

# HONORS & SCHOLARS

## UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

### Guidelines for Developing Honors Courses

Adopted by the University Honors & Scholars Faculty Advisory 2022-12-08

#### ***Introduction***

The University Honors Program welcomes the proposal of new and innovative academic opportunities for Honors students at The Ohio State University. This document describes the role, requirements and expected student outcomes of Honors and Honors embedded courses at the University.

#### ***What is an Honors Course?***

Honors courses remain a foundational component of the University Honors Program, offering students an enriched and challenging academic experience at the University. Practitioners and Scholars with the National Collegiate Honors Council (2022) recommend that honor courses foster student development or transformation in some or all of the following measurable outcomes:

- problem-solving, often with creative approaches
- critical reading
- clear, persuasive writing; oral presentation
- critical thinking
- forming judgments based on evidence
- artistic literacy
- articulated metacognition
- spiritual growth

#### ***Why an Honors Course?***

Honors courses support OSU's institutional mission and benefit students and faculty. As a land-grant institution, Ohio State maintains an educational imperative to address the academic needs of all our students and understands that diversity and inclusion are essential components to actualizing academic excellence. Honors courses (noted with an H following the course number on SIS) and Honors Embedded courses (noted with an E following the course number on SIS), with an emphasized degree of rigor and faculty engagement than regular courses, provide a means to address this need in our most talented and high-achieving students. One of the hallmarks of an Honors education is the community that emerges from shared experiences with peers and faculty (National

Collegiate Honors Council, 2022). As a large institution, our students frequently cite the small class size and enhanced engagement with faculty and Honors peers as their favorite aspects of the course.

Just as these courses benefit students, they also give faculty a chance to teach and mentor Ohio State's best and brightest. It is common for faculty to identify student researchers within an Honors course. Simultaneously, Honors students can engage further with the discipline that offers an Honors course, which may lead to a new academic interest for the student.

### ***What is the difference between an Honors course and an Honors Embedded course?***

The majority of academic experiences available to Honors students exist in the form of an Honors course, in which a small section of a course is offered to students in a discipline. Sometimes, a department may wish to offer an Honors course experience, but there are not enough students for even a small class section. A department may consider the Honors Embedded course option for students in those cases. The students who pursue an Honors Embedded course will be a part of the regular version of the class but will be expected to follow the Honors version of the course syllabus. An Honors embedded syllabus is expected to meet the same desired outcomes as a typical Honors course. However, to enact the honorific course experience, the logistics of the course for Honors could be impacted. For example, the faculty instructor and the Honors students meet outside of the scheduled class time to support the outcomes of the Honors course. The Honors Embedded courses receive their course numbers separate from the regular class, with SIS reflecting an "E" attached to the course number to note the completion of the Honors Embedded requirements

### ***Who can teach Honors courses or Honors Embedded courses?***

As outlined in this document, the delivery of these foundational Honors outcomes is central to the decision of who teaches Honors courses. Interested instructors should consult with their college or department Honors Director regarding teaching Honors courses.

### ***How do faculty develop and propose a new Honors or Honors Embedded Course?***

Faculty interested in developing a new Honors course, or revising an existing one, should refer to the guidelines below when considering various aspects of the class and course syllabus. Honors courses enrich the academic experience, provide a rigorous study in a discipline, and foster a greater level of faculty engagement than in non-Honors courses at the University. Questions to consider in the initial stages of course development include:

- 1) What content and assignments best meet a course's desired academic outcomes?

- 2) Are enough students interested in this topic to create an entire course? On average an Honors course consists of 15-25 students.
- 3) Will my chair and department support offering this small class section?
- 4) Can the learning objectives of the course be modified to reflect the rigor and challenge of an Honors course?
- 5) How will this course be taught (i.e., Honors course, embedded course, in-person course, synchronous online course, or hybrid course<sup>1</sup>)?

Staff in the University Honors Program are also happy to meet with faculty to guide this process.

Once the course syllabus is developed, the faculty will propose the course using the online curricular approval process ([curriculum.osu.edu](http://curriculum.osu.edu)). In most cases, a designated person in the department submits these. Once the course is in the system, it will go through all the approval bodies within the course's department and college.

As part of the curricular approval process, the Honors & Scholars Faculty Advisory Board will also need to approve the course. If the course is also proposed as a General Education class, it will be filtered through that approval process as well. Details on the General Education approval process can be found here. <https://oaa.osu.edu/ge-course-submission>

### ***What will faculty need to consider when developing an Honors Course?***

The Honors & Scholars Faculty Advisory Committee has outlined several components for successful Honors courses. These include structural components of the course, course requirements, and desired outcomes. Each of these components enhances student learning beyond just mastering the content of a discipline; instead, they develop academic capacities that may be transposed to other courses and contexts throughout a student's academic career. Honors courses also provide opportunities for students to reflect on what they have learned in the course and to consider how this class enhanced their academic and skill development.

#### **Structural components of an Honors Course**

1. Class size – Honors courses typically enroll 25 or fewer students. A small class size enhances opportunities for class discussion and engagement with faculty and peers.
2. Instruction format – the committee recommends an instructional format and pedagogical method that fosters discussion and enhances the personalized

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<sup>1</sup> If proposing this mode of instruction, please explain how you plan to facilitate peer-to-peer engagement and build community within the classroom.

experience for students. The smaller class size fosters discussion, which is less likely to occur in a larger class where a lecture is more practical.

### Desired outcomes and recommended Honors course requirements

1. Honors courses will foster enhanced critical thinking and analytical skills. An Honors course contains high-level content with the objective of higher-order thinking in comparison to a non-Honors course. For example, content and reading in the course should go beyond the typical textbook and instead draw from the primary literature. Additionally, an Honors course should not necessarily contain more assignments, but rather assignments that require and expect higher-order thinking. For example, instead of simply “describing a concept,” which a student might do in a non-Honors course through a lecture and textbook, an Honors course would require the student to “evaluate a concept” through reading and discussion of the peer-reviewed literature. Assignments should allow students to select and justify appropriate frameworks or methodologies from various fields and disciplines. In some cases, students can put this methodology into practice.
2. Honors courses will help students develop their problem-solving skills. Successful Honors courses frequently offer students the chance for independent work. The Honors course format is an ideal incubator for trial and error, offering students a safe opportunity to try out a new idea or thought pattern. An Honors course will include the principles and characteristics of high-impact practices such as high-performance expectations, real-world applications, frequent and constructive feedback, opportunities for sustained reflection (ePortfolio), public demonstration of competence, and experience with diversity (Kuh and O’Donnell, 2013).
3. Honors courses will allow students to process or produce substantiated works. Assignments and discussions in Honors courses will ask students to connect their learning in the course to other topics within the discipline and beyond. A critical piece of this outcome is enhanced interaction with the faculty member, facilitated by the structural components of the course.
4. Honors courses will augment student communication skills using inclusive modalities relative to the intended audience with activities such as oral presentations, class discussions, or written assignments.
5. Honors courses will allow students to demonstrate intellectual, interpersonal, and cognitive skills such as information literacy and to discover the relevance of learning through real-world applications.
6. Honors courses will promote reflective thinking and metacognition. Honors courses provide opportunities for students to make intellectual connections. Honors courses promote the connection of learning in a course to skill development, personal development, and career development.

## ***What items should a faculty member include when proposing a new Honors course?***

The Honors & Scholars Faculty Advisory Committee will expect to review the following items with the proposal for a new course both Honors and Honors Embedded:

- All fields in the online course approval system (curriculum.osu.edu)
- Honors course syllabus or Honors Embedded course syllabus
- A version of the syllabus of the regular course if one exists, or one at the same level
- Course rationale that addresses the items below:
  1. Why would the department like to offer an Honors version of this specific course
  2. What makes this course different from the regular version (if there is one) or a regular course at the same level
  3. Description of the typical structure (size, format, etc.) of a course for students at this level (1,000, 2,000, 3,000, etc.)
  4. In terms of the desired Honors course outcomes listed above, how does the course...
    - ✓ provide high-level content with the objective of higher-order thinking in comparison to a non-Honors course?
    - ✓ include principles and characteristics of high-impact practices?
    - ✓ ask students to connect their learning in the course to other topics within the discipline and beyond?
    - ✓ augment student communication skills using modalities that are inclusive relative to the intended audience?
    - ✓ allow students to demonstrate intellectual, interpersonal, and cognitive skills?
    - ✓ promote the connection of learning in a course to skill development, personal development, and career development?

## ***Questions?***

Please contact Dr. Julie Humbel-Courtney, Honors Program Director in the Honors & Scholars Center, with questions ([humbel-courtney.1@osu.edu](mailto:humbel-courtney.1@osu.edu))

## **References**

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