

## HONORS THESIS REQUIREMENTS

The Department of Economics has designed the Honors Program to encourage more intensive study than is required of majors in Economics. It leads to a bachelor's degree in "Economics with Honors." For more information, see Dr. Geoffrey Rothwell, Director of Honors Programs for the Department of Economics, email: rothwell@stanford.edu

### ADMINISTRATIVE DEADLINES

Honors students must meet specific deadlines established by the University, the Department of Economics, and the Honors Program Director (1) to continue as an honors student, (2) to be considered for departmental and university awards, and (3) to graduate "with honors."

**November 1st:** Submit completed *Honors Program Application Form* and *Advisor Signature Form* to the Academic Office in Economics Building (room 136).

**First week of Spring Quarter:** Submit the first draft of thesis to your thesis advisor. If you are unable to meet this deadline, you should take Economics 101 to fulfill department Writing-in-the-Major (WIM) requirements to graduate. (A finished thesis fulfills this requirement.)

**Second Monday in May:** Submit Honors Thesis. You will not be considered for the department or university prizes unless you submit your thesis by this deadline.

**Third week May:** Attend the Department of Economics Honors Symposium where students will present their Honors Theses.

**June 1st:** This is the last day you can submit your thesis to graduate with honors. (Your thesis advisor must read and submit a grade by the "grades for graduating students" deadline.)

### THESIS DEADLINES

Your goal in the Honors Program is to produce an Honors Thesis of excellent quality. To help you in making progress toward this goal, the following timetable and requirements are suggested. You should work out a schedule with your thesis advisor based on these suggestions and a timetable appropriate for your own project.

**Before November 1st:** Submit Three Page Overview and Bibliography to your thesis advisor.

**First week of Winter Quarter:** Submit literature review to your thesis advisor.

**February 1st:** Submit description of methodology ("Study Design") to your thesis advisor.

**March 1st:** Submit preliminary results to your thesis advisor.

**First week of Spring Quarter:** Submit first draft to your thesis advisor.

**Final Thesis.** The final version of your thesis is due the second Monday in May. Five copies must be submitted: four hard copies and one copy on a PC-compatible CD-ROM. One bound copy should go to your thesis advisor. Two bound copies, one unbound copy, and the CD should be submitted to the Undergraduate Administrator in the Academic Office. Bound copies must be bound as follows: **wire spiral with clear plastic front and vinyl black back**. Theses nominated by advisers will be considered for the University's Firestone Medal, for the Anna Laura Myers Prize for an Outstanding Thesis in Economics, and for the John G. Sobieski Award for Creative Thinking in Economics. (When submitting after the "prize deadline," submit one bound copy to your thesis advisor, and one bound copy and CD to the Academic Office.)

#### **OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

**Registration.** In addition to submitting your Honors Application to the Academic Office, you and your thesis advisor must decide on the number of credits for your Honors Thesis (through Economics 199D or 139D), subject to a **minimum of one credit** and a **maximum of ten credits**. The credits will not be used in Department of Economics GPA calculations (see below). Economics 199D meets the first Thursday of every quarter to discuss administrative matters.

**When registering for 199D or 139D, you must use the section number assigned to your thesis adviser (do not use section 01). A list of instructors (under "Independent Study") is available on Axess when you are filing your study list.**

**Course Requirements.** Honors students must complete all requirements of the major, including Economics 102A and 102B. They must (1) achieve a grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.5 for the 80 units required of the economics major and (2) complete at least two lecture courses most relevant for the proposed topic of the Honors Thesis by the end of the junior year. (These can be included in the basic 80 units.) Candidates must write an Honors Thesis for 1 to 10 units of credit (through Economics 199D or 139D; note: a grade for 139D must be submitted at the end of the quarter, but a grade for 199D can be submitted at the completion of the thesis). The requirement for Economics 101 may be replaced by 5 units of credit for the Honors Thesis to leave honor students with a total of 85 units overall. The thesis must be of high quality and written under the direction of a member of the department or its affiliated faculty, who will grade the thesis.

**GPA Information.** To enroll in the Honors Program, your overall or department GPA must exceed 3.5. **To graduate with honors your department GPA must be at least a 3.5 at graduation.** The following weights are used in calculating the GPA:

A+	4.3	B+	3.3	C+	2.3	D+	1.3
A	4.0	B	3.0	C	2.0	D	1.0
A-	3.7	B-	2.7	C-	1.7	D-	0.7

**ADVICE FOR WRITING AN HONORS THESIS**

**Why Write an Honors Thesis?** There are at least four benefits to writing an Honors Thesis. First, you will learn how to conduct research to address a thesis question or hypothesis. This develops your analytical and organizational skills. Second, you will have the benefit of regular interaction with a faculty member. Third, you will have the opportunity to spend enough time and thought on a problem to become an expert on your topic. Fourth, you will gain a sense of what writing a PhD dissertation might be like, should you be considering getting a PhD. These benefits provide a foundation for your training as an economist. This complements your course work, which provides a foundation for your understanding of economics.

1. Begin focusing as early as possible on a specific question, issue, or hypothesis. Write a title page with a 200 word abstract for each possible topic. Prepare a bibliography following the department guidelines for your favorite topic. Approach a faculty member or your academic adviser to help you pick an appropriate reading list. (If you are a junior, consider taking Economics 198 or Public Policy 197, “Junior Honors Seminar,” which will help you focus. Also, consider applying for a Summer Research Assistantship and/or Honors College.)
2. Reading with specific questions in mind is more useful and thought-provoking than passive background reading. Attempt to synthesize the methodologies and findings in the field of economics that contains your topic. Be on the lookout for a seminal paper that could be the foundation of your thesis. Your literature review should be completed by the end of the summer before your senior year. If you are doing an empirical study, you should begin your data analysis before winter break. The first draft of the thesis is due at the end of Winter Quarter. (If you do not make this deadline, take Economics 101 in the Spring.)
3. Another strategy is to take a course in the Fall that requires a term paper in an area that interests you (including Economics 101). The term paper could potentially be used as a foundation for your thesis. If you choose this strategy, you should receive permission from the course instructor to incorporate the work into your thesis. You could also take Economics 101 in the winter to complete the first draft of your thesis, if the instructor allows you to choose your own topic.
4. Establish a regular meeting time with your thesis adviser(s). At the meeting, discuss your progress and ask for intermediate deadlines. Do not be afraid to ask questions or solicit guidance from your course instructors, thesis adviser, or the Honors Director. They can often save you much time and frustration if you state that you do not understand something.
5. An Honors Thesis poses a question and provides analysis to answer it. A paper that simply describes economic events or institutions is not a satisfactory thesis. The thesis is analysis, not description or opinion. Usually, the introduction of the thesis poses a question, defends its importance, and outlines the general strategy of analysis that will follow. The second section reviews relevant background material. The third section discusses your analysis (this can involve several sections in your thesis). The final section answers your question. All of the material in your thesis should be relevant to answering your thesis question. You are not writing a book. Most theses are between 60 and 80 pages, including tables, figures, and references. Most students finish their theses, even though most students have no clue what they are doing when they start them.