

Policies and Procedures for Honors College Learning Contracts

Spring Semester 2012

****Please note important changes below in procedures and deadlines for submitting contract and completing agreed upon work.****

What is an Honors Learning Contract?

Through an Honors Learning Contract (sometimes called an “Honors Course Conversion”), an instructor and a University Honors College student agree on a more intensive and extensive exploration of course material in a non-honors course. By successfully fulfilling the agreement spelled out in the Honors Learning Contract, the student will receive Honors credit for the course.

Can an Honors Learning Contract be developed for any course?

The decision to enter into an Honors Learning Contract rests with the instructor, subject to the approval of the Honors College director of the college in which the course resides.

What are the criteria for an Honors Learning Contract?

To convert a non-Honors course into an Honors course, the student should gain a broader and more in-depth exposure to course content. For example, an Honors Learning Contract might include investigating primary sources and documents, undertaking a project in which the results are presented to the class, leading a study group formed of students in the class, or doing a term paper or research project on a topic more original and challenging than the typical topics in the course. A desired outcome of an Honors Learning Contract is more one-on-one contact that results in an intellectual dialogue with the instructor.

What is the procedure for developing an Honors Learning Contract?

STEP 1: After obtaining the instructor’s consent, the student must complete the attached Honors Learning Contract with a clear description of the specific work to be done. The form must be signed by the instructor and the Honors College director of the college where the course resides, as well as the Honors College Dean.

STEP 2: Preferably by the end of the add/drop period but no later than 4:30 pm on the last day of the eighth week of the semester, the student must bring the completed Learning Contract to the Honors College Office in Sullivan Hall. Copies of the Learning Contract will be available to the department chair and student if requested.

Note: Graduating seniors must submit their contracts by the end of the add/drop period.

STEP 3: All agreed upon work must be completed and submitted to the instructor by the end of the business day on the last day of the term. The Honors notation will not appear on the student’s transcript until the end of the semester.

For instructors only: The last week of the semester, instructors will receive an email asking them to notify the Honors College by the Monday of exam week which students have completed the agreed upon Honors Contract work. The student’s grade need not be determined or submitted.

If you have questions about this form or procedure, please contact the Honors College office at either 419-530-6030 or honors@utoledo.edu.

Suggestions for Developing an Honors Learning Contract

Fundamentally, honors courses should be *qualitatively different* from non-honors courses. In other words, they should be more challenging and demanding not by simply assigning *more* work, but by mining more educational *value* from the work that is assigned. Class meetings and out-of-class assignments should emphasize inquiry, investigation and analysis, in contrast to absorption of facts and information. For example, an Honors Learning Contract might include investigating primary sources and documents, undertaking a project in which the results are presented to the class, leading a study group formed of students in the class, or doing a term paper or research project on a topic more original and challenging than the typical topics in the course. A desired outcome of an Honors Learning Contract would be more one-on-one contact that results in an intellectual dialogue with the instructor. By agreeing to a Learning Contract, the instructor will not be creating an entirely new course, but may be adopting one or more of the ideas listed below to enhance an already existing course.

Like Honors courses, Honors Learning Contracts may take advantage of some of the following approaches:

- emphasizing written and oral communication skills;
- emphasizing discussion and other interactive teaching/learning techniques (e.g., use of the Socratic method) that are generally impractical for large undergraduate classes;
- promoting learning outside the formal classroom setting (e.g., service projects);
- fostering teamwork and collaboration;
- applying theory and principles to case studies and “real-life” problems;
- exploring connections among various fields of study;
- providing opportunities for independent research;
- providing opportunities for publication or public presentation of work;
- developing assignments that require students to reconcile conflicting findings or to synthesize different points of view;
- emphasizing the use of original or primary sources, as opposed to traditional textbooks.

This information adapted from “What Makes an Honors Course an Honors Course?”, a Calhoun Community College publication. Used with permission.

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