

The Handbook of the OCU Honors Program
Revised 2024

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The Handbook of the OCU Honors Program

Revised 2020

Section 1: The University Honors Program Mission Statement

The Oklahoma City University Honors Program advances the university's mission to create a culture of excellence through a rigorous, interdisciplinary program for intellectually motivated students. Successful completion of the program marks a significant academic achievement that will help students develop their full potential. The program's collaborative learning environment aims to strengthen both the breadth and depth of student learning through enhanced educational experiences in the general education curriculum and the major field that encourage:

- A spirit of critical inquiry, exploration, and discovery
- An awareness of and appreciation for cross-disciplinary exchange and problem-solving
- A tolerance for ambiguity, development of emotional intelligence, and respect for diversity of opinions
- A commitment to the highest standards of undergraduate research and scholarship
- A life-long pursuit of knowledge and wisdom in service to local and global communities.

Section 2: Honors Committee

Supervision of the University Honors Program is the function of the University Honors Committee. This committee is composed of faculty members from each of the undergraduate schools, the Honors Program Director, Assistant Director, Student Director (StuPro), President of the Honors Student Council, Director of Undergraduate Research (*ex officio*), the Banning Hall Residence Director (*ex officio*), and an undergraduate admissions counselor (*ex officio*).

The University Honors Committee is chaired by the Director of the University Honors Program, who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the program and serves as a member of the General Education Committee and the Academic Council. The director is appointed by the Provost.

The University Honors Committee has the following responsibilities:

1. Selection of students for admission to the University Honors Program
2. Monitoring of students' academic progress and compliance with the requirements for continuance in the honors program. The Director is charged with keeping records on all

honors students and providing information to the Honors Committee necessary to fulfill its oversight responsibility.

3. Review of probationary students and recommendation of retention or dismissal.
4. Evaluation and selection of course proposals and syllabi submitted for consideration for inclusion in the university honors curriculum.
5. Rigorous and systemic evaluations of each course in the honors curriculum with findings available to the faculty teaching honors courses.
6. Curricular assessment of the honors program.
7. Oversight of honors activities.
8. Periodic review of the structure and content of the University Honors Program with recommendations to the Provost for any changes in administrative organization, curriculum, criteria for selection and retention of students, or other academic requirements. Curriculum changes affecting general education must be approved by the General Education Committee. Other curriculum changes must be approved by the Academic Programs and Standards Committee.

Section 3: Selection of Students, Continued Eligibility, and *Cum Honore* Distinction

3-1. Selection of Students

No student is automatically admitted to the University Honors Program. Students apply to the University Honors Committee, which is responsible for admitting qualified students to the program. The committee's decisions are governed by the following criteria:

1. Incoming first-year students may apply to the program by completing the online application. First-year applications will be evaluated holistically, considering high school transcripts, standardized test scores (if provided), and the quality of the application essays.
2. Transfer students with a minimum GPA of 3.5 from their previous institution(s) may apply for the Honors Program before entering OCU.
3. On campus recruitment occurs on a rolling basis throughout the academic year. Acceptance will be based upon the student's performance in a minimum of 12 credit hours of work at OCU. Applicants must achieve a cumulative GPA of at least 3.5 and at least 3.5 in all General Education courses taken during the period preceding their application to the honors program. In addition to the application essays, current students must submit two letters of recommendation from OCU faculty.
4. Honors students transferring from another NCHC institution who are currently members in good standing of their honors program, may transfer directly to the OCU Honors Program. Up to 12 hours of honors credit from another institution can count toward the 24-hour requirement for *cum honore* distinction.

3-2. Eligibility for Continued Membership in the OCU Honors Program

1. Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.5 in all courses taken at OCU and in all honors courses taken.
2. The program director will review the grades of all honors students each semester. If a student fails to attain the required GPA, the Honors Committee will decide if the student will be placed on probation or dismissed from the program. Once a student is placed on probation, he/she will have one semester to attain the required GPA. If he/she fails to do so, the Honors Committee will decide whether the student should receive additional time to improve the GPA. The program director will notify all students who are either on probation or dismissed from the program. Students on probation and those dismissed from the program will be allowed to remain in any honors courses in which they are enrolled for the semester during which they are notified of their status. Students dismissed from the honors program lose all honors privileges as defined in Section 6. A student who brings his/her GPA (cumulative and honors) up to a 3.5 after dismissal from the program may petition the Honors Committee for reinstatement. The committee will consider the feasibility that a student can complete honors requirements in responding to a petition for reinstatement.
3. Students must earn at least a “C” in any Honors course for it to count toward the 24-hour requirement.
4. All honors students are required to complete HON 1100/1101 (Honors First-Year Colloquium) during their first semester in the honors program. Transfer students who bring in six or more hours of honors credit are exempt from this requirement.
5. All Honors students who need credit for ENGL 1213: Composition II must take an honors section of the course.
6. Students who violate the Oklahoma City University Academic Honesty Policy will be dismissed from the University Honors Program.

3-3. Requirements for *Cum Honore* Distinction

To graduate *cum honore*, students must fulfill the following requirements:

Required courses:

HON 1100/1101	Honors First-Year Colloquium
ENGL 1213H	Honors Composition II (waived for students who have earned Composition II credit through AP, CLEP, or other advanced placement exams, or who have otherwise earned credit for Comp II before enrolling at OCU)
HON 3163	Honors Junior/Senior Seminar

A minimum of 24 credit hours must be completed in honors courses and/or contracts, including the required courses noted above, with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.5 for a student to graduate *cum honore*. No more than 12 of these hours may be in the form of contracts.

Upon the student's completion of the curricular and GPA requirements for *cum honore*, the program director shall notify the registrar. Diplomas and transcripts will have special designation for those graduating *cum honore*, and a special honors stole will be presented to honors graduating seniors at the Honors Graduation Dinner and worn by them at graduation. Deans will be informed by the director of the students in their schools and colleges who have achieved *cum honore* distinction so that those students may be recognized in their respective honors and awards convocations.

Section 4: Honors Courses

4.1. Definition

An honors course is any undergraduate course, section, seminar, independent study, or other academic credit offering designated as such by the Honors Committee and the department in which it is offered by assignment of an honors section. All honors courses include the word "honors" in the title and are designated as "H" sections in the course schedule and by the University Registrar.

4.2 Faculty Teaching Honors Sections

Honors courses normally shall be taught only by persons holding a full-time faculty appointment. Upon recommendation by the department head and with approval of the Program Director and the Honors Committee, adjunct faculty may teach honors sections when appropriate full-time faculty are not available and/or if an adjunct has special topical knowledge or expertise.

4.3 Content and Grading in Honors Sections

Honors sections may well cover more sophisticated material than that covered in regular sections of the same course; more active participation should be encouraged; and the method of evaluation of student work (examinations, reports, etc.) may be different. The grading standards at the end of the course, however, should not be designed to force the honors students to compete among themselves for a limited number of "A" or "B" grades regardless of their level of performance. Instead, their grades should be assigned on the basis of the quality of their work based on the requirements of the course syllabus. Students who meet the challenge of an honors section should have this reflected in their grades, but there should be no hesitation to award low grades to honors students who do not live up to the expectations of the course.

All new honors course syllabi must be approved by the Honors Committee

4.4 Enrollment in Honors Courses

Enrollment in all honors courses is with the permission of the program director. Members of the University Honors Program are tagged in the enrollment system and automatically are eligible to enroll in Honors courses. Following the enrollment period for honors students, non-honors students who have a minimum 3.5 GPA and a faculty recommendation may request permission from the director to enroll in an honors course if there is available space in the class. Non-honors students enrolled in honors sections must meet the same expectations as honors students and will receive the GPA bonus at the completion of the course. Any questions about the eligibility of a particular student to enroll in an honors course should be directed to the program director.

HON 3163: Honors Junior-Senior Seminar serves as an academic capstone experience for the honors program. As a rule, first- and second-year honors students are not eligible to enroll in HON 3163. Second year students who achieve junior status early must obtain the permission of the program director to enroll in HON 3163.

4.5 Maximum Enrollment for Honors Courses

The maximum enrollment for an honors course is eighteen (18) students. Any requests for over-enrollment of courses must be approved by the course instructor and the program director.

4.6 Assessment and Evaluation of Honors Courses

All honors courses will be evaluated each semester. Questions specific to honors program learning objectives and instructional guidelines will be added to the course evaluation form for each honors section. Faculty also are required to complete the Faculty Evaluation of an Honors Course Form.

4.7 Team-taught courses

Each faculty member who team-teaches an honors course shall receive full course load credit for the honors section, with the exception of ENGL/PHIL 2004 and 2114, in which each faculty member receives only 3 hours of load credit.

Section 5: Honors Contracts and Additional Opportunities to Earn Honors Credit

5.1 Honors Contracts

Students may undertake honors contracts in courses other than those regularly offered in The OCU Honors Program. After consulting with the course professor, a student must

submit a completed Honors Contract Form to the program director, who will approve the contract form and verify the completion of the contracted work at the end of the semester. Generally, students will not be approved for more than two contracts in a single semester. Students must have completed HON 1100/1101 to be eligible to contract a course for honors credit. First semester freshmen must receive special permission from the director to contract a course.

In the case that scheduling conflicts make it impossible for a student to meet the 12-hour minimum in Honors course sections to graduate *cum honore*, upon recommendation of the student's academic advisor the program director may permit an additional three hours of Honors contract credit.

5.1.1 Content of Contracts

Approval of the content of honors contracts shall be obtained from the department chair for the contracted course and the Honors Program Director. In the case of undergraduate students enrolled in graduate courses as part of their undergraduate program, an honors contract may be filed indicating that the students are being graded by the same standards as graduate students in the course without requiring additional work for the Honors contract.

5.1.2 Course Instructors for Contracts

Honors contracts may be undertaken only in courses taught by persons qualified to teach honors sections under the provisions of Section 4.2 above.

5.1.3 Deadlines for Contracts

Honors contracts must be approved by the appropriate department head and program director and filed by the student with the program director by the published semester deadline (typically within the first four weeks of classes). The program director may approve the late filing of an honors contract if the faculty member supervising the contract verifies that sufficient time remains in the semester to complete the contracted work.

Students should complete all work for the honors contract within the semester. In unusual circumstances and on the recommendation of the course professor, the student may be allowed additional time to complete the contract.

5.1.4 Grades in Courses with Honors Contracts

The student's grade in a course in which an honors contract is undertaken shall not be affected by the honors contract work. A grade of a B- or better must be earned in the course before honors credit will be reflected on the student's transcript.

5.1.5 Reporting Contract Credit

The program director shall be responsible for obtaining reports on completion of honors contracts from faculty and shall submit to the Registrar a list of all students for whom honors credit should be reflected on the students' transcripts. The Registrar shall enter "Honors" for each course so reported.

5.2 Transfer Honors Credit

Students admitted from an Honors Program at a NCHC-affiliated college or university may transfer up to twelve hours of honors course credit to count toward the 24 required to graduate *cum honore*. Students must have earned no less than a B in a course in order for it to transfer for honors credit.

5.3 OSLEP Credit

With approval of the program director, up to six (6) credit hours graded satisfactory ("S") earned through the Oklahoma Scholar-Leadership Enrichment Program (OSLEP) may be counted toward the 24 required Honors hours.

5.4 Recitals

Honors students may earn honors credit for performing arts recitals. Students must contract for the credit with the program director. After consulting with the recital professor, a student must submit a completed Honors contract form to the program director, who will approve the contract form and verify the completion of the contracted work at the end of the semester.

5.5 Study Abroad

Honors students may earn honors credit for study abroad. Students must contract for the credit with the program director. Under most circumstances, students who maintain a journal or blog for a summer program or a one-semester program will earn the equivalent of three hours of honors credit. Students must be abroad for at least four (4) consecutive weeks to be eligible to receive honors credit.

Section 6: Privileges Earned by Active Participants in the University Honors Program

6.1 Definition of an "active participant."

To be considered an "active participant" in the honors program the student must enroll in an honors course or engage in an honors contract at least once every two semesters. Students who have completed their honors requirements or who lack only the Junior/Senior Seminar requirement are exempt from this requirement.

6.2 Early Enrollment

University Honors Program students will be permitted to begin early enrollment on the date specified by the Registrar, usually 24 hours prior to the start of regular registration. The program director is responsible for keeping the list of active honors students current in the office of the Registrar.

6.3 Honors Hall and Honors Library Seminar Room

Honors Program students are entitled to use the Honors Hall in the Goldstar Memorial Building and the Honors Seminar Room located on the fifth floor of the Dulaney-Browne Library for study or meetings.

6.4 Extended Library Check-out Privileges

Honors students are entitled to check out materials from the library with the same lending privileges as graduate students.

6.5 GPA Bonus

A student completing a class designated as honors (including contracts) receives an additional .25 quality point per credit hour.

6.6 Early Move-in to Residence Halls

New honors students have the privilege of early move-in to the residence halls usually 24-hours before the beginning of regular move-in. New students are required to participate in Honors Orientation to receive this benefit.

6.7 Honors Study Abroad Scholarship

Competitive scholarships to help support study abroad are available to honors students in good standing in the program. Students will be asked to indicate their honors status and to complete an additional essay question on the general Study Abroad Scholarship application.

Section 7: Honors Status Reports

7.1 The program director will check student grades each semester and prepare a probation report for the Honors Committee.

7.2 Following the spring semester each year, the program director will prepare a report on each active class of students indicating GPAs, retention, and graduation.

7.3 Following the spring semester each year, the program director will prepare an Annual Report for submission to the Provost and members of the Honors Committee.

**Changes to this Handbook may be made at any time by a two-thirds majority vote of the University Honors Committee.*