weeks. Be sure to pay attention to their feedback and incorporate it into your project; this will strongly contribute to a successful outcome.
- Defend your thesis (the defense deadline is usually at least 5 weeks before the end of the semester).

How long it takes you to research and write an honors thesis will depend on the nature of your research.

Theses that require lab work, field research, or human subjects research can take a significant amount of time to plan and conduct, so start planning early.

Check out Frequently Asked Questions here: www.colorado.edu/honors/graduationfaq

Still have Questions? Email honors@colorado.edu, visit us in Norlin M400M during our [in-person office hours](#), or call 303-492-6617.