

## University Honors Program Thesis Overview for Mentors and Readers

Updated April 2025

### Faculty Colleagues:

Thank you for considering serving as a thesis mentor or a reader for a University Honors Program senior. The University Honors Program requires students to complete a yearlong thesis project during their final three terms at SCU. While most students will fulfill this requirement through work completed in their major and/or minor departments, many students pursue interdisciplinary projects that may take many forms, not just the traditional academic or creative ones that scholars in their fields typically produce. The Honors Program encourages such creativity, especially when students are able to bridge the various disciplines in which they have worked while at SCU. The Honors Program values culminating projects that are required or recommended by academic departments (ie Capstones) to serve as the foundation for the Honors thesis. In the case of the three quarter Engineering Senior Design Project, the Honors Program recognizes this work as the complete senior thesis.

The Honors Program relies on the expertise, time, and attention of faculty across campus to mentor and support our students as they pursue their thesis projects. The role of the mentor and reader can vary widely depending on discipline, and often students complete their thesis in collaborative work with faculty on their own research. We are deeply appreciative of the hard work mentoring these projects entails and the excellent work it enables.

Here are some general guidelines about the thesis process. (See the [syllabus for Honors 195](#) for the details from the student perspective)

- Honors seniors will be enrolled in HNRS 195 during their final quarter of senior year. The Director of the University Honors Program will be the instructor of record. This “class” does not have official meeting times but there are periodic “deliverables” that students are expected to submit.
- The thesis will normally be brought to completion during the senior year. The thesis/project should engage each student in original creative or scholarly work; and it should also provide participants with the opportunity to work closely with faculty members who will guide them in beginning, pursuing, and completing a long-term project.
- Because of wide variations in method and expectations among the various departments of the University, many different kinds of projects can fulfill the senior thesis requirement. However, the thesis work is expected to encompass approximately three quarters and result in a final product judged to be of appropriately high quality by two faculty members, the mentor and the reader of the thesis.

### The roles of the mentor and the reader:

- As a general rule, the thesis mentor and the reader should hold full-time faculty appointments at Santa Clara University, but the Director of the University Honors Program may approve other qualified persons to serve in either or both capacities.
- In order to encourage interdisciplinary thought, the Honors Program encourages students, as appropriate, to consider engaging with faculty in different departments as their mentor and reader. In keeping with this goal, we also encourage students with multiple majors and/or minors to consider ways to connect their academic disciplines through their senior thesis.
- The mentor will have primary responsibility for directing the student in their thesis work. The mentor will most often be a member of the department in which the participant is completing a major but, if appropriate, may represent another department or discipline. The Honors Program encourages the mentor and student to consider one quarter of directed reading/research credit, as appropriate and feasible, during which they can work closely on the thesis. Regardless, we strongly recommend that students meet weekly or biweekly with their thesis mentor and to consult at least quarterly with their thesis reader.
- The reader's participation is intended to extend the participant's interaction with faculty members concerning the thesis and to provide opportunity to expand the interdisciplinary scope of the endeavor. Generally speaking, the reader will play a secondary role to that of the mentor. The reader's contributions may be limited to providing comment on an advanced draft of the thesis/project, but this guideline is not intended to exclude more extensive participation on the reader's part. The Honors Program encourages seniors to check in with their reader at the end of fall and winter terms and to provide regular status updates during the final term of work.
- The mentor will be asked via Google form by the Honors Program to provide a status update at the end of fall and winter terms. We very much appreciate your attention to this procedure, as it is one of the main ways for us to have a sense of how students are doing on their projects and to provide support to them as needed.
- The mentor and reader will submit independent decisions regarding the suitability of the thesis for fulfilling the thesis requirement. Of course, the mentor and reader may consult with each other or with others during the preparation of the thesis and before judging its outcome.

**The thesis/project will be considered completed when the student submits the following:**

- The completed thesis, submitted to the Camino course for Honors 195.
- Attribution statement: Students who do group projects (this is usually engineering students) also need to include a short description of their contribution to the project.
- Email approval from the mentor and reader sent to [honors@scu.edu](mailto:honors@scu.edu) by the designated date indicated in Camino, but no later than the day that grades are due for spring quarter.

**Incomplete or unsatisfactory theses:**

- In the rare situation that the mentor and reader agree that the thesis is unacceptable, the thesis requirement will not be considered complete. In such a case, the participant should consult the mentor and reader about steps necessary for the approval of the thesis and discuss options with the Director of the Honors Program. If the mentor and reader of a thesis disagree about the acceptability of the thesis, the Director of the University Honors Program will decide.
- If the student is unable to complete the thesis to the satisfaction of their mentor and reader by the June deadlines, they can choose to be summer graduates. In this case, students do not need to enroll in classes, and they will have until the end of August to complete the work and obtain the approval of their mentor and reader.

Thank you so much for your willingness to work with our students on these projects. The thesis is an empowering, exciting experience for seniors, and the work they do on their projects helps to clarify their ambitions and interests as they prepare to graduate and move on to the next stage of their lives. Your support in this process is invaluable!

If you have any questions please reach out to the Honors team, Naomi Andrews (Director, [nandrews@scu.edu](mailto:nandrews@scu.edu)), Michele Parker (Asst. Director, [mtparker@scu.edu](mailto:mtparker@scu.edu)), or Ethan Mulberg (Program Manager, [emulberg@scu.edu](mailto:emulberg@scu.edu)).