



Ursinus College

Office of Academic Affairs

TO: Faculty Colleagues

FROM: Kelly Sorensen, Associate Dean of the College

DATE: December 2024

RE: Honors Program registration for 2024-2025

This is a reminder of the [requirements for the Honors Program](#). This document includes:

- (1) the policy approved by the Faculty in April 2013, modified in October 2018 and included in the online catalog for 2024-2025;
- (2) suggested Honors timelines;
- (3) [this link](#) to downloadable Honors registration form that faculty due at the beginning of spring term for students invited to continue from 491 to 492.

Part 1—Honors Program.

Departmental and Interdepartmental Honors (*approved April 2013*)

The goals of the Honors Program at Ursinus College are to encourage academic excellence, to promote original research and independent study, and to reward scholarly achievement. Students with high overall academic standing who have demonstrated an exceptional competence, the capacity for independent, original research and disciplined scholarship may be awarded departmental honors or distinguished honors in the department of their major or minor fields of concentration. Students may also be awarded interdepartmental honors or distinguished honors, if they are double majors and complete the requirements for honors in both departments. Interdepartmental or distinguished honors may also be granted to students who complete the requirements for honors in the departments of their major and minor, subject to approval of both departments. Students may pursue honors in their minor departments or programs, with the approval of both their major and minor departments/ programs.

All these awards are made subject to the following regulations:

1. The standard GPA requirement to be eligible for departmental honors is either 3.3 overall or in the major. A student with a GPA below 3.3 may be nominated to the program by the student's research advisor(s), who should provide information about extenuating circumstances in the student's background and evaluate the student's academic background and ability to complete the thesis. Such nominations must be confirmed by the Academic Standards and Discipline Committee.
2. To be admitted to candidacy for departmental or interdepartmental honors or distinguished honors, students must enroll in a first semester of Research/Independent Work 491. By the middle of their first semester of Research/Independent Work 491, a candidate for honors submits a formal proposal including a bibliography and research plan to the department(s) for approval. Near the end of the 491 course, the candidate submits a written status report and makes an oral presentation to the department(s). Upon completion of 491, the student may be invited by the department(s) to pursue honors in the following semester.

Students must obtain written consent of a faculty member who will serve as the project adviser and have their candidacy certified by the chairperson of the department in which they wish to pursue honors. In the case of interdepartmental honors, students must obtain written consent of a faculty project adviser from each department/program, have their candidacy certified by the chairperson/coordinator of one of these departments/programs, and have the research or individual projects approved by both departments/programs.

Students who receive such approval by the end of the first semester will complete a second semester of Research/Independent Work 492.

3. The Honors Project, completed in the second semester of research/independent work, must demonstrate disciplined, independent and original scholarship or creativity. If the candidates receive a passing grade, they will earn credit hours toward graduation, even though their work may not be recommended for honors.

4. An honors committee consists of at least three faculty members, at least two from the department(s) and at least one from outside the department(s) or a non-Ursinus outside evaluator. The faculty adviser serves as one of these committee members. The committee evaluates the project and an oral presentation and examines the candidate by early to mid-April. This committee is chosen by the adviser(s) in consultation with the department chair(s) and the student. Departmental or interdepartmental honors will be awarded on the recommendation of this committee and the department(s), and the approval of the faculty.

Based on the above guidelines for Honors and Interdepartmental (or Interdisciplinary) Honors, **all Honors Committees consist of at least three members.**

For **departmental honors** there must be two members from the department and one from outside the department.

For **interdepartmental honors** the committee should minimally have one member from each represented department and one outside member. That outside member should be from a third discipline.

The student should consult with the honors project mentor.

After the student submits the final paper and passes the oral presentation, the committee may decide to award **distinguished honors**, if the student has demonstrated exceptional scholarship, originality, and/or thoroughness, and the project has been vetted by an outside reader. The Honors Committee including the outside reader must be unanimous in their decision to award distinguished honors to the student.

5. Departments specify the date for the candidate to submit a completed thesis. In order that the faculty may consider the awarding of honors or distinguished honors, the candidate must submit the completed thesis in PDF to the Digital Commons by the Monday of the last full week of classes following the format established by the Myrin Library, the approval of the project adviser(s), and approval of the department(s) and committee members and of the outside evaluator for distinguished honors.

Part 2— Honors timelines based on Honors guidelines approved by faculty 4/25/13 and modified based on an October 2018 faculty vote

Spring – Second Semester Junior Year

- Students with a cumulative average of at least 3.3 overall or in the major may register for Independent Research 491 with the approval of a faculty mentor for fall term senior year.
- Department chairs and faculty mentors are responsible to check GPA and prerequisite requirements for preliminary eligibility.
 - Department chair will validate both GPA and prerequisites when signing the Honors registration form late in fall term.
 - The student should have a 3.3 GPA overall or in the major
 - Exceptions to the 3.3 minimum GPA must be approved by Academic Standards and Discipline Committee – see above.
- With consent of the research adviser and prerequisites met, students may register for 491 in their major department, minor department, or Interdisciplinary Studies in the case of two departments (approval of both departments required). Students may not pursue Interdisciplinary Honors in more than two departments.
- Students may consider pursuing Honors level research in another department (i.e., neither the major nor the minor department) where the student has approval of a research adviser and the department but must also have approval from Academic Standards and Discipline Committee. This request should be initiated by the department.

Fall – First Semester Senior Year

- Student is registered in 491
- Mid-semester (approximate) – student submits proposal including bibliography and research plan for department approval.
- Student may register for 492 but final enrollment will be contingent upon successful completion of department requirements set for 491. This is determined at the end of the fall semester.
- End of semester – student submits written status report (form determined by the department) and makes an oral presentation.
- With Department and mentor consent, department may INVITE the student to pursue honors in the following semester and register for 492. If more than one department/program is involved, both departments must agree to move the candidate forward.
- By mid-January the student should complete the Honors registration form and secure the appropriate signatures including validation of the GPA and pre-requisite requirements.
- The Honors committee should be identified by this mid-point in the yearlong honors process. If the project is moving toward distinguished honors, the non-Ursinus outside evaluator should be identified and added to the committee no later than one month prior to the April presentation.

Spring – Second Semester Senior Year

- Departments, mentor and student set the date for the final oral presentation/defense and submission of the final draft.
- Final Paper due the Monday of the last full week of spring semester classes. (See below for instructions on uploading the project and submitting the signature page.)

Additional points for students pursuing honors:

- The Provost's Office will provide a standard form for Honors registration, which will require a brief description of the project and the signatures of the project adviser(s) and the department chairperson(s). See: The Research and Creative Projects website for the form: <https://www.ursinus.edu/offices/research-and-creative-projects/honors-projects/>
- Non-Ursinus outside evaluators for Distinguished Honors will read the final draft of the research and may participate either in person or virtually. Note: the Provost's Office does provide stipends for outside evaluators – please reach out to provostoffice@ursinus.edu for further information.
- All research involving human subjects requires review and approval by the Ursinus Institutional Review Board in accordance with federal law and Ursinus policy. The goal of these regulations is to ensure the safety, respect, and dignity of human subjects who volunteer to participate in scientific research. <https://www.ursinus.edu/offices/institutional-review-board/>
- All departments and programs in which honors are granted will offer two courses in research/independent work (numbered 491/491W, 492/492W) of at least four semester hours credit each. Candidates for honors must complete two semesters of research/independent work.
- In the case of interdepartmental honors, the outside member cannot be from the same department as either of the other two members.
- Honors and Distinguished Honors candidates must deposit (upload) the completed thesis to the Digital Commons on or before the due date (**5:00 p.m. on the Monday of the last full week of Spring classes**) in the format established by Myrin Library. The signature page, with written approval (signatures) of the mentor/advisor(s), the committee members, the department chair(s) (and outside evaluator for distinguished honors) must be submitted in paper copy to the office of the Provost by **5:00 p.m. on the Monday of the last full week of Spring classes**. Guidelines for formatting honors papers and for submitting projects to the Digital Commons can be found at: <https://www.ursinus.edu/offices/research-and-creative-projects/honors-projects/>.
- Honors papers submitted to the Digital Commons will be presented for Faculty approval at the May Faculty Meeting.