

Honors Thesis

Majors in Child Learning and Development, Cognitive Science, Neuroscience, Psychology, and Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology.

Who does an honors thesis?

There are three separate honors programs that require an honors thesis:

1. **University Honors** at the *magna cum laude* and *summa cum laude* levels. Students must complete a minimum of 45 graded hours at U.T. Dallas and have an overall GPA of 3.9 for *summa cum laude* and 3.75 for *magna cum laude*. Students whose GPA qualifies them for *summa* or *magna* honors must complete an honors thesis or project in their major with an evaluation of *summa* or *magna*, respectively, by their program; without an honors thesis, these students will receive *Cum laude* University Honors. *Cum laude* level honors require a minimum of 45 hours of graded course work at U.T. Dallas and GPAs of 3.5, but not an honors thesis.
2. **School of Human Development Honors.** This honors program is for majors in Cognitive Science, Neuroscience, Psychology, and Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology. Requirements include: at least 30 hours at U.T. Dallas, at least 12 hours of required core courses in the major, an overall GPA of 3.4 or better, completion of the Spring Honors Seminar, and successful completion of an honors thesis. The Associate Dean has more information about this program.
3. **Collegium V (CV) Honors Program.** CV is a university-wide honors program of study. It offers seminar-style classes taught by the university's best faculty as well as a program of extracurricular activities and benefits designed to encourage and reward academic achievement. Students are admitted in to CV (typically as entering freshmen) by application and must complete 12 credit hours of lower level CV courses and 12 credit hours during the junior and senior years. During their senior year, they must complete a senior thesis or senior project. Students are also expected to participate in a certain number of extra-curricular events every semester and graduate with a 3.5 grade point average. For more information see <http://cv.utdallas.edu/>.

What types of honors thesis are there?

There are two basic types of honors thesis:

1. **Empirical Research Thesis.** An empirical research thesis is a journal-style report of the methods, findings, and conclusions drawn from an empirical study. In most cases students design and conduct the research study themselves under the direction of their Faculty Sponsor. In some cases the thesis involves the analysis of archival data. Good models for this type of thesis can be found in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*.
2. **Library Research Thesis.** There are two varieties of library-research theses. The most common is a literature review thesis that involves an integrative and critical review of a significant body of published research; papers published in *Psychological Bulletin* serve as excellent examples. The other variety is a theoretical project that involves critiques of significant theories and the elaboration of original theory; papers published in *Psychological Review* serve as excellent examples.

How much work is an honors thesis?

An honors thesis involves substantially more work than a term paper. It will probably be the largest single project you will undertake as an undergraduate.

1. A **library research thesis** is usually 25 to 35 pages long. It necessarily involves multiple rounds of revisions. It can be done in one full semester if the topic and scope are clearly laid out before the semester starts, but two semesters are recommended.
2. An **empirical research thesis** (roughly 15-25 pages) usually takes longer than one semester. Empirical research takes time to design, analyze, and write up. In the past, some students who tried

to complete an empirical research thesis in one semester ended up postponing graduation another semester. The analysis and write-up of archival data may be possible in one semester.

What are the steps for completing an honors thesis?

1. Find a Faculty Sponsor who is willing to supervisor your work. At the very latest, you must have a sponsor by the beginning of the semester you plan to graduate. You may need to talk to several faculty members before you find one who has the time and interest required to supervise your thesis. Be aware that supervising an honors thesis requires a considerable investment on the part of the faculty sponsor. Faculty members are not required to supervise a thesis, but rather are willing to do so for students who are bright, eager, hardworking and whose thesis topics are of interest to them. It is up to the student to convince the faculty member that the investment of time will be rewarded.
2. Register for PSY 4397 Honors Thesis independent study with your Faculty Sponsor during the semester you plan to finish the thesis. In consultation with the faculty supervisor, the student decides on the thesis topic, its form (i.e., empirical or review) and tentative title. This step also takes time, usually several meetings between the student and sponsor. Do not expect a faculty member to approve of your proposal without substantial discussion and refinement.
3. The student submits a completed Honors Thesis Application form to the Associate Dean's office. This should be done no later than the seventh week of the semester you plan to graduate. The Associate Dean decides whether or not to approve (a) the proposed topic/form of the thesis, (b) the selection of the Faculty Sponsor, and (c) the Second Reader who the student nominates. Instructors who are not regular tenure-track faculty in the School may supervise an honors thesis provided that the student finds a regular faculty member of the School to serve as a Secondary Sponsor. The Secondary Sponsor, in this case, serves as the Second Reader and is obligated to make sure that the student and primary advisor adhere to all University procedures and that the finished thesis meets the School's standards of excellence. The Associate Dean's Assistant has copies of the Honor Thesis Application form. It is the student's responsibility to check with the Associate Dean's Assistant to make sure the application is processed and approved.
4. The student must meet regularly (on a weekly basis) with the Faculty Sponsor and work closely under his/her supervision to complete the thesis. It is important to understand that a thesis is not like a term paper that is simply turned in once at the end of the semester. A thesis must be a high quality product that has been refined through multiple cycles of drafts, faculty feedback, and revisions. You must allow weeks (and sometimes months) for completing the revision cycles. Students must turn in a complete draft of the thesis, including tables and references, to the Faculty Sponsor and to the Associate Dean at least four weeks prior to the last day of classes.
5. The student gets two copies of the Reader Evaluation Form from the Associate Dean's Assistant. The top part of this form must be completed by the Associate Dean's Assistant. Give one copy each of the evaluation form to the first and second reader when the final thesis is submitted for review.
6. Only after the Faculty Sponsor is satisfied that the thesis is ready for outside review should it be submitted for final evaluation. One copy of the thesis is submitted to the Faculty Sponsor (along with the Thesis Evaluation Form) and a second copy is submitted directly to the Second Reader (along with the Thesis Evaluation Form). The thesis must be submitted for evaluation by no later than the last day of classes for the semester. The Faculty Sponsor and the Second Reader have one week to review the thesis and turn in their Thesis Evaluation Forms in to the Associate Dean. Students are strongly advised not to wait until the last day of classes to submit the thesis for evaluation. Often readers ask for substantial revisions to the thesis before it is deemed worthy of honors. Leave time to make these revisions to avoid having to postpone graduation for another semester.
7. The student must make sure that the final revised and accepted thesis and the Evaluation Forms are received by the Associate Dean no later than 5:00 pm the day before grades are due. The final copy should NOT be bound or in a binder. The thesis should be typed according to APA publication guidelines or comparable format standards. The important thing about the format is *consistency*.
8. The thesis will be evaluated according to the following criteria: **summa cum laude** = "A" level thesis work; **magna cum laude** = "A-" level thesis; **BBS School Honors** = "B+" level thesis.
9. Congratulate yourself on a job well done! Be sure to express your appreciation to your Faculty Sponsor and Second Reader for their efforts.