



## Honors Guidelines for the Independent Concentration

Independent Concentrators 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 (usually 7<sup>th</sup>) semester at Brown.

Honors candidates spend the senior year working intensively on a **self-directed research project** under the guidance of **one faculty advisor (director of the thesis), 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 a deepened relationship 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 (more than 50%)
- Secure a faculty advisor, and discuss plans for the proposed thesis project with the advisor, ideally during the student's 6<sup>th</sup> semester<sup>1</sup>
- 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> Students who plan to **study abroad** should think about potential topics and meet with appropriate professors **before leaving**. If away in the 6<sup>th</sup> semester, they should maintain contact with their advisors while abroad.

received training); and (3) a reasonable timeline for completion by April 15 for spring graduates, or the 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of December for mid-year completers.

## Thesis Requirements

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 primary thesis advisor (at least twice per month is recommended)
- Meet ~ twice with first reader each semester, and ~ once with second reader each semester
- Arrange for one group meeting between thesis director and readers by mid-7<sup>th</sup> semester
- Submit drafts of the thesis by the established deadlines listed in this document to thesis director and readers
  - ***The primary thesis advisor/director should comment on the first chapter soon after submission, and on the first full draft. The first reader should comment on the first full draft. The second reader can comment on the first full draft but need only comment on the final version of the thesis.***
- Give an oral presentation of their research (as all IC students must do)
- ***Quality of the thesis should meet the quality of a high-level of achievement, or the equivalent of "A"-level work.***
- Honors is awarded by the IC Dean based on the assessment of the thesis by the thesis committee members, and on the overall performance in the concentration.

### ***Advisor and Honors Committee***

An honors thesis requires **one advisor/thesis director and two readers** to serve as the **Honors Committee** (the advisor and two other readers of the thesis<sup>2</sup>). While it is not required, the IC faculty sponsor 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of the 7<sup>th</sup> semester (see the timeline below).

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

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 (aligning with the IC student's junior-year methods course), 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 the 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***

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, and/or creative process
2. A theoretical framework, and/or a form of critical analysis of the creative process
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.).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 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](#).

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

## Thesis Timeline & Deadlines (*\*dates are recommended and subject to your advisor's approval*)

### 6<sup>th</sup> 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

### 7<sup>th</sup> Semester

3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of the term (Friday, September 25, 2020)

Submit signed Thesis Proposal & Form to IC Dean (peggy\_chang@brown.edu)

4<sup>th</sup> week of the term (Tuesday, October 6, 2020)

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

### 8<sup>th</sup> Semester (revised for Academic Year 2020-21)

4<sup>th</sup> week of the term (Wednesday, February 17, 2021)

Confirm registration in an independent study course

Friday, March 19, 2021 (November 15 for mid-years)

Submit the complete draft to the honors committee for feedback

Friday, April 2, 2021 (1<sup>st</sup> 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

Thursday, April 8 (3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of December for mid-years)

Honors committee's letters of recommendation are due to IC Dean via email; see document template on IC website

### ***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. The IC Dean can share IC theses from prior years.

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.
5. Try to schedule at least one group meeting between you and your entire thesis committee, to clarify expectations and roles.

### Recent IC Honors Thesis Titles

#### 2020

- Aliosha Bielenberg, AB in Critical Thought and Global Social Inquiry: "How Do We Make A World? Hannah Arendt, the Khoi-San, and the Problems of Alterity and Humanism"
- Talia Curhan, AB in Nutrition, Philosophy, and Human Development: "Project REACH: Redefining Eating Availability and Choices in Hospitals"
- Mattis Dalton, ScB in Cognitive Neuroscience of Music: "Aberrations in time: The effects of music-elicited emotions on time perception in film"
- Ann Garth, AB in Systems Change and Environmental Policy: "The Framing of State-Level Climate Policy"
- Shannon Kingsley, AB in Ethnobotany: "How Do Immigrant Farmers and Gardeners Impact Plant Diversity in Providence County, Rhode Island?"
- Lori Kohen, AB in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics: "Power, Precarity and Violence in Turkey: A Comprehensive Investigation of the Rise in Violence Against Women under the AKP"
- Noa Machover '19.5, AB in Urban Design: "Toxic City: Design Praxis for Just Waste Futures in Bayview-Hunters Point"
- Audrey McDermott, AB in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics: "The American Woman's Double Shift: Household Labor's Philosophical Origins, Economic Consequences and Policy Solutions"
- Julia Ostrowski, ScB in Computational Neuroscience: "Rhythmic Modulation of Beta Events in Somatosensory Cortical Processing and Tactile Detection"
- William Patterson, ScB in Computational Neuroscience: "Prediction of bacterial STIs among MSM in Rhode Island: A machine learning approach"

- Chahat Rana, ScB in Computational Neuroscience: “Computation beyond Neurons: A mechanistic proposal for the integration of vascular to neural signaling in dopaminergic axons”
- Sara Runkel, ScB in Environmental Physics: “Atmospheric Boundary Layer Dynamics and Pollutant Transport in La Paz, Bolivia”
- Nivedita Sriram, ScB in Philosophy and the Scientific Method: “Metabolic Syndrome, Certainty and Doubt: Re-envisioning the Scientific Method through Philosophy of Science”
- Daniel Tompkins, AB in Human Centered Design: “Interaction Design and the Art of Free Play”

## 2019

- Maryam Ahmad, AB in Narrative Health: “how we got sick”
- Julian Jacobs, AB in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics: “Is This Time Different? Artificial Intelligence, Inequality, and The Future of Work”

## 2018

- Adrian Grant-Alfieri, AB in Social Innovation: “Accelerating the Transition to a Sustainable Food System”
- Anna Schwartz, AB in Music Cognition: “The Effects of Timbre Distortions, Arousal, and Spatial Orienting on Memory for Vocal and Instrumental Melodies”
- Christian Suarez, AB in Animal Studies: “Holy are the Immonde: Farm Sanctuaries and the Countercultural Contours of Interspecies Devotion”
- Conor Regan, AB in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics: “When to Act: U.S. Interventions in the Balkans as a Framework for Syria Policy & the Limits of State Sovereignty”
- Michele Winter, ScB in Computational Neuroscience: “Comparative Analysis of CNNs and the DoG Filters to Model Mouse Visual Cortex”

## 2017

- Madeline Chin, AB in Medical Humanities:
- Brandon Dale, AB in Ethnopharmacognosy:
- Anne Fosburg '17.5, AB in Critical Pedagogy: “The Intimacies of Education: An Exploration of Critical Pedagogy in Higher Education”
- Miranda Olson, AB in Global Health Narrative: “Dying well in Haiti: a hospital-level needs assessment”
- Dolma Ombadykow, AB in Medical Humanities: “What Only the Corpse Might Know: Situating the Development of Medical Authority within Histories of Violence”

## 2016

- Wayne Byun, AB in Critical Humanities: “Hannah Arendt on the Life of Thinking”

- Sarah Grace, ScB in Statistics:
- Marisa Millenson, ScB in Biostatistics:
- Morgan Patrick '16.5, ScB in Music Cognition:
- Kiera Peltz, AB in Happiness: "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Unhappiness"
- Sana Teramoto, AB in Educational Neuroscience: "Interpreting Neuroscience of Education: The Effect of ELS and BDNF Val66Met Interaction on Executive Function Development"
- Marion Wellington, ScB in Music Cognition:
- Livia Whitermore, AB in Refugee and Migration Studies:

## 2015

- Ana Gonzalez, AB in Jazz Studies: "The Puerto Rican Diaspora in Jazz: *Identidades en Vaiven*"
- Allison Rosen, ScB in Statistics: "A Bayesian multinomial logistic regression analysis of the influence of genetic predisposition for risk-taking and perceived behavior of role models on Mexican-American adolescent alcohol use"
- Juan Santoyo, AB in Contemplative Science: "Linking Experience and Brain Activity: A Novel Method for Neuropharmacology"
- Mina Shakarshy, AB in Art, Design, and Visual Perception: "The Art and Science of Bi-Stable Image Perception"
- 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"
- Chloe Zimmerman, AB in Contemplative Psychosomatic Medicine: "Embodied Medicine: Elucidating Neural Mechanisms of Maladaptive Body Awareness in Chronic Pain"

## 2014

- Benjamin Davidson, AB in Applied Political Theory: "Life in a Rhetorical Democracy: Rhetorical Strategies for Navigating Adversarial Disagreement"
- Eric Heimark, AB in Information Technology and Political Economy: "The Impact of Information Technology on the Labor Force"
- 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”
- Luke Lattanzi-Silveus, AB in Philosophy, Politics and Economics: “Consumer Finance and Labor Exploitation”
- 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

## 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: \_\_\_\_\_ DEPARTMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

THESIS ADVISOR'S SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

1<sup>ST</sup> READER'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DEPARTMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

1<sup>ST</sup> READER'S SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>ND</sup> READER'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DEPARTMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>ND</sup> 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 via your IC methods course taken during your junior year.**

**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.*