

Honors Thesis Handbook

For Undergraduate Research in the:
Honors College
University of Texas at San Antonio
One UTSA Circle, JPL 4.02.10
San Antonio, TX 78249

Updated:

September 2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>I. INTRODUCTION TO THE HONORS THESIS</i>	<i>1</i>
Why a Thesis Handbook?	1
Why Write an Honors Thesis?	1
Who Writes an Honors Thesis?	2
Basic Requirements for the Honors Thesis	2
<i>II. WHAT IS AN HONORS THESIS?</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>III. GETTING STARTED</i>	<i>7</i>
When Should I Start My Thesis?	7
HON 3501: Honors Thesis Exploration Seminar	7
Finding a Thesis Topic and a Thesis Advisor	7
Does My Thesis Advisor Have to Be a Member of the UTSA Faculty?	10
How Do I Approach a Potential Thesis Advisor?	10
Do I Have to Do the Thesis in My Major?	11
Is it "Legal" to Re-work an Old Paper or Project?	11
How Do I Find My Thesis Readers?	11
How Do I Approach Potential Thesis Readers?	12
Responsibilities Involved in the Thesis Advisor/Student Relationship	12
Responsibilities Involved in the Reader/Student Relationship	13
Do My Thesis Advisor and Readers Have to Meet?	14
Can I Have More Than Two Readers?	14
Can I Ever Change the Members of my Thesis Committee?	15
How Can I Find Financial Support for My Thesis Research?	15
<i>IV. THE MECHANICS</i>	<i>16</i>
Registering for an Honors Thesis (4993) Course	16
Deadlines and Requirements for Students Registered in an Honors Thesis Course	17
Grading the Honors Thesis Course	19
What Happens to My Grade if I Fail to Complete the Thesis?	20
Can I Use Honors Thesis Work to Meet Degree Requirements?	20
Filing Your Honors Thesis	20
What If a Committee Member is Unavailable to Sign?	21
<i>V. CONTENT OF THE HONORS THESIS PROPOSAL</i>	<i>22</i>
Writing the Thesis Proposal	22

What Happens If I Can't Do Everything I Planned in My Proposal? _____	23
VI. CONTENT OF THE HONORS THESIS _____	24
The Order of the Thesis Components _____	24
Text of a Research-Based Thesis _____	24
Text of a Creative Thesis _____	25
How Long Should My Thesis Be? _____	26
What Special Stylistic Requirements Does my Thesis Have to Meet? _____	26
What Happens If I Do Not Have Good Results? _____	27
VII. HONORS THESIS PRESENTATIONS _____	28
The Presentation Requirement _____	28
Who Will Attend the Honors Thesis Symposium? _____	29
How Do I Know When I Am Presenting? _____	29
VIII. MISCELLANEOUS CONCERNS _____	30
Are There Any Other Requirements? _____	30
What Happens if I Don't Finish on Time? _____	30
What If I Want to Change Advisors? _____	30
Final Words of Wisdom _____	31
IX. WHAT HONORS STUDENTS SAY ABOUT THE THESIS _____	33
Why did you decide to do a thesis? _____	33
How did you identify your thesis topic? _____	33
How did you find a thesis advisor? _____	34
What did you gain from doing a thesis? _____	35
What advice would you give to students considering doing an Honors thesis? _____	36
X. HONORS THESIS MANUAL OF STYLE _____	38
THESIS SECTIONS _____	38
THESIS FORMAT _____	41
Example of Title Page: Thesis Proposal _____	43
Example of Title Page: Thesis _____	44
Example of Title Page: Creative Thesis _____	45
Example of Signature Page: _____	46

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE HONORS THESIS

Why a Thesis Handbook?

This Honors Thesis Handbook was developed to encourage students to write an Honors thesis and earn the distinction of graduating with Tier 2 Honors/Highest Honors from the UTSA Honors College. In addition, it is designed to provide you with helpful information and pointers that will simplify – and de-mystify – the process of writing an Honors thesis. The answer to virtually every question ever asked about an Honors thesis can be found in this handbook. It is a good idea to read this information carefully before you begin the process of developing an idea for your Honors thesis. Keep it handy between now and graduation! If you have a question about the Honors thesis – how to register, what the deadlines are, what the thesis should look like, what you can do if something goes wrong -- look back through the Handbook. Chances are the answer to all your questions are in here! However, if you have a question that is not answered in this handbook, please contact the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research Development or Associate Dean in the Honors College.

The Thesis Handbook should also be helpful to your thesis advisor and your thesis readers. The Handbook contains information about the expectations not only for students, but also for thesis advisors and readers. After you tell the staff in the Office of the Honors College who your thesis advisor and readers are, we will send a copy of the handbook to them as well.

Why Write an Honors Thesis?

For students who are intent on making the most of their Honors education, the Honors thesis serves as an academic capstone experience. An Honors thesis offers the following special benefits:

- 1) Opportunity to work one-on-one with a faculty mentor in your major on a project that will enhance your research, creative, and writing skills.
- 2) Integration of knowledge in a project of your own choice.
- 3) Self-awareness as you engage in an independent project that will help to clarify your academic interests and career goals.
- 4) Reward of rising to a unique, intellectual challenge.
- 5) Recognition on your official transcript and at the Commencement Ceremony for having graduated with Tier 2 Honors/Highest Honors through the Honors College.
- 6) Enhancement of graduate school and employment opportunities.
- 7) Satisfaction that comes from working through a project on your own.

Who Writes an Honors Thesis?

Students who are truly gifted and truly dedicated scholars are most likely to write an Honors thesis. In addition, students who wish to get the most out of their education will opt to write an Honors thesis.

All members of the Honors College who are completing their degree in the 2000-2002 or an earlier catalog must complete an Honors thesis to graduate from the Honors College. Members of the Honors College who are completing their degree under the requirements of a more recent catalog must complete an Honors thesis to earn the distinction of graduating with Tier 2 Honors/Highest Honors, the highest level of Honors awarded through the Honors College.

Basic Requirements for the Honors Thesis

Listed below you will find the essential elements involved in writing an Honors thesis. While most thesis students register for six (6) hours of credit for their work on the Honors thesis (in either HON 4993, "Honors Thesis," or a 4993 course in their academic discipline – e.g., BIO 4993, PSY 4993), you do not *have* to register in an Honors Thesis (4993) course. Each of the essential elements listed here is described in greater detail later in this handbook.

1. You must have a thesis advisor.

The thesis advisor must have a terminal degree in his/her field (usually a Ph.D., although possibly an M.D., J.D. or M.F.A.) and be a member of the faculty at a four-year college or university. While most thesis advisors come from the faculty at UTSA, many students have asked faculty members from the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSC-SA) to serve as their thesis advisor and several have asked faculty who have left UTSA to serve as their advisors.

2. You must have two thesis readers.

Like thesis advisors, thesis readers must have a terminal degree in their field, but they do not have to be a member of a college or university faculty. One of the readers (or your thesis advisor) must be a representative of the Honors College Faculty. A list of members of the Honors College Faculty is available in the Honors College office.

3. You must have your thesis proposal approved by your three-member Thesis Committee prior to beginning data collection.

You should never begin data collection without verifying that all three members of your committee are comfortable with your plan of action. The best way to ensure this is to have your committee members sign and approve the thesis proposal. Students who register for two semesters of an Honors Thesis (4993) course should obtain their committee members' signatures on the proposal during the first semester in which they are registered for a 4993 course. The thesis proposal must be approved and signed by the thesis advisor and both readers before it can be submitted to the Honors College.

4. *Students must submit their complete, signed, and bound thesis prior to Commencement in order to qualify for the distinction of graduating from the Honors College with Tier 2 Honors/Highest Honors.*
5. *Students who are registered in a 4993 course in a given semester must present their thesis proposal (semester one) or completed thesis (semester two) Honors Research Symposium. Students who plan to graduate with Tier 2 Honors/Highest Honors must also present their results at the Honors Research Symposium – even if they did not register for a 4993 course in that semester.*
6. *A thesis proposal and thesis must follow format/style guidelines as described in the Honors Thesis Manual of Style at the back of this handbook.*

II. WHAT IS AN HONORS THESIS?

The Honors thesis is the most respected hallmark of an Honors degree and the last step in completing the requirements for graduation with Tier 2 Honors/Highest Honors from the Honors College at the University of Texas at San Antonio. The thesis project provides the opportunity for a student -- in close consultation with an expert member of the faculty -- to define and carry through a line of research or a creative enterprise appropriate to the conclusion of a serious and substantial undergraduate program of study.

The most common type of Honors thesis project is envisioned and executed entirely as a written piece of work. Within the category of written projects, the most common type is an academic or scholarly work that reports on the results of the student's original research project. ***But writing a thesis is different from writing just another research paper.*** First, it is a more substantial piece of work, both in terms of effort and length. [NOTE: There is no standard or required length for an Honors thesis. The length should be appropriate to the area of study and the topic and should be agreed upon by the student and his/her thesis committee.] Second, writing the thesis involves a cycle of writing, receiving feedback, and rewriting, etc. Students who write an Honors thesis never turn in a single draft and have it approved by all their committee members. Instead, they work as apprentices through the process of writing scholarly work. The ultimate goal is to do excellent work and write an excellent (and original) paper.

Third, the thesis tackles a problem, or part of a problem, that others have not yet addressed adequately or completely, or it approaches the problem in a new way. Library research into what others have done is an essential first step, but the Honors thesis goes beyond this to include your own insights, ideas, and/or collection of data. What distinguishes an Honors thesis from a research paper that might be written for a regular, upper-division, 3-credit course is the necessity for you to go beyond what others have written and to think critically about the topic at hand, to bring your own ideas to bear on the topic, and/or to collect and report on new information that expands knowledge in your academic discipline. An Honors thesis is not, however, a Master's thesis or a Ph.D. dissertation and should be, correspondingly, smaller in scope. The Honors thesis is a large research (or creative) project that can be pursued successfully in two to three semesters as part of a normal undergraduate course load. We expect that the Honors thesis will exemplify the highest undergraduate standard in its ideas, methodology, accuracy, clarity, reasoning, and presentation.

Examples of topics that have been addressed in research-based theses include: (1) testing the effects of two types of diet on the growth and development of members of different types of fire ant colonies; (2) testing the hypothesis that members of a culture that emphasizes collectivism can access memories about others more quickly than can members of a culture that emphasizes individualism; (3) an analysis of the issues involved in a current policy debate; (4) a discussion of the legal implications of developments in reproductive technology (including taking a position on that debate); (5) an analysis of Dorothy Sayers' perspective on the place of intellectual women in early twentieth century society; (6) identifying the electrotonic architecture of developing granule cells in the rat dentate gyrus; (7) an analysis of the historical change in the celebration of *El Dia de los Muertos* in San Antonio; or (8) a theoretical investigation of the unusual reactivity of 1-methoxy-1,3-cyclohexadine with methanol.

While there are creative elements to the standard, written, research thesis, ***a second type of Honors thesis is primarily a creative work.*** For an English major, the thesis might involve creative writing -- the preparation of a novella or play or a collection of short stories or poetry. Students in majors such as art, music, or architecture may have as the basis of their thesis a work in a medium appropriate for their major. An art student might create an exhibition of original works. An architecture major might design a building. A music major might write a musical composition or compositions or learn to perform a work or set of works that he or she might not have to learn as part of the standard curriculum. Students in a variety of fields (e.g., history or sociology) might produce a video documentary as part of their thesis. Students may also write curriculum or business plans, develop a web site, or plan and evaluate some type of event (e.g., a fund-raiser). ***It is the responsibility of the student's thesis committee to judge if the creative work deserves to be considered a capstone experience to a student's academic program.***

While the majority of students who have done creative Honors theses in the past have written novellas or collections of short stories or poetry, other examples of creative Honors theses include: (1) attempting to cast bronze sculptures in the method of the ancients (an art major); (2) writing a lab manual for a course in Developmental Biology (a biology major); (3) writing a manual to prepare voice majors for the opera audition process (a music major); (4) learning and performing a variety of pieces by two Spanish composers and placing the work in the context of their times (a music major); (5) designing a mural for the Science Building which will represent the history of the planet (an education major, specializing in science education); and (6) writing a beginner's guide to using four mallets while playing the marimba (a music major). ***Honors students are encouraged to think creatively in designing a project that fits what they want to learn!***

Although a creative project can form the basis of a thesis, it is not the complete thesis! To be accepted as an Honors thesis, ***A CREATIVE WORK MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A WRITTEN ANALYSIS!*** This written analysis should include: (1) an introduction in which the student explains what s/he chose to do and what his/her personal and academic goals were in attempting the project; (2) the creative work itself or a written description of the creative piece if it is not in text form; and (3) ***a reflective discussion or conclusion section*** in which the student evaluates the results of the exhibition/performance/story/script, etc. The introduction should address questions such as why the student chose the particular approach used, why the student selected the particular work or works to be performed, and what the student hoped to gain or learn in doing the project. The evaluative discussion should address how the student met or failed to meet the original goals of the project and what the student would do differently (or the same) if s/he were to attempt the project again. The submission of a creative thesis must include an appropriate hard copy record of the project, such as a portfolio, audiotape, or videotape, and the accompanying manuscript.

A third type of thesis might be called the Problem-Solving thesis. Examples of this type of thesis, which may be completed by students in any major, include the development and (pilot) implementation of educational materials or a training program (with an assessment of the program's effectiveness), the preparation of a public awareness campaign, the design of an advertising campaign, the development of a business plan, an engineering design project, the creation of a computer program or a Web site, or an extensive study for a community client.

Again, *a problem-solving thesis must include a written analysis, as described for creative projects, as well as appropriate documentation of the product.*

Additional examples of creative projects and problem-solving theses include: (1) creating, implementing, and evaluating a small group discussion unit on cancer for use in an Honors biology course; (2) learning to perform a Schubert song cycle and producing a written document on Schubert's compositional techniques, a translation of the text, and development of publicity materials; (3) writing a children's book that addresses prejudice with an accompanying text that describes the development of the book and explains its elements and objectives; (4) creating a manual of environmental science projects for use in an elementary school; or (5) developing a plan for opening a business called "Just Imagine," where children come and engage in pretend play.

Most students employ an approach to the Honors thesis that is appropriate to their particular field of study. For example, a student in the sciences is most likely to do a project that involves laboratory research; a student in the humanities most often does library research, combined with critical analysis; a student in the social sciences might conduct survey research, a laboratory study, a case study, or content analysis; a student in the fine and performing arts can use a creative work as the basis for a thesis. No particular approach is required. *You and your committee determine the methods and approach to the project.* It is difficult to anticipate all the variations of projects that may be undertaken to qualify as an Honors thesis. If you and your advisor are unsure whether your project is acceptable, you or s/he should contact the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research or Associate Dean in the Honors College.

Whatever type of thesis you choose to do, it is essential that you select a topic that truly interests you. A topic that does not engage you will quickly become boring and onerous, a task unpleasant to both you and your advisor -- a task soon avoided and unlikely to be completed.

III. GETTING STARTED

When Should I Start My Thesis?

The sooner you start, the better off you will be. In most cases, however, students are not ready to start their Honors thesis until they have completed at least 60 hours. Students in highly technical fields may need additional coursework before they have enough background to do a thesis in their field.

Traditionally, most students have worked on their Honors theses in their final two, long semesters prior to graduation (i.e., spring and fall, or fall and spring). The problem with waiting until the last two semesters to begin the thesis occurs when a thesis takes a little longer to complete than the student anticipates. If you begin early, you can always take an Incomplete in your second semester of a 4993 course and then finish up the final details in the next semester (i.e., the one in which you plan to graduate). If you are trying to complete your thesis in the semester in which you plan to graduate, you run the risk of delaying your graduation if problems arise with the completion of your thesis.

HON 3501: Honors Thesis Exploration Seminar

The best way to get started on your Honors thesis is to enroll in HON 3501, “Honors Thesis Exploration Seminar.” HON 3501 is a one-credit seminar that is offered through the Honors College every fall semester. Students are allowed to enroll in HON 3501 at any point in their academic careers. The best time to take HON 3501 is in the fall of your sophomore or junior year. Ideally, you would take HON 3501 *at least* three to four semesters before you plan to graduate from UTSA.

The HON 3501 course is designed to help students: (1) understand what a thesis project is; (2) recognize what personal resources (time, energy, motivation, etc.) are necessary for successful completion of a thesis project; (3) identify a thesis topic; (4) find an appropriate individual to serve as their thesis advisor; and (5) outline a project plan and timeline for their thesis project. Students who take HON 3501 begin a thesis project notebook, read and analyze an Honors thesis project in their discipline, identify potential thesis advisors and thesis topics, prepare a project plan for their thesis, and attend at least one session of the Honors Research Symposium.

Finding a Thesis Topic and a Thesis Advisor

The biggest fear most students have as they think about doing a thesis is that they will be unable to find a topic. While finding a topic can be difficult, the more research you do and the more you talk to others, the more likely you are to find a topic that suits you. Keep in mind that ***you do not have to develop the topic all on your own!*** Think of doing a thesis as finding a position as an apprentice. Your thesis advisor will have a great deal more experience in developing new research ideas than you will. **Make sure to use your thesis advisor and other faculty members as a resource!** It may be helpful to keep in mind something that Dr. David Senseman, an Honors faculty member, is fond of saying:

“Dumb students do a project that their professor recommends.
Smart students do a project that they think up themselves.
Really smart students do a project that their professor recommends.”

In this section, we will consider selecting a topic and selecting a thesis advisor together because the two are inextricably linked. Some students identify a topic first and then use that to help guide them to an advisor. Others identify an advisor first – a faculty member with whom they have a good relationship -- and then use that relationship to guide them to a topic.

Ideally, your topic will be something that interests you already -- perhaps something you've learned in an earlier course, something you've read, or even a hobby. When you have an idea for a study that interests you, then you should find an advisor with interest and expertise in that area. If you don't know the research specialties of faculty in your discipline, you can contact the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research Development or the Associate Dean in the Honors College and request their assistance to identify faculty members whose interests match or overlap with yours. While identifying a topic on your own is ideal, you should be prepared for faculty members to tell you that your understanding of the field is naïve or that your topic is too broad or unmanageable. You should also be prepared for some faculty members to tell you that, while your idea is very interesting, they cannot serve as your advisor because your project is not closely related to their research specialty. When you develop a topic completely on your own, you may have difficulty finding an advisor who is willing to work with you.

Students who don't have a topic in mind have one advantage: they will not have their ideas rejected. On the other hand, they may be somewhat more likely to end up with a project that is not as interesting to them. If you don't have a topic in mind, it can be useful to find an advisor first. You can approach a faculty member whose course interested you and ask him/her for assistance in developing a topic. Often, that faculty member will help you develop a project that fits with his or her line of research. If you have a general subject area in mind (e.g., social psychology, physiology, modern literature, business ethics), you can ask the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research Development or the Associate Dean in the Honors College to help you identify faculty members who have interests in those areas. You can then approach those faculty members to ask for assistance in developing a topic.

Another good way to identify a potential thesis advisor is to make use of the web. Web sites for many departments at UTSA list faculty research interests. Even if you really have no idea what specific sub-field of your discipline is most interesting to you, you can find out a lot about what topics might be of interest to you by reading about faculty members in your discipline on the web site. If you have interests in science or health, you can also make use of the web site for the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSC-SA). In fact, their web site is particularly well designed for this purpose. Go to their web site at (<http://www.uthscsa.edu/faculty/>) and enter a keyword (e.g., cancer, microbiology, diabetes) in the Key Word Search block. You will then have a listing of faculty who do research relevant to your keyword. Click on the faculty members' names and you will get substantial descriptions of the research they are doing in their labs.

It is often easier to choose an advisor than it is to choose a topic. You should choose your advisor by taking into consideration both the faculty member's expertise in areas that interest you and the potential for you to develop a close working relationship with that faculty member. Most students find that one of the most rewarding aspects of doing the thesis is developing a personal and intellectual relationship with their thesis advisor. Think about a professor whose classes you have particularly enjoyed, a professor you have gotten to know during office hours or in other contexts outside the classroom. Even if that professor turns out not to be the right advisor because his or her research area does not match your interests, that professor can often help direct you to an appropriate advisor. In addition, that faculty member will be someone whom you want to consider asking to serve as a reader on your thesis.

A thesis topic should be neither too broad nor too narrow. A topic that is too broad, such as "Juvenile Delinquency," is simply not manageable. What about juvenile delinquency? Juvenile delinquency where or among whom? A topic that is too narrow, such as "Police Response to Juvenile Delinquency in Seguin, Texas: May 1997," may not yield enough results for a meaningful analysis. You need to work with your advisor to select a topic that will result in a thoughtful, credible, high-quality thesis within a period of two to possibly three semesters (depending on the time available between the point when you begin your thesis and your intended graduation date).

It will probably take a period of time for you to cut the problem down to feasible proportions. Keep in mind that this project will not be the last word on your topic. Either you or others will follow up on the ideas you address in your thesis. Most original thesis topics need to be scaled down before they become feasible. *It is up to you and your thesis committee to set the boundaries for your project.* You and your committee will need to agree on the number of books you will read, the number of participants you will have or the number of observations you will make, the expected length of the finished work, and whether you will set a temporal stopping point. You may change your mind on these points as the project progresses, but it is helpful to begin by defining these items in advance.

As you explore various options for thesis topics, keep in mind that *the most important factor in completing an Honors thesis is your interest.* You need to be interested in what you propose to study. You need to take ownership of the project. Nothing will cripple your progress more than working on a thesis that does not interest you. How do students get into that situation? Often by having a professor persuade them to do something they are not really interested in. "Dr. Eisenberg, would you be an advisor on my thesis? It's about why identical twins are different from each other." "Well, I don't know much about identical twins or behavioral genetics, and besides, I'm kind of busy with my study of children's understanding of televised material. Say, how about helping me with my study?" So you sign on, having no knowledge of or interest in children's understanding of television. Where will this thesis go? Probably nowhere unless you very quickly become interested in children's understanding of television. *So we strongly advise you to pick a topic that interests you.*

Does My Thesis Advisor Have to Be a Member of the UTSA Faculty?

Your thesis advisor does not have to be a member of the UTSA faculty. In fact, numerous UTSA Honors students have completed their Honors thesis with an advisor who was a member of the faculty at UTHSC-SA. If a potential thesis advisor leaves UTSA and takes a position at another college or university, you may continue to work with him or her. You may also find a faculty member at another institution (e.g., Trinity University or another institution in town) to serve as your thesis advisor. ***A thesis advisor must have a position on a college or university faculty and must hold a terminal degree in his or her field (e.g., a PhD, MD, JD, or MFA).***

How Do I Approach a Potential Thesis Advisor?

Approach potential thesis advisors with as much confidence as you can muster and as much information as you can gather. Exactly how you approach a potential thesis advisor may depend on how certain you are that the professor in question is the right advisor for you. If you are certain you want that individual for an advisor and know what topic you want to pursue, you can go in, introduce yourself as a member of the Honors College, explain that Honors students who wish to graduate with the highest level of Honors need to complete an Honors thesis, and explain what topic or topics you are interested in. If you think you might want that professor for an advisor but are not certain what topic you wish to pursue, you can introduce yourself as a member of the Honors College, explain that Honors students who wish to graduate with the highest level of Honors need to complete an Honors thesis, indicate that you would be interested in working with him or her, and ask the professor if s/he has a project that you might be able to work on. Flattery can be useful (e.g., "I decided to approach you because I really enjoyed your Physiology class and I felt that I would be interested in research in physiology and would enjoy and benefit from the opportunity to work with you.").

Be as prepared and informed as possible, both about the thesis experience and your potential advisor. It may be useful -- especially if your potential advisor has no experience mentoring an Honors student -- to bring along a copy of this Honors Thesis Handbook. Doing so may make you look prepared, responsible, and thoughtful. ***You should always do as much research as possible on a potential thesis advisor's line of research!*** If his or her publications are listed on a web site, go to the library and read several of their most recent papers. If there is no faculty web site or the web site does not list publications, use the appropriate search engine service in the library that helps you find journal articles in your field and plug in the name of a potential advisor in an author search. ***Locate two or three of his or her most recent publications, get them from the library, and read them.*** Not only will you look more intelligent if you have read several of the professor's papers, but this is a good way for you to find out if you really find the work interesting. It is likely to impress a potential advisor if you are able to come in and say, "I decided to approach you because I read your article 'The Ironic Effects of Thought Suppression' and I was really intrigued that research on thought suppression might help us identify individuals who are at risk for depression." It would, of course, be even more impressive (but not necessary) if you could use what you read to pose a new question (e.g., "It also made me wonder whether people who are at risk for depression try to endorse positive feelings, but are less certain about those feelings.").

Keep in mind that finding a thesis advisor may take time. You may need to approach many different individuals to discuss their work before you find both a topic and an advisor that feel right to you.

Do I Have to Do the Thesis in My Major?

You do not have to complete the thesis in your major or with a faculty member from your academic discipline. Several Honors students have chosen to complete their thesis in the field of their minor. A few have chosen to do a thesis in a field in which they have taken several courses. Examples of students who have crossed disciplinary lines to work on a thesis include: (1) an accounting major who wrote a novella that focused on a businessman's ethical challenges; (2) an English major who wrote a plan for an after-school program for at-risk youth in a small town; (3) a communication major who developed a proposal for preventing HIV/AIDS among inner-city, homosexual males; (4) an economics major who wrote about the myth of the hero's journey, as depicted in comic books; or (5) a chemistry major who wrote a paper in which he analyzed the scientific claims of Holocaust deniers.

Is it "Legal" to Re-work an Old Paper or Project?

A thesis that builds on and further develops work you have already done can be a fine piece of work. Many students have developed thesis topics out of papers they completed for Honors Contracts or for upper-division courses. *What is not legitimate is simply to recycle, with minor additions or changes, a paper or papers already completed and submitted for a grade.* A student who proposes to add a different introduction or a longer conclusion or more examples or illustrations to an already existing paper is certainly not proposing anything that can be considered the capstone of an Honors education.

How Do I Find My Thesis Readers?

Once you and your thesis advisor settle on a topic, you will need to select two additional readers for your thesis committee, with your advisor's help. If your advisor is not a member of the Honors Faculty, one of the two additional readers will need to be a member. The two readers should be individuals who can help you in the creation of your thesis. It is best to choose readers whose expertise adds to the knowledge that your chair provides or who have useful skills in research methods. You can also choose someone whom you know will nurture you and help you deal with the stress involved in doing a complex project. While it is okay for you to suggest your own readers (e.g., a faculty member with whom you have a good relationship), monitor your thesis advisor's response closely. *You do not want to choose a reader who does not get along with your thesis advisor!*

The Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research Development or the Associate Dean in the Honors College can provide you and your thesis advisor with a list of representatives of the Honors Faculty whose field of research is most closely related to yours. Like the thesis advisor, *readers must hold a terminal degree (Ph.D., M.D., J.D., M.F.A.)* in their field of expertise, but unlike the advisor, they do not have to be members of a college or university faculty. Thus,

Ph.D.'s who work in your thesis advisor's lab are eligible to serve as thesis readers. All readers should, however, have research expertise that is related to your topic.

How Do I Approach Potential Thesis Readers?

Although your thesis advisor should help you identify and select your readers, ***it is ultimately the student's responsibility to ask the readers if they are willing to serve on a thesis committee.*** Unless your thesis advisor offers to do so on your behalf, you will be expected to approach your potential readers to ask them to serve on your thesis committee. Once again, ***you should be prepared before you approach your potential readers.*** It is a good idea to write up a one- or two-page description of your topic area and the approach you plan to take. You can then email this description to your readers or drop it off to them, along with a request to serve as a reader on your thesis committee and a time-line that specifies when you plan to complete written portions of your thesis. Explain to the potential reader that you would really like to work with him or her and that you value his or her input and assistance.

Responsibilities Involved in the Thesis Advisor/Student Relationship

Your thesis advisor should be willing to meet with you on a regular basis. ***It is best if you meet with your thesis advisor on a regular basis.*** As soon as your thesis advisor has agreed to work with you, these meetings should begin and should continue at **one- (or two-week) intervals** until the thesis is complete. The purpose of these meetings is for you to ask questions and seek advice and for the advisor to give advice, direction, and encouragement. ***One of the major mistakes students make is not meeting often enough with their thesis advisor!!*** Let the regularly scheduled meetings help you meet your deadlines!

Your advisor should help you refine and focus your interests into a manageable project and should help you develop a strategy and a timetable for the work's successful completion. Your advisor will read ***several drafts*** of your thesis proposal and thesis, and will provide you with detailed feedback on the drafts (as well as on other activities you engage in as part of your research). ***An Honors thesis should always go through multiple revisions. You are expected to give your advisor ample time to read/view and comment on each version/revision!!*** You are also responsible for making the appointments with your advisor and making sure to show up for each of those appointments. Keep in mind that you are likely to want to ask your thesis advisor to write letters of recommendation for you at some time in the future. The responsibility and dedication you demonstrate in working on your thesis will be important factors in the quality of the letter your thesis advisor is willing to write for you.

In summary, your thesis advisor should be willing to:

- meet with you on a regular and frequent basis (ideally at least once per week)
- help you define an appropriate scope for the project
- set forth clear expectations for the length of your thesis
- read your work in a timely fashion
- help you identify appropriate readers
- help you identify the necessary resources to complete the project

- communicate with your readers to ensure common understanding of project length, criteria for assessment, and other conditions and assumptions involving the project

In response, you must be willing to:

- meet with your thesis advisor on a regular and frequent basis (and not chronically cancel or miss appointments)
- meet all deadlines that you and your thesis advisor set together
- notify your thesis advisor if you are having problems that interfere with your ability to meet deadlines or attend appointments
- work in the lab when you have committed to do so. ***Lab intensive research (especially in the sciences) often requires that you become a dedicated member of a research team, which means that you may be helping labmates with their research and, in turn, receiving their help on your project.***

Responsibilities Involved in the Reader/Student Relationship

While you will work most closely with your thesis advisor, ***you are also expected to work closely with your readers as you develop your ideas, plan your method of doing the project, and write the thesis.*** You should anticipate that both your readers will have their own suggestions that they will want you to act on and changes and revisions that they will want you to make. You need to address these suggestions and revisions and ***be aware that your readers do not have to accept (and sign) the thesis until they are satisfied that the work is of Honors quality.*** Creating a thesis is not an assignment that you simply hand in at the end of the semester and receive a grade for it. It is an ongoing collaborative process among you, your advisor, and your readers. Sometimes readers can seem to be more demanding than your thesis advisor!

If your thesis project involves data collection (as most work in the sciences and social sciences does), ***it is imperative that you make sure your readers approve of your methods before you begin collecting any data!*** It is neither appropriate nor wise to find your thesis readers after you have already begun (or finished) collecting your data. Your readers may be frustrated if they have not had the opportunity to provide input or feedback into the design of the study. In the worst-case scenario, they may refuse to sign off on your completed thesis because they believe you should have approached the study differently. ***You are also likely to be more satisfied with your project if you give your full committee a chance to provide you with input at all stages of the process.***

Your readers should also be willing to meet with you on a regular basis from the time you begin your thesis until you complete it. Those regular meetings should take place no less often than once a month and, ideally, every two to three weeks. ***It is your responsibility to keep your readers apprised of your progress! A major mistake students make is not giving their advisors and, especially readers, enough time to read and comment on their drafts and demand revisions!!*** You will not be able to file your thesis when you expect to unless you have given your thesis advisor and readers ample time to demand revisions (see the section on Deadlines in this handbook). You always need to ask your advisor and readers how much time they need to read

and respond to drafts of your work and when they expect to see a first draft of various sections of the thesis proposal and thesis.

In summary, your thesis readers should be willing to:

- meet with you on a regular basis (no less than once per month)
- help you define an appropriate scope for the project
- set forth clear expectations for the length of your thesis
- read your work in a timely fashion
- help you identify the necessary resources to complete the project

In response, you must be willing to:

- meet with your readers on a regular basis (and not cancel or miss appointments)
- involve your readers in all decisions relating to the content of your thesis
- inform your readers of the deadlines that you and your thesis advisor have set together and ***meet those deadlines***
- notify your readers if you are having problems that interfere with your ability to meet deadlines or attend appointments

Keep in mind that your thesis is not complete until it is approved by your full thesis committee – your thesis advisor and your two readers. Members of your thesis committee signal their approval of your thesis work by signing the signature page of your thesis (see instructions on the signature page later in this handbook). ***Members of your thesis committee should not agree to sign your thesis unless and until they believe the work is of the quality expected of a UTSA Honors student.***

Do My Thesis Advisor and Readers Have to Meet?

Whether your thesis advisor and readers choose to meet is up to them. In the past, most students have worked separately with their advisor and readers, with the advisor and readers providing independent feedback. It can often be a good idea, however, to schedule at least one meeting with your thesis advisor and readers early in the process so that all parties are clear on what the expectations are and so that problems originating from different perspectives can be ironed out in advance. Keep in mind, however, that members of the faculty are typically very busy people and it may be difficult to schedule a meeting of your full committee.

Can I Have More Than Two Readers?

You are required to have at least a three-person committee – your advisor and two readers. Beyond that, you can have as many readers as you choose. Keep in mind, however, that the larger your thesis committee is, the more people you have to please. Thus, it may be wisest to keep to a three-person committee. On some occasions, however, students would like to ask someone who does not have a terminal degree to serve on their thesis committee. For example, students in the sciences often believe they need assistance with writing and, hence, wish to have a former English instructor serve on their committee. In most cases, however, the English instructors whom

students know – their instructors for WRC 1013 or ENG 1023 -- do not hold a terminal degree. In such cases, students are welcome to invite an English instructor to serve as a third reader.

Can I Ever Change the Members of my Thesis Committee?

You are expected to identify all three members of your thesis committee as early in the process of writing a thesis proposal as possible. In fact, students cannot register for an Honors Thesis (4993) course until they have identified a thesis advisor. In addition, students are asked to identify their thesis readers by census date (the 12th day of classes) of the first semester in which they are registered for an Honors Thesis (4993) course. Once you have filed the names of your committee members with the Office of the Honors College, you are expected to keep the committee members the same throughout the process of completing the thesis.

We recognize, however, that, in some cases, the composition of a thesis committee must change. While committee members, once approved, are allowed to continue serving as a thesis advisor or a thesis reader even if they leave UTSA, some may not agree to do so. Or, if a committee member goes abroad, it may be difficult or impossible for a student to continue working with that person. ***Students who wish to change the composition of their thesis committee after the Honors College has approved the committee must request that change in writing.*** While there may be a variety of circumstances that warrant a change in the composition of a student's thesis committee, students should be forewarned that an individual committee member's belief that the work is not Honors quality is not one of those circumstances – particularly if the committee member who refuses to sign the thesis (or thesis proposal) is the representative of the Honors faculty.

How Can I Find Financial Support for My Thesis Research?

Most Honors thesis projects are not terribly costly, but some do involve materials, supplies, and other costs that are difficult for students to afford. In many cases, especially if your project addresses the same line of research as your advisor's does, your advisor (especially an advisor in the sciences) may use his or her own research funds to pay for materials and equipment necessary for your project. ***You can also apply to the Honors College's Undergraduate Research and Travel Grant Program for up to \$500 for costs associated with thesis research.*** Each year, the Honors College offers approximately 20-25 such grants to students who are working on (or looking to present the results of) their thesis research. There are rolling deadlines for the Undergraduate Research and Travel grant program—with deadlines of the 15th of each month—so funds are available throughout the year (until all funds are expended). The funds can be used for travel to research sites and archives related to the thesis project, to purchase supplies and research materials, to reimburse participants, and to travel to a professional conference to present the results of the research. The application, which is available on the Honors College website or in the Honors College Office, requires a project abstract, a description of the funding needs, and an itemized budget for planned expenses.

IV. THE MECHANICS

Registering for an Honors Thesis (4993) Course

Those students wishing to graduate with Tier 2/Highest Honors, must complete an Honors thesis. You are not required to register for an Honors Thesis course, but most students choose to do so. There are two types of Honors Thesis courses – HON 4993 or a 4993 course in your major (e.g., BIO 4993, CS 4993, PSY 4993). ***Most students register for an Honors Thesis (4993) course for two semesters*** since an Honors thesis should reflect a minimum of six (6) credits of work. You may, however, choose to complete only three (3) hours in a 4993 course or no hours of 4993. What typically determines whether or not you should register for a 4993 course is whether you need additional Honors hours (to reach the minimum number of Honors hours required for Honors graduation in your catalog) or additional total hours to complete your degree. If you do not need additional degree hours or Honors hours and do not wish to pay for the additional hours, you may complete the Honors thesis on your own time. ***You should keep in mind, however, that your Honors thesis is still expected to reflect a minimum of 300 hours of work (the equivalent of 6 credit hours), regardless of whether you register for a 4993 course.***

If students expect their project to be more ambitious than the typical project or if they need a semester before they begin their actual thesis to identify a project or learn appropriate laboratory techniques, they may also register for a semester Independent Study *before* they register for a 4993 course. Students who wish to do a semester of Independent Study before beginning the Honors thesis should take an Independent Study course (4913). The course should be in a UTSA advisor's academic discipline (e.g., BIO 4913, PSY 4913, ENG 4913) or should be HON 4913 if the thesis advisor is not a member of the UTSA Faculty. All 4913 courses, regardless of discipline, count toward the number of Honors hours required for graduation. Many students register for an Independent Study (4913) course in the spring or summer before they officially begin their thesis to learn appropriate laboratory techniques, to work with a professor to identify a topic, etc. ***You are encouraged to begin your thesis early in this manner!*** The sooner you begin your thesis, the more likely you are to complete it on time. A handful of students have also used an Independent Study course to earn credit when their project turns out to be larger than they expected. Registering for a semester of Independent Study in addition to two semesters of 4993 can give you an extra semester in which to complete the work (since students in most majors can only earn 6 credits through 4993 courses). You should note that registering for a 4913 Independent Study course requires the completion of an Independent Study form that must be signed by your thesis advisor, your academic advisor, The Department Chair for the Thesis advisor's department, The Dean of the College overseeing that academic discipline.

To register for a 4993 course in any academic discipline, you must complete an Honors Thesis Course Registration Form and turn it in to the Office of the Honors College. The form requires you to identify your thesis advisor and a topic area (in one to two sentences). It also requires you to specify your expected date of graduation. Students whose thesis advisor is a faculty member at UTSA should enroll in the appropriate 4993 course in their thesis advisor's academic discipline (e.g., BIO 4993, COM 4993, POL 4993). Students whose thesis advisor is not in the academic department of the student's major or is a faculty member at another institution (e.g., UTHSC-SA) should register for HON 4993 with Dr. Eisenberg as the instructor of record.

All 4993 courses, regardless of discipline, count toward the number of Honors hours required for graduation. Students whose thesis advisor comes from a Department that does not offer a 4993 course (e.g. Architecture, Art, Art History, Music) will also take HON 4993. ***Your thesis advisor must sign the Honors Thesis Course Registration Form before anyone on the Honors College staff will register you for a 4993 course! You cannot register for a 4993 course without a thesis advisor.*** Students may complete the form and register for a 4993 course any time from the opening of registration until the fifth day of classes.

Deadlines and Requirements for Students Registered in an Honors Thesis Course

Students who are registered for the first semester of an Honors Thesis (4993) course and who intend to register for a second semester of an Honors Thesis (4993) course in a subsequent semester must meet the following deadlines:

1. ***You must submit: (a) the working title of your thesis; (b) a one-paragraph description of your thesis topic; and (c) the names of your two readers by Census Date (i.e., the 12th day of classes) to the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research in the Honors College.***
2. ***You must submit a complete draft of your thesis proposal to your advisor by November 1 in a fall term, April 1 in a spring term, or July 1 in a summer term.***
3. ***You must submit a complete draft of your thesis proposal to your readers by November 15 in a fall term, April 15 in a spring term, or July 15 in a summer term.***
4. ***You must present a description of your proposed thesis project at the Honors Research Symposium, normally scheduled for a Thursday, Friday, or Saturday after the last day of classes in a fall or spring term or as specified by the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research.***
5. ***You must submit a signed copy of your thesis proposal to the Honors College no later than noon on the last day of the final exam period (see instructions concerning the signature page later in this handbook).***

Students who are registered for the second semester of an Honors Thesis (4993) course must meet the following deadlines:

1. ***You must submit a complete draft of your thesis to your advisor by November 1 in a fall term, April 1 in a spring term, or July 1 in a summer term.***
2. ***You must submit a complete draft of your thesis to your readers by November 15 in a fall term, April 15 in a spring term, or July 15 in a summer term.***
3. ***You must present the results of your thesis project at the Honors Research Symposium, normally scheduled for a Thursday, Friday, or Saturday after the last day***

of classes in a fall or spring term or as specified by the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research Development.

4. ***You must submit a SIGNED AND BOUND copy of your completed thesis to the Office of the Honors College NO LATER THAN noon on the last day of the final exam period*** (see instructions concerning the signature page later in this handbook).

Students who plan to complete an Honors thesis either without registering or in a single semester of an Honors Thesis (4993) course must meet the following deadlines in either the semester in which they are enrolled in the Honors Thesis course or in the semester of their graduation:

1. ***You must submit: (a) the working title of your thesis; (b) a one-paragraph description of your thesis topic; and (c) the names of your two readers by Census Date (i.e., the 12th day of classes) to the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research in the Honors College.***
2. ***You must submit a complete draft of your thesis to your advisor by November 1 in a fall term, April 1 in a spring term, or July 1 in a summer term.***
3. ***You must submit a complete draft of your thesis to your readers by November 15 in a fall term, April 15 in a spring term, or July 15 in a summer term.***
4. ***You must present a description of your thesis project at the Honors Research Symposium, normally scheduled for a Thursday, Friday, or Saturday after the last day of classes in a fall or spring term or as specified by the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research.***
5. ***You must submit a signed copy of your proposal to the Honors College no later than noon on the last day of the final exam period*** (see instructions concerning the signature page later in this handbook).

Failure to meet these deadlines will affect your grade for the Honors Thesis (4993) course and may delay your graduation! Members of your thesis committee are under no obligation to rush to read or approve your thesis if you do not turn in the required materials by the deadlines indicated. These deadlines were selected to allow students ample time to revise their thesis proposal and full thesis so that the final version of the thesis meets the standards of the thesis committee and the Honors College.

Note: Students who are doing a research-based thesis that involves humans as participants MUST also complete paperwork through the University Standing Committee on Human Subjects before collecting any data from participants!

Grading the Honors Thesis Course

Because an Honors Thesis committee is not supposed to sign off on any thesis work the committee members believe deserves less than an “A,” the typical grade for an Honors Thesis (4993) course is an “A.” ***If a student fails to meet the deadlines specified above, however, the student does not automatically receive an “A,”*** even if he or she manages to submit a signed thesis to the Office of the Honors College. In addition, regardless of any policy set by the Honors College, the instructor of record – who is typically your thesis advisor (if he or she is a UTSA faculty member) – can issue any grade he or she chooses.

The deadline for submitting a signed and bound thesis or a signed thesis proposal is the last day of the final exam period in a given semester. ***Students who register for just one semester of a 4993 course receive a grade for that course only when they complete the full thesis (and have it signed by all three members of their committee) by the deadline.*** The Office of the Honors College will notify thesis advisors as to whether students are registered for a second semester of Honors Thesis at the time grades are due.

Students who register for two semesters of a 4993 course must work out an agreement with their thesis advisor as to how much work must be completed in the first semester to earn them a grade for that first semester. ***Students who plan to take two semesters of 4993 must complete at least their full thesis proposal (and have it signed by their full committee) by the end of the first semester in order to earn a grade for the first semester.*** The thesis advisor may also stipulate that a portion of the actual thesis should also be completed before he or she will issue a grade for the first semester of a 4993 course. Typically, thesis advisors in the sciences and social sciences grant a grade for the first semester of 4993 once the full thesis proposal is completed, signed, and submitted to the Office of the Honors College because the proposal represents a substantial portion of the eventual thesis. Since thesis proposals in the fine arts and humanities and thesis proposals for creative projects typically represent substantially less than half the work, ***thesis advisors who are supervising projects in the fine arts and humanities and creative endeavors are encouraged not to issue a grade for the first semester of a 4993 course unless the student has completed substantial work in addition to the thesis proposal.***

If students meet all the deadlines specified in the previous section, it is assumed that they will receive a grade of "A" for the 4993 course. If students do not meet the deadlines for turning in drafts, but do manage to meet the deadline for turning in the signed and bound thesis or signed and bound thesis proposal (thanks to the dedication and good nature of their committee members), then the thesis advisor has the option of issuing a grade of “B” (or lower).

If students do not meet the last-day-of-finals deadline for turning in the thesis or thesis proposal (and any additional work the thesis advisor specifies), then the thesis advisor should issue a grade of Incomplete (“IN”). The Incomplete will be not be removed and replaced with a grade until the student files the signed thesis or thesis proposal (and any additional work) with the Office of the Honors College. Students should be aware that grades of Incomplete automatically turn into an "F" on the last day of classes a year after the end of the semester in which the grade of "IN" was issued. In addition, students cannot graduate with a grade of "IN" on their record.

What Happens to My Grade if I Fail to Complete the Thesis?

Grading is more complicated for students who fail to complete their Honors thesis (or thesis proposal) prior to graduation. Failure to complete the Honors thesis automatically means, of course, that the student will not graduate with Tier 2 Honors/Highest Honors. In addition, students who enroll in an Honors Thesis (4993) course and fail to complete the thesis (or thesis proposal) should never receive a grade of "A," as that grade is reserved for completion of the work the student contracted to do in registering for a 4993 course – that is, the thesis or thesis proposal.

Students who decide not to complete the thesis should contact the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research Development or the Associate Dean in the Honors College *as soon as they make the decision not to continue the thesis work*. The Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research Development or the Associate Dean in the Honors College will consult with the student's thesis advisor to determine what grade the student deserves. If a student fails to complete the project the student and thesis advisor defined, the thesis advisor needs to determine what alternative efforts (usually a paper) deserve a grade of "B," "C," and so on.

Can I Use Honors Thesis Work to Meet Degree Requirements?

Students in most disciplines can use one or both semesters of their Honors thesis (4993) course work to meet upper-division, elective requirements in the major -- as long as they do a thesis with a faculty major from their own academic discipline. HON 4993 can often be substituted for upper-division electives in the student's academic discipline (e.g., Biology when the student works with an advisor from the UTHSC-SA). In some majors, students can request permission to substitute the Honors thesis course work for a Senior Seminar. Some majors do limit students to using only 3 hours of a 4993 course to meet upper-division degree requirements in the major and some majors do not have elective requirements within the major. ***Honors thesis (4993) hours can only be applied toward undergraduate degree requirements with the approval of the student's academic department. The "guidelines" listed above must be addressed on a case-by-case basis.*** You will need to discuss your own case with your thesis advisor or Honors College advisors.

Students in disciplines, such as Architecture and Engineering, which require a capstone project may choose to expand their capstone project into their Honors thesis. Typically, the Honors thesis has a larger written component than does the capstone project. While students pursuing these majors may complete the creative project for a course in their major, ***they must still follow Honors College requirements concerning the written portion of the project.*** That is, their thesis must include a written explanation of the creative project.

Filing Your Honors Thesis

When you are finished writing your thesis and your advisor and readers agree that it is complete, you should make sure that your thesis advisor and both readers sign your title page. [Sample title and signature pages are available in the Honors Thesis Manual of Style in the back of this handbook.] You will also need to arrange to have your thesis *bound*. While hard-back binding is nice (and is available through the UTSA Library), it is not required. *At a minimum, however,*

you must have a copy center bind the original, signed copy of your thesis with spiral binding. The spiral-bound copy of your thesis must have plastic or vinyl covers -- clear plastic or vinyl for the front cover and opaque plastic or vinyl for the back cover. The bound, original copy of the thesis - with original signatures -- must be filed with the Office of the Honors College by noon on the last day of finals week in the semester in which you plan to graduate.

To summarize, the steps involved in filing your thesis are:

1. Re-write the thesis until your thesis advisor and two readers believe it is of Honors quality.
2. Have your thesis advisor and your two readers sign the signature page.
3. Get the thesis bound.
4. Turn the thesis in to the Office of the Honors College by NOON on the last day of the final exam period.

What If a Committee Member is Unavailable to Sign?

On some occasions, students complete their thesis and receive approval from their full committee, but an individual committee member is unavailable to sign the signature page of the thesis. This occurs most frequently when a committee member is at an institution outside of San Antonio or when a committee member has gone out of town shortly before the end of the term. If a committee member has approved the thesis, but is unable to sign when the thesis is due, that committee member may email the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research Development or the Associate Dean in the Honors College to state that he or she would sign if he or she were present at UTSA. The email notification can then count as a signature. *However, the student must obtain the committee member's actual signature at the earliest possible date.*

V. CONTENT OF THE HONORS THESIS PROPOSAL

Writing the Thesis Proposal

Your project proposal serves several purposes. Writing the proposal will help you organize your thoughts and decide exactly what you want to accomplish. While you are working on your project, your proposal will serve as a sort of road map that will help keep you focused on your goals. Your proposal serves as a contract between you and your advisor and your readers and between you and the Honors College. That is, it specifies what you need to do to complete the Honors thesis and earn the distinction of graduating with Tier 2 Honors/Highest Honors through the Honors College. Having all parties agree in advance on the nature of your project will minimize the chance of misunderstandings later.

Your proposal must explain why your project is worthwhile. How will it add to the body of knowledge that already exists in your field of study? You should be sure to explain not only the very specific questions you hope to answer (e.g., whether 9-year-old children are more aware of their mothers' than their fathers' emotions), but also the larger questions that your project addresses (e.g., how gender differences in emotional expression develop). If you are doing a creative or problem-solving project, you should explain how the endeavor will be worthwhile for you to do. The thesis proposal should present your case for your ideas.

In the sciences and social sciences, the thesis proposal typically becomes the Introduction, Background, and Methods sections of the thesis itself. As a result, a proposal in these fields is usually fairly lengthy -- perhaps 15 to 20 pages in length. Essentially, your proposal should answer the following questions: (1) What is the point of the study? That is, what hypotheses will it test? What questions should it answer? (2) How does the study you propose relate to other research that has been done in the past? (3) How will the methods, design, and analysis you plan to use help you test your hypotheses and answer your questions? If you have difficulty addressing any of these questions, you probably need to question what you are doing. If you complete a good and detailed proposal for a project in the sciences and social sciences, the actual writing of your thesis will probably only entail adding two more sections -- the Results and Discussion sections.

Proposals in the humanities and fine arts and proposals for creative or problem-solving projects are typically not as long as they are in the sciences and social sciences because more of the work is done *after* the proposal stage. Because of this, however, *students working on creative or problem-solving projects or projects in the Humanities should plan to complete their thesis proposal well before the middle of the first semester in which they enroll in an Honors thesis (4993) course.* The proposal for a project in the Humanities should still contain Introduction and Methods sections. Your Introduction should state your thesis (e.g., that post-modernism is a feminine aesthetic or that the works of Joaquin Turina have been incorrectly characterized as Spanish nationalism). It should also explain how your perspective, viewpoint, or argument differs from other researchers' analysis of the same material. Your Methods section should explain what primary and secondary sources you will examine and what you will be looking for as you examine these materials.

If you are planning a creative or problem-solving project, your thesis proposal should define what the project will consist of (e.g., 6 poems and 4 short stories, a unit on cancer for use in an Honors Biology course, a plan for developing a new not-for-profit agency). It should explain the value of the product that will be produced. If your product will be a work of creative writing or some other artistic product, your proposal will also need to describe previous similar work you have produced or training you have in the area and explain how the proposed thesis project will extend that work along new lines. You will need to describe the themes you plan to address in this new work and how they connect to the themes addressed in your earlier work or other issues of concern for you. The thesis proposal should also place your proposed creative work in a larger context that is defined by the creative works of other individuals in your field. That is, how will your work relate to the works of other artists, authors, poets, musicians, etc.? You will also need to explain the medium or genre you plan to work in and the artistic statement you expect to make with your work. Finally, you will want to explain what you personally hope to learn or gain from doing this project. The thesis proposal for a creative or problem-solving project that does not involve written work should also detail how you will document the product – e.g., through videotaping, audio taping, photographs, or slides.

Your thesis advisor and your readers should help you define the appropriate structure, content, and length for your thesis proposal! Keep in mind that the thesis proposal is written at a point when you have not yet done the research. Thus, you should be writing in the future tense – e.g., “I will...” or “The participants in the study will....”

When you submit your thesis proposal to your committee members and the Office of the Honors College, you should make sure to submit a title page and signature page along with the content sections of your thesis proposal. The signature page for the proposal should follow the format of the signature page for the completed thesis (see the Honors Thesis Manual of Style at the end of this Handbook for more information). The title page for the proposal should follow the format of the title page for the completed thesis, *except* that the section under the title and your name should simply say “Thesis Proposal” (see the sample title page for the thesis proposal at the back of this handbook).

What Happens If I Can't Do Everything I Planned in My Proposal?

As you work on your project, you may find that you will not be able to do exactly what you said you would do in your thesis proposal. This is a common occurrence and should not be a cause of major concern. Typically, the student and his or her thesis advisor and readers agree that the proposed project was too large or too broad, and the student and committee members come to an agreement on ways to narrow the focus of the project. Sometimes the student and his or her advisor discover that necessary materials or equipment are unavailable. They then consult with the other committee members and agree on ways to modify the project in light of that new information. It is also okay to change the focus of the project *as long as the full thesis committee agrees to changes in the focus!*

If you and your committee members cannot come to an agreement on how the project can be modified, you may need to consult with the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research Development or the Associate Dean in the Honors College. In addition, if you plan to make major

changes from what you proposed, *your thesis advisor should contact the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research Development or the Associate Dean in the Honors College to explain the circumstances and the changes.*

VI. CONTENT OF THE HONORS THESIS

The Order of the Thesis Components

Your Honors thesis should consist of the following sections:

1. Title Page
2. Signature Page
3. Abstract (a 150-300 word summary of your thesis)
4. Table of Contents
5. Acknowledgements
6. The Thesis Body
7. Footnotes/Tables/References (if applicable)
8. Bibliography
9. Appendices (if applicable)

These sections are described in greater detail in the Honors Thesis Manual of Style at the back of this handbook.

Text of a Research-Based Thesis

Typically, the body of a standard, research-based thesis will include the following sections:

1. **Chapter 1: Introduction:** The Introduction should include a clear statement of the subject under investigation, the questions the thesis will attempt to answer, definitions of important terms, and a rationale for the study and the structure of the thesis. In the sciences and social sciences, the Introduction to the thesis may be essentially the same as the introduction to the thesis proposal. Although the two Introduction sections may be identical, keep in mind that you will need to change the tense from future tense (e.g., “The participants will answer...” or “The data will be collected...”) to past tense (e.g., “The participants answered...” or “The data were collected...”).
2. **Chapter 2: Background:** The Background section should include a presentation of previous work on the topic and a review of the literature and the historical background of the topic. This section should explain how previous work led to the questions addressed in your thesis and the methods for answering them. In some cases, students will include the Introduction and Background in one chapter.
3. **Chapter 3: Materials and Methods:** This should include a detailed description of the materials and methods -- the theoretical approach, instruments used, data collection and analysis, performance principles, etc. Again, as with the Introduction, if you plan to

use essentially the same Methods section for your thesis as you did for your proposal, you will have to remember to change from future tense to past tense and you will have to check to see if additional details need to be specified. You may have proposed to include 100 participants or 12 mice, but only included 96 participants or 10 mice. Now that you know who your participants were, you may need to include additional information about them. Also, you may have changed your procedures from your original proposal. Each of these changes and all this additional information needs to be documented.

4. **Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings or Results:** This section of the thesis must provide a careful analysis of results with convincing evidence to support the main thesis presented in the introduction, along with an analysis of the results of testing the hypotheses presented in the introduction. Charts, tables, and figures or other graphic aids may be used in the presentation of results.
5. **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions:** This section will summarize the results of your research, attempt to explain any unexpected findings, and address directions that future work in the area should take.

Text of a Creative Thesis

One of the weaknesses of creative theses that were conducted to meet requirements for graduation with Honors in the former University Honors Program was their lack of adequate reflection. *A creative thesis should never consist of just the creative work itself.* In addition to whatever creative product a student decides to prepare, the creative thesis needs at a minimum two additional written sections – a proposal piece that explains the goals of the project and an evaluative piece that assesses whether and to what extent the student reached his or her goals. Thus, an Honors thesis that involves a creative presentation or a problem-solving project should contain the following sections:

1. **Part 1: Introduction/Background/Plan.** This section will describe what you were attempting to accomplish in preparing the creative work and why you set those goals for yourself. It should also contain a discussion of the historical and cultural context of the work (if appropriate). This section may also need to describe how you approached the production of your creative work and the steps you took as you developed your work. It should explain why you chose the medium you chose (e.g., poetry, prose, sculpture, etc.) and the advantages and disadvantages of working in that medium. Your original thesis proposal may form a portion of or most of this section of your completed thesis. Keep in mind, however, that you should have written your thesis proposal in either the future or present tense (e.g., “My goal in doing this thesis will be/is to...”). Thus, if you are using your thesis proposal for Chapter 1, then you will need to go back through the proposal and change to the past tense (e.g., “My goal in doing this thesis was to...”).
2. **Part 2: The Creative Product.** This section will contain the actual creative work that you produced. If the product involved creative writing, then the text should appear

here. If the product was a web site, printed copies of the various pages of the web site should be included in this section. If the product is not written, this section should refer the reader to the creative piece that is attached to the text – e.g., an audiotape or videotape. If the product is a performance, the student should aim to videotape the performance, although audio taping may be acceptable. If the product is a visual one – e.g., sculptures or paintings – slides of the work should be included in this section.

3. **Part 3: Evaluation.** This section should address a variety of issues, including whether or not you accomplished what you set out to accomplish, what problems you might have encountered that led you to modify the product, etc. You may also wish to describe the creative process you went through as you worked on the product – e.g., what changed for you, what did you learn as you worked? This section should also address your own feelings about the work you developed, what you might have done differently or would do differently the next time, etc.

While there may be more variation in the organization of the description of a creative work than there is in a standard research thesis, the written portion of the project should tell the reader exactly what you did, why you did it, how well (in your opinion) it turned out, and what you would do the same or differently if you did it again.

These sections of the thesis are further described in the Honors Thesis Manual of Style, available at the end of this Handbook. If you ask to read samples of creative works that are on file in the Office of the Honors College, you should be forewarned that you may not see the Plan and Evaluation sections that are described above. Even though not all students who have done creative theses in the past have included these sections, *students who plan to use a creative work to earn the appropriate Honors distinction in the Honors College MUST include Plan and Evaluation sections with their creative products.*

How Long Should My Thesis Be?

While this is the most frequent question that students ask, there is no easy answer for it. There is no set minimum or maximum length for an Honors thesis. The correct answer is, "However long it takes to cover your topic adequately." *Your thesis advisor and readers should help you determine how many pages it will take to do that and should give you some guidelines concerning the length of thesis they expect to see.* You should keep in mind, though, that an Honors thesis is a major undertaking, so it is reasonable to expect the body of a traditional research thesis to be 30-50 pages -- perhaps somewhat shorter in science and mathematics and longer in the humanities. A traditional research thesis is also likely to contain several tables, figures, and appendices (e.g., examples of the questionnaires you used). The written, non-creative component of a creative project should probably be at least 8-20 pages in length.

What Special Stylistic Requirements Does my Thesis Have to Meet?

Stylistic requirements and guidelines are specified in the Honors Thesis Manual of Style, available at the end of this Handbook. You should follow specifications for footnotes and

references that are appropriate to your academic field. *Your thesis advisor and other committee members also may set any stylistic requirements they choose to set.*

What Happens If I Do Not Have Good Results?

Students who write research-based theses often worry that their thesis projects will not work out. That is, they are concerned that the data they collect will be unable to support their hypotheses or meet their objectives, so that they will essentially have “no” results. You should not be overly concerned with this issue. Failure to support hypotheses is a common result of research in the sciences and social sciences.

While students may not be able to submit a thesis that yields no significant results to earn a Ph.D. degree, being unable to support any of your hypotheses is not a problem in an undergraduate Honors thesis. The goal of conducting a research-based thesis is for you to learn about the process of conceptualizing a study and collecting and analyzing the data. As long as you followed the procedures laid out in your thesis proposal, the actual results of that process are unimportant. Instead of having to redo the study or give up on your thesis, your job in the Discussion or Conclusion section of your paper will be to explain what you think went wrong. Was something wrong with your methods that may have kept you from supporting your hypotheses? Do you think your theory was wrong?

VII. HONORS THESIS PRESENTATIONS

The Presentation Requirement

During the spring and fall semesters, Honors thesis presentations -- which take place at the Honors Research Symposium -- are usually scheduled for the Saturday after the last week of classes. In most cases, the Honors Research Symposium is an all day event with a morning and afternoon session. *Students who are registered for an Honors Thesis (4993) course in that semester are required to present at the Honors Research Symposium. Students who plan to graduate with Tier 2 Honors/Highest Honors in that semester are also required to present, even if they are not registered for an Honors Thesis course, if they have not done so in a previous semester.* Out of courtesy, all participants in the Honors Research Symposium are expected to attend all the presentations in their half day Symposium session.

Each presentation is scheduled for a 15-minute time slot. Presenters should expect to speak for about 10 to 12 minutes, leaving 3 to 5 minutes for questions. If you are presenting during your first semester of an Honors Thesis (4993) course, you should describe the plan for your Honors thesis. If your project is a traditional research-based thesis, you will need to: describe the purpose of your study and how it relates to previous work; explain what arguments you will address, what problem you plan to solve, or what hypotheses you will test and why you are asking those specific questions; and describe how you plan to answer your research questions (i.e., the methods you will use). If you are presenting on a research-based thesis in the semester in which you are completing your thesis, you will need to summarize the same type of information you presented in the previous semester – the purpose of your project, its goals and research questions, and the methods you used. In addition, you will need to present and explain your results and explain the significance of those results. In both cases, you should keep in mind that *the audience is all of the Honors community.* Thus, you need to target your presentation to a lay audience and make sure to define any technical or field-specific jargon that you use.

If your Honors thesis involves a creative performance or creative writing and you are in your first semester of an Honors Thesis (4993) course, you will need to explain what your goals are and why you decided to do that specific type of project. In addition, if at all possible, you should read or present some of the creative work already completed to illustrate the type of project you will be doing – the first poem or two, sketches for a sculpture, the first movement of a sonata, etc. When you present your creative or problem-solving thesis in the second semester in which you are registered for Honors Thesis, you should explain what your goal was, what you produced and how you approached your production, and provide an assessment of your effort (i.e., what you would do the same or differently if you were to repeat the experience). In addition, you should again include a presentation of a portion of your project -- a segment of your video documentary, the reading of a few poems or a portion of your novella (particularly a portion that illustrates your goal in writing the piece), slides of art work, a taped portion of a musical performance, or the presentation of slides of your art work. Students whose work involves musical performance or a video documentary or something comparable may also choose to schedule their own presentation -- a lecture/performance -- for an evening in the last month of classes.

You will probably want to practice your presentation with your thesis advisor. It is usually helpful to the audience if you use visual aids to accompany your oral presentation -- a PowerPoint presentation, slides, or overheads. While students are often tempted to write out every word of their presentation, keep in mind that it is very difficult to listen to a speaker who is reading to you. Remember that this thesis work is YOUR project! You should know the work very well and be able to speak about it comfortably in a conversational manner. You do not need to over-prepare.

While students are often nervous about the thesis presentation, it is helpful to think of it as an opportunity to share the fruits of your labor with others. Remember that you know more about your thesis than anyone else does. The members of the audience – other students and faculty – are rooting for you; they want you to do well in your oral presentation of the project. They are interested in your work and want to know what you have been doing. Dress up, look like a professional, stand tall, and speak up. Above all, relax! It's okay if someone asks a question you cannot answer. You don't need to try to bluff your way through the question-and-answer period (but don't refer the person to your advisor, either). Just say, "That's an interesting question. I would have to think about it, but right now, I don't know the answer." Most questioners have not read your thesis. If they ask questions that have nothing to do with your thesis, just politely indicate to them that you weren't dealing with that issue in your thesis.

Who Will Attend the Honors Thesis Symposium?

The audience at the Honors Research Symposium will include the members of the staff of the Honors College, other Honors students, Honors thesis advisors and readers, and other members of the Honors community and Honors faculty at UTSA. Many presenters also invite their parents, spouses, or other friends or family members to attend, and you will be welcome to do so as well when it is your turn to present. If you are reading this handbook, but have not yet begun work on your Honors thesis, *you are strongly encouraged to attend this semester's Honors Research Symposium!* The best way to find out what kinds of projects students tackle and what it is like to do a thesis is to attend the Honors Research Symposium, listen to students talk about their projects, and talk with the thesis students after the session. Lunch is served between morning and afternoon sessions of the Honors Research Symposium.

How Do I Know When I Am Presenting?

As soon as all students registered for an Honors Thesis (4993) course in a given semester have submitted their working titles (DUE on Census Date), the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research Development will develop a draft of the presentation schedule. At least four weeks before the presentation date students will receive a draft schedule. *It is your responsibility to notify the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research Development of scheduling conflicts for yourself and/or your thesis committee!*

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS CONCERNS

Are There Any Other Requirements?

If your Honors thesis involves collecting information from human participants through surveys, interviews, observation, or experimentation, you *must* submit a proposal to the University's Committee on Human Subjects *before* beginning to collect your data. This Committee checks to see that studies involving human participants are carefully planned, informed by the latest scholarship, and sensitive to the privacy and well-being of those studied. Your thesis advisor should be able to help you obtain the appropriate forms.

What Happens if I Don't Finish on Time?

If you do not file your *signed and bound* thesis with the Office of the Honors College by the last day of finals week in the semester in which you intend to graduate, you will not be able to graduate with Honors in that semester. You will need to contact the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research Development or the Associate Dean in the Honors College to discuss your options. One option is to delay your Honors graduation until the next semester – which will give you time to complete and file the signed and bound thesis. A second option is to choose not to graduate with Honors. Because you cannot graduate with a grade of Incomplete ("IN") on your record, if you choose this option, the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research Development or the Associate Dean in the Honors College and your thesis advisor will have to discuss what grade you should earn for the work you have completed. Keep in mind, though, if the Associate Dean and your thesis advisor believe you deserve a grade of "F" for your Honors Thesis (4993) course, *you still may not be able to graduate if you need that course for your total number of degree hours or for a requirement in your major*. If you plan to use the Honors Thesis (4993) course to meet major requirements in the College of Sciences, you will not be able to graduate if you earn a grade of "D," either.

What If I Want to Change Advisors?

If you find you cannot work with your thesis advisor in a satisfactory fashion or if you change the focus of your topic and realize that another professor would be a more appropriate advisor for your new topic, you do have the option of changing your advisor. If you wish to change advisors, you *must* submit a request for a change in advisors to Office of the Honors College *in writing*.

In general, however, *it is not a good idea to change advisors* and, in fact, you may encounter some problems – particularly with the grading of your Honors Thesis (4993) course – if you choose to do so. In most cases, your thesis advisor serves as the official Instructor of Record for your Honors Thesis (4993) course. This means that your original thesis advisor will receive the grade sheet and will be expected to turn in the grade for your thesis work. Unless you change your advisor prior to Census Date, your original thesis advisor will continue to be responsible for your grade. Thus, even if you decide to complete your thesis with a new advisor, once you have enrolled in an Honors Thesis (4993) course past Census Date, your original thesis advisor will have control over your course grade. Thus, you will have to negotiate with him or her to determine what

grade you should receive for the Honors Thesis (4993) course. *Just because you complete a signed thesis proposal or thesis with another instructor does not obligate your original thesis advisor to give you an “A” – or any other grade.* If you want help and suggestions of how to address this issue with your original thesis advisor, you should see the Assistant Director for Undergraduate Research Development or the Associate Dean in the Honors College for assistance.

Final Words of Wisdom

1. *Get an early start in identifying a topic.* If you are beginning your last year at UTSA when you read this handbook, you are probably at a disadvantage already. You will be most successful in completing your thesis on time if you have already identified a topic and a thesis advisor well before your final year of college begins. If you plan to work on your thesis in consecutive fall and spring terms, you should have a topic and advisor identified by the end of the spring semester before you begin. If you plan to work on (and register for) your thesis in consecutive spring and fall terms, you should identify your thesis advisor and topic by the previous November.
2. *Begin writing early in the process!!!* As soon as you complete your preliminary research, start writing!! Write even if what you write seems flimsy and superficial. The biggest mistake you can make is to keep putting off writing. The longer you wait to start writing, the bigger and bigger the task will seem.
3. *Avoid thinking of your thesis as of monumental significance in the grand scheme of things.* It is not your life's work. It will certainly not be the definitive statement on the topic. The more you inflate the importance of the work, the more you will be intimidated and overwhelmed by the prospect of researching and writing a thesis. Remember to narrow down your topic sufficiently. Many thesis students try to accomplish too much. It is better for your thesis to be narrow and deep, rather than very broad and very superficial.
4. *Decide at the start of your project how many hours per week you will work on the project and stick to that commitment.* Working at a steady pace will produce much better results than trying to do the whole project in two weeks. For many students, working on the thesis is the first occasion in which they need to set their own deadlines. Because there are few externally established deadlines, students are often tempted to do other things first (e.g., their work for other courses). *Don't make your thesis work a low priority!*
5. *Set small, easily realizable weekly goals.* Your grand aim is the production of an acceptable thesis, but if you set your eye only on that goal, you will find it difficult to reach. Writing your thesis is best accomplished by taking a series of small steps. Block out time on your calendar for reading, library research, time in the lab, writing, and editing.
6. *Schedule frequent (preferably weekly) meetings with your thesis advisor to discuss your progress.* If you see your advisor once a week, you will feel pressed to accomplish

something each week. Remember also that your advisor has the primary responsibility for approving your project. He or she may decide not to approve your project if you have not had regular contact.

7. *Don't ignore the deadlines set out in this handbook!* These deadlines may seem unrealistic, but if you finish a full draft of your thesis proposal or thesis by these deadlines, you will have adequate time for editing and polishing your work. Members of your thesis committee will also have adequate time to read your work and provide you with feedback. Spending the last week of the semester getting two hours of sleep a night and hovering on the brink of hysteria during your waking moments accomplishes nothing. It certainly does not improve the final product and it does not endear you to your thesis committee!
8. *When you are setting up a timetable for your project, remember that it always takes longer than expected to complete a task.* A good rule of thumb is to estimate the maximum amount of time you believe it will take to complete a task in the worst possible case -- then double your estimate.

IX. WHAT HONORS STUDENTS SAY ABOUT THE THESIS

Because the words of other students are often most valuable, we interviewed several UTSA Honors alumni about their experiences in doing a thesis. We asked the Honors alumni to respond to what we saw as the most critical issues -- why they decided to do an Honors thesis, how they found a topic and a thesis advisor, and what they gained from doing a thesis. We also asked if they had any advice for students who were beginning the thesis process. We include a collection of their responses here.

Why did you decide to do a thesis?

"UTSA is not known at all for undergraduate geology and I had very high aspirations concerning graduate school. Therefore, I had to do more than just take classes if I wanted to overcome this disability. I need to distinguish myself from all the other GPAs out there, demonstrate my initiative and excitement for geology, and conduct a research project to develop some advanced skills. It worked; here I am!" (Aaron Kullman, Geology)

"To complete the requirements of the Honors Program, but I had received an NEH summer grant to conduct research among Mexican American healers; a thesis was the logical format to present my findings of that research." (Liz de la Portilla, Anthropology)

"Because I wanted to graduate with Honors. Looking back on it, though, I see that it has been the single greatest piece of work that I have ever accomplished." (Duane Miller, Philosophy)

"Frankly, I wanted to receive Honors. Secondly, I believed the freedom of a creative writing project could only be fully appreciated in the Honors Program." (Jeff Jaeckle, English)

"At first, it was because I wanted to graduate with Honors, but by the time I truly made the decision, it was because I was excited about having the chance to spend the kind of graduate-level time and research on a topic which really excited/intrigued me. I realized early on that the thesis would be a huge challenge, but would be the kind of "epic" intellectual opportunity that I was really hungry for.... Being able to do my thesis on 1960's American Art was like a dream. It seemed more like a reward than a task!" (Arend Zwartjes, Humanities)

"To make myself more competitive for the [medical] schools I was applying to." (Carlo Martinez, Biology)

How did you identify your thesis topic?

"I knew I wanted to do something in genetics and, with a lot of help from Dr. Eisenberg, I was able to find a lab to work in [at UTHSC-SA] and a doctor interested in the same area of research that I was." (Cynthia Davis, Biology)

"I tried to find a topic that I had a little experience with. I also wanted a topic that would not offer a purely academic thesis. This might be more of a personal preference, though. I wrote a

thesis that a person with a good vocabulary and a decent education would be able to understand." (Duane Miller, Philosophy)

"I first did an Independent Study and the topic just evolved. Some of my readers and I discussed some things we found lacking in the existing literature." (Anne Turner, Psychology)

"I chose it after speaking with my thesis advisor." (Carlo Martinez, Biology)

"The topic was a synthesis of my personal interest in *curanderismo* and from conversations with my advisor on similar traditions and practices among Comanches." (Liz de la Portilla, Anthropology)

"I went to each of the five Geology professors and told them that I wanted to do an Honors thesis and asked them if they had any projects.... I basically decided on my project based on my interests, the ability to work with the advisor, the project, and the small need for funding -- in that order." (Aaron Kullman, Geology)

"I simply examined several of my recent ideas and current projects [in creative writing]. I chose the most interesting and extensive topic to base my thesis on." (Jeff Jaeckle, English)

"Based on topics we had glazed over in class, but which I felt warranted special attention. Also, my thesis advisor took my initial ideas and really helped me focus them through further research." (Arend Zwartjes, Humanities)

"My thesis advisor helped me identify my thesis topic. He had been working on a project before I approached him and my thesis continued on the same trail." (Ankur Kohli, Computer Science)

How did you find a thesis advisor?

"Finding a thesis advisor was not easy and I suggest to all of you to start early. If you are not already 'in good' with any of your professors, I suggest reviewing UTSA's web page to read up on some of the great research that lots of professors are doing here. Then talk with the ones whose interests match up with you to see if any are interested in also working with you. I suggest that you think about your approach in how you bring up the subject." (Cynthia Davis, Biology)

"My thesis advisor was my academic advisor. I had approached him because his interests were similar to mine." (Liz de la Portilla, Anthropology)

"I looked at all the professors' past and current research to see if there was any overlap with my interests. I was able to find a pretty close match." (Patricia Tenorio, Psychology)

"I knew Dr. Flannagan from classes and from being her SI leader, so we had already cultivated a relationship." (Anne Turner, Psychology)

"I had already had one class with Mark Bernstein and I was talking to him on the phone one night and I just asked. He had written his MA thesis on philosophy of science so he was familiar with the topic. Also, I know that Mark and I have different views on things and I wanted to make sure my arguments were sufficiently strong to stand up to his criticism." (Duane Miller, Philosophy)

"I made sure to work with professors I had had numerous classes with. Dr. Caver and I had a history of three classes together and hours of conversation outside of class." (Jeff Jaeckle, English)

"I asked Dr. Eisenberg about the Computer Science advisors in the Honors Program who, I think turned out to be Dr. Steve and Kay Robbins. I approached Steve Robbins and was immediately interested in the opportunity for research he offered." (Ankur Kohli, Computer Science)

What did you gain from doing a thesis?

"I gained much from doing an Honors thesis, but above all, I was able to develop a working relationship with people in the field of my interest. This is invaluable." (Cynthia Davis, Biology)

"A greater knowledge of how to research topics, but most importantly, once you have written a 32-page thesis, it doesn't seem so daunting to write a 101-page book or something like that." (Duane Miller, Philosophy)

"I now have a small, but polished body of poetry and prose, which I can use to apply to graduate schools, for various scholarships, and even paid positions. My writing has expanded and improved. Furthermore, I have developed meaningful relationships with three intelligent and influential professors in my degree program." (Jeff Jaeckle, English)

"The interaction with my thesis advisor was by far the greatest benefit that I came away with. Her professionalism, insight, and incredible support, attention, and ability truly helped me improve so many aspects of my intellectual capacity.... Doing the thesis taught me intellectual rigor and truly advanced my critical analysis skills." (Arend Zwartjes, Humanities)

"I would not have my current job if I hadn't taken on the Honors thesis. I also got an opportunity to work on exciting subject matter outside the realm of the basic Computer Science curriculum." (Ankur Kohli, Computer Science)

"I have become more critical of my writing, as well as of others'. I learned how to break down a question or problem and find the best way to answer it." (Carlo Martinez, Biology)

"All the practical stuff that goes into producing such a work has come in handy in graduate school." (Liz de la Portilla, Anthropology)

"I learned more about research methodology and statistical analyses than any classroom course could have taught me." (Patricia Tenorio, Psychology)

"I feel much more prepared for graduate school since I've gone through the process. It made me more competitive and I ended up with various offers to graduate school. It strengthened my presentation skills and my self-confidence, except when I got a draft back from Dr. Eisenberg :). I also developed close relationships with my readers." (Anne Turner, Psychology).

What advice would you give to students considering doing an Honors thesis?

"Start early!!!! Also, make sure you meet your own deadlines!" (Cynthia Davis, Biology)

"I would tell them to make a plan about how and where they will do their computer typing and also I would suggest that they organize their photocopies in as orderly a manner as possible! I ended up with a stack of photocopies from tons of books and magazines, all unlabeled and a mess! Eventually, I learned to label and file everything, but they should do this from the beginning!" (Arend Zwartjes, Humanities)

"I wish I had started thinking seriously about the thesis in my freshman or sophomore years, instead of in my senior year." (Ankur Kohli, Computer Science)

"Maintain close communication with [your] readers. Though I kept [mine] informed of my progress, the updates were sporadic and, in the end, many of them had very good advice to give." (Carlo Martinez, Biology)

"Pick something that is doable, but challenging. There can be a great sense of accomplishment in the end." (Liz de la Portilla, Anthropology)

"My advice would be to start early!! Take extra courses that appeal to you. Get INVOLVED in research that professors are doing as soon as possible. I can't stress that enough." (Patricia Tenorio, Psychology)

"I wish I had read everything pertaining to my thesis and my thesis proposition before even starting. Don't procrastinate. With my thesis proposal, I procrastinated and it was extremely stressful. With my actual thesis, I did not procrastinate and it was generally an enjoyable experience. Also, don't expect your readers to contact you -- they won't. Contact them, drop off chapters and chapter revisions at their offices, make sure you know their e-mails, phone #s, office hours, home phone #s, etc." (Duane Miller, Philosophy)

"Decide what topic you want to pursue, and then do it. Don't waste half the semester with it in your head; put it down on paper and distribute it to your advisor and readers. The sooner you receive their opinions, the sooner you can revise and improve your thesis. What I should do differently is complete my project sooner to allow more time for revision and feedback." (Jeff Jaekle, English)

"Involve your advisor and committee -- a lot! Someone told me once, 'If you show your science to more people, you will become a better scientist.' It's true for many different reasons. The more you talk about your work, the better you understand its strengths and weaknesses, the better a presenter you become, you learn new applications and insights that you may never have thought of or just a new way of looking at things, and your committee is interested in helping you!" (Aaron Kullman, Geology)

"Go for it. The pain is worth it." (Anne Turner, Psychology)

X. HONORS THESIS MANUAL OF STYLE

THESIS SECTIONS

An Honors thesis must include the following sections, in the order listed below. Each section should begin on a new page.

Title Page

All information on the title page should be centered. Please refer to the examples of various title pages provided at the end of this handbook: Example of Title Page: Thesis Proposal or Example of Title Page: Thesis or Example of Title Page: Creative Thesis. Please refer to the *electronic template of the Honors Thesis Proposal and Honors Thesis that are available on the Honors College web-page*. These templates are formatted properly and should be the starting point for building your own electronic proposal or thesis document.

Signature Page

The signature page should contain at least five lines for signatures – your signature, the signatures of the three members of your thesis committee, and the signature of the Dean of the Honors College. You should sign first and the Dean of the Honors College should be the last to sign. Your name should appear at the top of the page under the heading “PREPARED BY.” The other signatures should appear below that in a section with the header “APPROVED BY.” Before you take the signature page to your committee members for them to sign, *you will need to type in their names directly below the blank line you provide for their signature*. It is a good idea to check the spelling of your committee members’ names as well as whether they like to use their middle initial as part of their name. The Dean of the Honors College is Dr. Richard Diem.

At the bottom of the page, the words “RECEIVED BY THE HONORS COLLEGE:” should appear in the center of the page. Directly below that, you should type in the month and year in which you are filing your thesis or anticipated graduation (e.g., “May 2008”). A sample signature page appears in this manual. This signature page can be used for both the completed thesis and the thesis proposal.

Acknowledgements

In this section, you have an opportunity to express your appreciation to those who have helped you with your thesis or who have contributed to your academic and personal growth. While an Acknowledgements section is not required, it is encouraged. This is your chance to let the people who have helped you know how much you value their support!

Abstract

Each thesis must include an abstract of between 150 and 300 words. The abstract is a summary of the thesis. For a traditional academic thesis, the abstract should generally include a statement of the problem, your argument or hypotheses, a brief description of your methodology,

and a summary of your findings and conclusions. For a thesis project executed in a non-written medium, the abstract should typically include a statement of the creative goal or problem, the historical and/or cultural context of the work, a discussion of the medium/processes used in the project's creation, and the student's conclusions. Because the abstract summarizes a complete work, it should be written in the past or present (not future) tense. The abstract will be one of the last sections of the thesis that you write.

An example of an abstract for a traditional academic thesis is as follows:

“This study examined children's perceptions of their parents' experiences with negative emotions and the relationship between those perceptions and parents' reports of their willingness to display negative emotions. It tested three hypotheses: (1) that children would be more aware of mothers' than father's emotions; (2) that older children would be more aware of parents' negative emotions than younger children; and (3) that children whose parents reported expressing more negative emotions would be more aware of their parents' negative emotions. To test the hypotheses, 48 children, ages 6 to 10, were asked to answer questions about their fathers' and mothers' negative emotions. The children's parents completed a questionnaire that concerning the likelihood that they would share their negative emotions with their child. Major findings were that age, gender of parent, and the specific emotion influenced children's perceptions of their parents' emotions and that fathers' (but not mothers') reports of their own expressiveness were related to how much the children could say about their parent's emotional experiences. Unlike previous studies, age did not influence the extent to which children cited themselves as the cause of parents' emotions. The discussion addresses implications for the development of gender stereotypes about emotion.”

An example of an abstract for a creative thesis is as follows:

“The goal of this project was to explore the process of using poetic themes as inspiration for the creation of several pieces of visual art. This has been done a number of times in the past; for example, Monet's paintings based on the poetry of Rimbaud. However, I could find no examples of this in the area of print-making. I was inspired by the work of poet Charles Bukowski. After obtaining his permission to use three of his poems, I decided that his ideas could best be expressed visually using the intaglio medium, incorporating the techniques of etching, aquatint, mezzotint, and drypoint. While on the whole, I was pleased with the outcome, it would have been beneficial to have had more contact with the poet, so that I could be clearer about his intentions.”

Table of Contents

Every thesis must have a Table of Contents, listing the contents and page numbers of each Chapter and sub-chapter of the thesis proposal or thesis. The Table of Contents page numbering can be automatically built using the indexing tools in a word processing program. Refer to the Thesis Proposal Template or Thesis Template for examples of this indexing process.

List of Tables

If tables of data are presented in the Thesis, they must be listed after the Table of Contents and include the page numbers for each Table. The List of Tables page numbering can be automatically built using the indexing tools in a word processing program. Refer to the Thesis Proposal Template or Thesis Template for examples of this indexing process.

List of Figures

If figures are presented in the Thesis, they must be listed after the Table of Contents and include the page numbers for each Figure. The List of Figures page numbering can be automatically built using the indexing tools in a word processing program. Refer to the Thesis Proposal Template or Thesis Template for examples of this indexing process.

Thesis Body

The format for the thesis body should follow the conventions of your academic discipline. The body of the thesis will generally include a statement of the problem, a survey of existing literature, your argument (hypotheses), a description of your methods, your findings or results, and your conclusions (often including directions future work might take).

For a thesis project completed in a non-written medium, the creation itself (or, as appropriate, its photographic, video, or audio representation) is the heart of the thesis. However, *the creative product is not the entire thesis!* You must describe the creative product in a thorough essay, usually preceding the creation (or its representation) in the body. The essay should describe the medium, discuss why you chose this medium (including the advantages and disadvantages of the medium) and this particular subject, describe in some detail the process that led to this creation, and self-critique your success in achieving your creative goals. In other words, the reader should learn exactly what you did, why and how you did it, how well -- in your opinion -- it turned out, and what you would do the same or differently if you did it again. This additional, written piece of your thesis should also demonstrate your familiarity with similar work in your field by discussing its historical and/or cultural context. As with a traditional academic thesis, the format of the body should follow the conventions of your discipline.

Footnotes/Endnotes (if applicable)

You should use whatever form of citation that is dictated by the discipline in which you are writing. Your thesis advisor is the appropriate source for advice on documenting your sources.

Bibliography/References

The Honors thesis must include a list of all sources cited in the text. You should use whatever form of bibliographic citation is required for your discipline. Your thesis advisor should provide you with the appropriate citation format.

Appendices (if applicable)

Any tables, graphs, illustrations, photos, or other material (e.g., survey/research instruments) that you refer to in the thesis, but do not include in the body of the thesis, should be included as appendices, following the conventions of your academic discipline. As with all other parts of the thesis, your appendices must have 1-inch margins on both sides.

THESIS FORMAT

The Honors Thesis Proposal and Honors Thesis will be submitted to the Honors College electronically. However, a printed copy of the title page and signature page (including signatures of advisor and readers). *An electronic template of the Honors Thesis Proposal and Honors Thesis are available on the Honors College web-page, these templates are formatted properly and should be the starting point for building your own electronic proposal or thesis document.* The format of the electronic copy and printed title page and signature page must adhere to the following standards:

1. Paper

Title and Signature page must be printed on good quality, 8-1/2" x 11" paper.

2. Margins

Your left-hand and top margins must be 1.25 inches. Your right-hand and bottom margins must be 0.75inch. This applies to the entire thesis, including the title page and all appendices, diagrams, and figures.

3. Type

The thesis must be typed or prepared on the computer in 11- or 12-point font. The text must be justified on the left side. It is up to you and your thesis advisor whether you use full justification. If you justify the right-hand margin, you must do so consistently throughout the entire document (except within figures, tables, and appendices).

4. Line Spacing

The abstract, table of contents, acknowledgements, and body of the thesis must be double-spaced. Footnotes/endnotes and the bibliography/references must be single-spaced within each entry and double-spaced between entries. Appendices must adhere to margin and page-number requirements, but they do not have to conform to spacing requirements, except in the labeling and titling of each appendix.

5. Page Numbering

Page numbers must appear either at the top or the bottom of the thesis/thesis proposal and must be either centered or right-justified. The page numbers are placed 0.5 inches from the page margin. Title Page and Signature Page are NOT numbered, but counted as pages i and ii. Lowercase Roman numerals (iii, iv, v, etc.) are used for the Acknowledgements, Abstract, Table of Contents, List of Tables, and List of Figures. The body, References, and Appendices receive numeric symbols starting over with 1, 2, 3, etc. For more information on page numbering, see the electronic Thesis Proposal Template and Thesis Template.

6. Direct Quotations

Direct quotations of up to five lines in length should be included as part of the body of the text and enclosed by quotation marks. Longer quotations should be indented and set off from the main flow of the text. All quotations should be referenced appropriately.

7. Documentation

You may use whatever form of bibliographic and footnote/endnote citation required by your discipline. Your thesis advisor should provide you with the appropriate citation format.

8. Other Formatting Instructions

If a single line of text appears either at the top or bottom of a page, a page break should be inserted so that no line of text stands alone.

Chapter titles must be numbered and expressed as Headings (e.g., **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**) in the document. Chapter titles must be written in all capitals and 14-point boldface font, centered on the page. Sub-chapters titles must also be numbered and expressed as sub-headings (e.g., **3.1 Data Collection**), and written in progressively smaller font sizes. Such divisions should be parallel and consistent between sections and must be included in the Table of Contents. For more information on chapter titles and the use of headings in the document, see the electronic Thesis Proposal Template and Thesis Template.

You should avoid auto-hyphenation programs. When it is necessary to hyphenate, you should make sure the reader will not be confused or inconvenienced.

Mathematical or chemical equations should be set off from the text in the same manner as a long quotation. Equations that will be referred to again in the text should be numbered or lettered in a consistent style and the label placed in parentheses or brackets. Equation editors and Greek alphabet fonts are available in most word processors. In extreme cases, equations may be hand lettered in black ink.

Foreign language phrases, including genus and species names, should be italicized in the same font as the text. A species name should be spelled out completely, with the genus capitalized and the specific name in lower case, the first time it appears and anytime it begins a sentence. Subsequent occurrences should abbreviate the genus (e.g., *E. coli*).

Example of Title Page: Thesis Proposal

**THE TITLE OF THE THESIS PROPOSAL WILL BE IN CAPITAL LETTERS,
DOUBLE SPACED AND IN AN INVERTED PYRAMID FORMAT IF TITLE
IS MORE THAN ONE LINE LONG**

by

AUTHOR'S NAME

THESIS Proposal
Presented to the Faculty of the
Honors College
The University of Texas at San Antonio
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements
For the Degree of

BACHELOR OF **SCIENCE** IN **CHEMISTRY**
WITH HIGHEST HONORS IN THE HONORS COLLEGE

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO
Name of College
Name of Department
Month and Year of Graduation

Example of Title Page: Thesis

THE TITLE OF THE THESIS WILL BE IN CAPITAL LETTERS, DOUBLE SPACED

AND IN AN INVERTED PYRAMID FORMAT IF TITLE

IS MORE THAN ONE LINE LONG

by

AUTHOR'S NAME

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the
Honors College
The University of Texas at San Antonio
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements
For the Degree of

BACHELOR OF **SCIENCE** IN **CHEMISTRY**
WITH HIGHEST HONORS IN THE HONORS COLLEGE

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO

Name of College

Name of Department

Month and Year of Graduation

Example of Title Page: Creative Thesis

THE TITLE OF THE THESIS WILL BE IN CAPITAL LETTERS, DOUBLE SPACED

AND IN AN INVERTED PYRAMID FORMAT IF TITLE

IS MORE THAN ONE LINE LONG

by

AUTHOR'S NAME

A Written Explanation of the Creative THESIS
Presented to the Faculty of the
Honors College
The University of Texas at San Antonio
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements
For the Degree of

BACHELOR OF **FINE ARTS** IN **VISUAL ARTS**
WITH HIGHEST HONORS IN THE HONORS COLLEGE

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO
Name of College
Name of Department
Month and Year of Graduation

Example of Signature Page:

THE TITLE OF THE THESIS WILL BE IN CAPITAL LETTERS, DOUBLE SPACED

AND IN AN INVERTED PYRAMID FORMAT IF TITLE

IS MORE THAN ONE LINE LONG

PREPARED BY:

Author's Name

APPROVED BY:

Advisor's Name, Ph.D., Thesis Advisor

Reader's Name, Ph.D., Thesis Reader

Reader's Name, Ph.D., Thesis Reader

Accepted: _____
Richard Diem, Ph.D., Dean of the Honors College

Received by the Honors College:
