

HONORS THESIS REQUIREMENTS 2020-21

The Department of Economics has designed the Honors Program to encourage more intensive research than is required of majors in Economics. It leads to a bachelor's degree in "Economics with Honors" (BAH). For more information, contact Marcelo Clerici-Arias, Director of Honors Program for the Department of Economics (marcelo@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."

Second Monday of autumn quarter: Contact the Director of the Honors Program about your possible intent to participate in the Honors Program

Third Wednesday of autumn quarter:

- Complete the *Honors Program Application*. It will be routed to your honors advisor and Marcelo Clerici-Arias, the Econ Honors Director for approval and Joanne DeMarchena for processing.
- Declare Econ BAH in Axess.

Winter Quarter: Enroll in one unit of the Director of the Honors Program's Econ 199D section.

First day of classes in 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. (Only the finished thesis fulfills the WIM requirement.)

May 6th (12 noon): Submit Honors Thesis. You will not be considered for the department or university prizes unless you submit your thesis by this deadline.

May 10-14th: Oral presentation of your honors thesis at the Department of Economics Honors Symposium.

June 4th (12 noon): 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 make 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 the third Wednesday of autumn quarter: Submit Three Page Overview and Bibliography to your thesis advisor and the Director of the Honors Program.

Fall Quarter, week 7: Submit literature review to your thesis advisor and the Director of the Honors Program.

Winter Quarter, week 4: Submit description of methodology ("Study Design") to your thesis advisor and the Director of the Honors Program.

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Winter Quarter, week 7: Submit preliminary results to your thesis advisor and the Director of the Honors Program.

First day of classes in spring quarter: Submit first draft to your thesis advisor and the Director of the Honors Program.

Final Thesis. You must submit a hard copy as well as an electronic copy to each of the following people: your thesis advisor, the Undergraduate Student Services Officer and the Director of the Honors Program. The format of the thesis must comply with the style guidelines.

Electronic copies should contain all thesis components in a single PDF file.

Theses nominated by advisors 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.

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), 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).

When registering for 199D, 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 Axxess when you are filing your study list.

Course Requirements. Honors students must complete all requirements of the major, plus five more units to bring the total Econ units to 85. 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 Econ upper division 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 one to nine units of credit in their thesis advisor's section of Econ 199D. Note: the advisor should submit the N or N- grades in autumn and winter quarters. When the thesis is complete, the final grades must replace the N grades. Additionally, winter registration for one unit of Honors Thesis Research, under the Director of the Honors Program section number (199D-20). 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 excellent quality and written under the direction of a member of the department or its affiliated faculty, who will grade the thesis. **Students must not enroll in Econ 199D prior to being accepted into the Honors Program.**

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.**

Note: due to the lack of letter grades in spring 2020, the Econ GPA requirement for honors in 2020-21 is a hard 3.4

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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 or an advanced sophomore, 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 on the first day of classes in spring 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.
4. Establish a regular meeting time with your thesis advisor(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 advisor, or the Honors Director. They can often save you a lot of 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

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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.