Honors Guidelines for the Independent Concentration

Students who (a) have completed at least two thirds of their independent concentration requirements, (b) earned a majority of “A” grades in those courses, and (c) are in good academic standing, are eligible to apply for honors at the start of their penultimate (often 7th) semester at Brown.

Honors candidates spend the senior year working intensively on a self-directed research project under the guidance of one faculty advisor, and two other faculty members who serve as readers. The pursuit of Honors in the concentration provides an opportunity for intensive engagement. The process of designing a research project and formulating a research question, practicing inter/disciplinary ways of thinking, and presenting one's research to others develops expertise and heightened communication skills as well as deepened relationships with a faculty mentor.

How to Apply for Honors Candidacy

Applicants must:
- Be in Good Academic Standing
- Have completed at least 2/3 of the IC requirements by the application deadline
- Have earned a majority of “A” grades in the IC
- Secure a faculty advisor, and discuss plans for the proposed thesis project with the advisor, ideally during the student's 6th semester
- Prepare a thesis proposal according to the advisor’s specifications and those listed in this document, outlining the major research questions and methods to be used (the Thesis Proposal Form is included at the end of this document)
- Submit the proposal, signed by faculty advisor and both readers, to the IC Dean no later than the third Friday of the 7th semester (this deadline allows the IC Dean to notify students of their admission to the Honors program with sufficient time to allow the student to add a class by the deadline in the 4th week of the term)

Strong thesis proposals will be submitted on time, will be well-written, and will have (1) a clear research question; (2) sound and appropriate methods (on which the student has received training); and (3) a reasonable timeline for completion by April 15 for spring graduates, or the 1st Friday of December for mid-year completers.

Thesis Requirements

1 Students who plan to study abroad should think about potential topics and meet with appropriate professors before leaving. If away in the 6th semester, they should maintain contact with their advisors while abroad.
Once accepted as honors candidates, students must:

- Enroll in 2 semesters of departmental independent study courses with the faculty advisor (student must register no later than the last day to add a course, four weeks into the semester)
- Meet regularly with the faculty advisors (twice per month is recommended)
- Submit drafts of the thesis by the established deadlines listed in this document
- Give an oral presentation of their research (as all IC students must do)

**Advisor and Honors Committee**

An honors thesis requires one advisor and two readers to serve as the Honors Committee (the advisor and two other readers of the thesis). While it is not required, the IC faculty advisor often serves as the thesis advisor. The student identifies two additional readers in consultation with the thesis advisor. The Honors Committee must be established early enough so that they may read, provide feedback for, and sign the Thesis Proposal, due no later than the 3rd Friday of the 7th semester (see the timeline below).

Although the roles of advisor and reader differ, students must maintain regular communication with all committee members during the research and writing of the thesis. The advisor works closely with the student to develop the research project and a plan (with short- and long-term deadlines) for its execution. The two should establish a regular meeting schedule at the start of each term. Because the advisor serves as the instructor of record for the required independent study course, this meeting schedule can serve as a syllabus for the work to be done during each of the two semesters. The advisor provides guidance on specific research methods, recommending additional coursework or referring the student to faculty with relevant expertise. The advisor also evaluates the progress of the research, providing direction and timely feedback on written drafts. The two readers play a smaller role, while still providing input and guidance throughout the project. Often, the readers are able to provide feedback in areas where they advisor may not have expertise – this is often the case in independent concentrations where the research may span several disciplines. Readers often read fewer drafts than the primary reader, but still offer feedback and comments. Students should establish a few regular meetings with each reader, at least monthly (although this may vary based on the reader's personal style.) It is often beneficial for the readers and the advisor to periodically touch base about the student's progress.

**Thesis Components and Format**

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2 The advisor and at least one additional reader must be Brown faculty members. A curriculum vitae for any non-Brown thesis readers must accompany the Thesis Proposal.
The honors thesis is an extended essay, usually between 50-100 pages in length. The format and length of the thesis will be determined at the discretion of the thesis advisor and the student. A sample title page is provided at the end of this guide. The structure of the honors thesis varies from across academic disciplines. However, the honors thesis generally consists of:

1. A clear and sustained thesis or argument
2. A theoretical framework
3. Primary sources
4. Persuasive, academically honest, and engaging argumentative writing
5. Conformity to proper academic presentation protocol (e.g., table of contents, full and properly formatted notations, subheadings, etc.).

It may be possible to complement a non-written component (such as a multimedia installation, performance, laboratory experiments, etc.) as part of the honors thesis. The form of this component will vary according to the IC. However, the non-written component cannot substitute for an extensively researched and carefully written thesis, supporting the argument of a cogent research question.

**Evaluation of the Honors Thesis and Recommendation for Honors**

Before recommending Honors, the IC dean will ensure that the student has continued to make progress toward degree requirements and has met the Honors requirements (remaining in Good Academic Standing, etc.) listed in this document.

The Honors Committee and the IC Dean will evaluate the thesis for:
- Original research (may mean a novel approach to an oft-posed set of questions) or creative expression
- Intellectual and methodological rigor
- Depth of analysis; evidence is appropriate to the claims being made
- Ability to apply theories and methods of research, analysis, and interpretation or creative techniques as appropriate
- Clarity of the presentation: the thesis should be well written with appropriate citations
- Soundness of the conclusions that have been reached

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3 Students should consult a style handbook (such as Modern Language Association Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, The Chicago Manual of Style, the American Psychological Association Manual, etc.) appropriate to the discipline and ensure the style used is acceptable to the advisor. Use of citation management software (such as Zotero, Endnote, or RefWorks) is also recommended. See Brown's Library website for support.
Thesis Timeline & Deadlines (*dates are recommended and subject to your advisor's approval)

6th Semester
*February-March (October-November for mid-years)
Begin thinking about potential topics; contact potential advisor and readers

*May 15 (December 15 for mid-years)
Submit a working bibliography to potential advisor and readers

7th Semester
3rd Friday of the term (Fall 2016: Sept. 23; Spring: 2017: Feb. 10)
Submit signed Thesis Proposal & Form to UH 209

4th week of the term
Accepted honors candidates must confirm registration in an independent study course

December 15 (May 15 for mid-years)
Submit a partial draft (at least 1 chapter) to the honors committee for feedback

8th Semester
4th week of the term
Confirm registration in an independent study course

March 15 (November 15 for mid-years)
Submit the complete draft to the honors committee for feedback

April 15 (1st Friday of December for mid-years)
Submit the final honors thesis, in a single PDF File to IC Dean; consult with each reader to determine their preferred format

April 30 (3rd Friday of December for mid-years)
Honors committee’s letters of recommendation are due to IC Dean via email. Letters can use this template.

Tips and Resources

1. Peruse recently written honors theses in related departments. They are kept on file in department offices and archived at the John Hay library.

2. Only enroll in 3 courses in addition to your thesis independent study. You will need to treat your thesis work like a course in order to prioritize it and make the steady progress that is required. Create a short- and long-term schedule with goals for each week and each month. The thesis is a marathon, not a sprint!
3. Talk with students in related departments. Find a "thesis buddy" or group to meet with regularly to share ideas, problem-solve, or to simply write together.

4. Create a thesis-advising network that includes a Writing Center Associate and Subject Librarian in your field. You are not expected to figure it out alone.

Recent IC Honors Thesis Titles

2015

- Ana Gonzalez, AB in Jazz Studies: “The Puerto Rican Diaspora in Jazz: Identidades en Vaiven”
- Juan Santoyo, AB in Contemplative Science: “Linking Experience and Brain Activity: A Novel Method for Neuropharmacology”
- Jay Xu, ScB in Statistics: “A Comparison of INLA and JAGS when applied to multiple imputation with the penalized spline of propensity prediction method”
- Rachel Zema, AB in Geography: “Millennium Mining for Petroleum: Land Management and its Socio-Environmental Effects in the Ecuadorian Amazon”

2014

- Christina Johnston, AB in Aesthetics: “Particularity: An Investigation into Aesthetic Apprehension”
- Emily Kassie, AB in Politics, Film, and Journalism: “‘I Married the Man who Killed My Family’: An Exploration of the Post-Genocide Phenomenon of Intermarriage as a Method of Reconciliation and Reintegration in Rwanda”
- Junkyung Kim, ScB in Intelligent Systems: “A Computational Model of Early Stereo Vision and the Role of Normalization in Solving the Correspondence Problem”
- Hanna McPhee, AB in Biologically Inspired Design: “Parallels Between Science and Art: The Scientific Process and Design Methods”
- Alice Preminger, AB in Narratology: “Adaptation and Anna Karenina”
Sample Title Page

[Title]

Honors Thesis Submitted by

[Student Name]

in partial fulfillment of the

[A.B./Sc.B] in [Title of Independent Concentration]

Brown University

[Date]

Prepared under the Direction of

[Advisor’s Name], Advisor

[Reader’s Name], Reader

[Reader’s Name], Reader

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Senior Thesis Proposal Form

This form (signed by the student and honors committee members) should accompany a 1-2 page thesis proposal addressing the questions listed below.

NAME: _______________________________ GRAD YEAR: _______________________________

CONCENTRATION TITLE: ______________________________________________________________

WORKING THESIS TITLE: _____________________________________________________________

THESIS ADVISOR’S NAME: ____________________________________________________________

THESIS ADVISOR’S SIGNATURE: _______________________________________________________

1ST READER’S NAME: ______________________________________________________________

1ST READER’S SIGNATURE: ___________________________________________________________

2ND READER’S NAME: ______________________________________________________________

2ND READER’S SIGNATURE: _________________________________________________________

STUDENT’S SIGNATURE: ___________________________ DATE: ___________________________

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Write a 1-2 page thesis proposal addressing the questions listed below.

1. Describe your thesis topic and state your research question(s).

2. Briefly describe your research design, or the type of methodology you will use to answer your question(s). Discuss any training you have received in these methods.

3. Provide a projected work schedule of the two semesters of thesis work, noting deadlines listed in the IC Honors Guidelines.

Submit signed form & thesis proposal to
Peggy Chang, IC Director of Undergraduate Studies, Curricular Resource Center.