

Honors Contract Course Credit

The Honors Contract allows a student to make a one-on-one arrangement with an instructor in order to earn Honors credit in a non-honors course. Contract applications are accepted during the first four weeks of the fall and spring semester.

The work assigned as a result of the contract should be qualitatively different in nature from the work already assigned in the class. The mere addition of readings or assignments is not sufficient. For example, the assigned work may rely on primary sources not formally introduced in the class, or focus more intensively on particular topics. We will not approve contracts in which students function as TAs for honors credit.

The student must earn a grade of B or above in the class in which the Honors Contract Option is completed in order to earn honors credit. Thus the instructor and student should discuss the student's progress in the course, both when the project is originated and after the midterm, in order to determine if an honors option is advisable. (In the event that a student completes an Honors Contract, but does not earn a minimum B in the class, some instructors choose to convert the project to extra credit—this is entirely at your discretion.)

Contracts will be reviewed to see if they meet the above policies and are:

Specific. Details of exactly what is to be done, such as required format if relevant, products, amount of reading, number of meetings, specific topic or process for choosing a topic where relevant, expected completion date(s).

Measurable. Criteria for evaluating any output such as papers or presentations, level of scholarship expected, etc.

Relevant. Appropriate to the course and course level.

Beneficial. Produce a benefit to the student in terms of developing depth or breadth of knowledge/skills not available to non-Honors students or application of knowledge/skills in ways not available to non-Honors students.

Contracts should be designed to provide an enhanced experience in one or more of the following areas:

1. Applied learning
2. Peer instruction and public presentation
3. Interdisciplinary perspectives
4. A deeper and more challenging view of one aspect of the course material
5. Experience outside the classroom/service learning
6. The use of theory beyond that required of other students

Originating an Honors Contract project

The student is expected to approach the instructor by no later than the end of the third week of the semester to request permission to complete an Honors Contract and to discuss possible projects. Earlier is better, and the students are encouraged to contact the instructor before the semester starts.

If the instructor agrees to supervise an Honors Contract, the project should be outlined in the Honors contract by the end of week four. The student fills out the student contract request. It is the instructor's responsibility to fill out the instructor's contract in the (<http://www.rrcc.edu/honors/faculty>). Once initiated, the student is required to agree to the contract, indicated by a signature.

Completing an Honors Contract project

The student is expected to check in with the instructor at least every other week to report progress, unless otherwise specified by the instructor. It is encouraged to set up a regular meeting schedule.

Deadlines are outlined in the Honors contract, and if those deadlines are not met, the instructor has the right to terminate the Honors Contract.

Since the student must earn a minimum GPA of 3.5 in the class in order to earn Honors credit, it is suggested that the student and instructor meet during week ten to discuss whether the student is on track to earn the necessary grade.

Evaluating and Reporting an Honors Contract project

The Honors Contract project does not need to receive a numeric grade. However, the project must satisfy all of the requirements laid out in the honors contract in order for the student to earn honors credit. The evaluation of the project must be completed in the online honors option tool on the faculty tab of the Honors page. (There is a form to fill out. Evaluations are typically 1-2 paragraphs in length and indicate the strengths of the project, areas for improvement, and whether or not the project met the established objectives.) Once the evaluation is completed, click "Submit Evaluation" in order to finalize the project. This will notify the Director that the honors distinction should be added to the contract.

Recording of Honors credit

Once the registrar's office receives the email from the Director indicating that Honors credit has been earned, and after verifying that the student earned a minimum B in the course, they will manually change the name of the course so that Honors appears in the title. (Please note that it sometimes takes a few weeks for the Honors distinction to appear.)

Frequently Asked Questions about Honors Contracts:

How is a contract different than a whole Honors section?

This is just for one student, not a whole class. So the Honors Class contract lets the Honors Program student make any transfer-level class an Honors class. And while Honors sections are open to anyone meeting the prerequisites for the course with instructor permission, only Honors Program students can make Honors Class contracts.

Do I have to participate if a student asks me?

No, of course not. It's a voluntary program. But many faculty want to support students who have the will and desire to do more. These contracts seek to give the student an opportunity to work closely with an instructor, to experience active learning more typical of 300- or 400-level college coursework or to do work a professional in that discipline might do. It's what we call the Honors Experience.

How do I make an Honors Class contract with an Honors Program student?

Download the form from the website or from the Faculty guide. It can be filled out electronically or by hand. You and the participating student should meet to discuss the extra work or project and fill out the contract together. We'll let you know if the contract is approved ASAP so that the student can get started early in the semester!

Who assesses the student's work?

You do. If completed in accordance with the assessment standard you set out in the Honors Class contract, you the Director know by the first day of the following semester. "Honors" will be added to the course name on the student's transcript retroactively.

Honors Contract Option Best Practices – Tips from Instructors

- Develop one or two "go-to" projects in case the student doesn't have a clear idea of what they want to study. Develop specific guidelines, expectations, grading rubric, etc, and give them to the student at the beginning of the project.—business faculty member
- Make sure to fill out the contract and be clear in the goals. Set a deadline and require more than one draft before the deadline. —psychology faculty member
- Design a project that fits seamlessly into what you are already doing in class, such as augmenting a research paper.—English faculty member
- Develop a project that contributes to the course—something that you can use as a teaching tool in subsequent classes.—English faculty member