

## **University of Illinois at Springfield**

### **Guidelines for Departmental or Program Honors**

**(Prepared by the Undergraduate Council)**

#### I. Definitions

##### A. What are “Departmental or Program Honors”?

Departmental or Program Honors should be distinguished from “Undergraduate Honors,” which are awarded at graduation for designated GPAs and are labeled *summa cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, and *cum laude*. Departmental or Program Honors should also be distinguished from the Capital Scholars Honors Program, which has its own set of requirements. Departmental or Program Honors guidelines are defined by a set of requirements for undergraduates within a given academic program. Those requirements usually consist of a “track” that students pursue within a major, involving the following three elements:

- Coursework or closure requirements;
- Independent, high-quality research or scholarship;
- Specific grade point average requirements.

##### B. Departmental or Program Honors Coursework and Closure Requirements

Departmental or Program Honors coursework and closure requirements are set up by individual academic programs. Typically, students in an honors track will be required to complete a capstone course, a seminar, a research methods course, a thesis preparation course, or some other course that assists students with completing the requirements for honors within the program. Alternatively, a program may choose to require students in an honors track to complete additional work in a course that all majors take.

##### C. Independent, High-Quality Research or Scholarship

Just as the Faculty Personnel Policy defines scholarship in terms of the “Boyer” criteria based on Ernest Boyer’s *Scholarship Reconsidered*, independent research or scholarship should be defined broadly by the campus (the following discussion is adapted from Article 3 of the UIS Faculty Personnel Policy). Individual programs should determine a suitable and specific definition, consistent with their goals for the honors track and the program learning outcomes. Student research and scholarship might take the form of *discovery*, original intellectual work such as traditional research or creative contributions. There are, however, other forms of research and scholarship. The scholarship of *integration* is often inter- or multi-disciplinary and gives meaning to isolated facts and puts them into a broader perspective, making connections among and across disciplines and educating those who are not disciplinary specialists. The scholarship of *application* connects theory to practice, and is commonly called applied research. Students may even engage in the scholarship of *teaching*, particularly as it relates to the processes and methods of teaching as a profession.

D. Grade Point Average Requirements

Grade point average requirements may be established for students in two areas: the cumulative grade point average for all baccalaureate coursework at UIS and the cumulative grade point average for coursework in the major. Programs may choose whether or not to adopt a minimum CGPA for honors students in the major, but programs should adopt minimum requirements for a baccalaureate CGPA that may not be lower than 3.25.

II. Processes and Procedures

A. Departmental or Program Oversight of Honors

Departmental or Program Honors should be assigned to a specific faculty member or committee within the program. That faculty member or committee should be responsible for overseeing the quality of the Departmental or Program Honors by ensuring that

- Application and selection procedures are developed, advertised, and implemented effectively;
- Students have proper advising for completion of honors requirements;
- Honors requirements are clearly stated and uniformly enforced;
- Proper policies and procedures are developed.

B. Guidelines for Eligibility and Selection

Departments or programs should develop an internal, formal process or application for candidates to enter the honors track (a sample application form has been provided in Appendix A). Students should be informed about guidelines for eligibility and selection, and those guidelines should be clearly expressed in the *UIS Catalog*. The Undergraduate Council recommends that programs advertise those guidelines early in the student's career as a major, preferably through an introductory class, so that students can make plans early to meet the requirements. The names of students admitted to the honors track should be submitted each year to the Office of Undergraduate Education so that the institution can begin tracking honors graduates and working with programs to develop assessment processes for these closure activities.

Departments or programs are encouraged to develop a policy for advising students who wish to apply for program honors but whose CGPAs are below the required minimum. Such "provisional admission" to the honors track should be contingent on whether it is mathematically possible for the student's CGPA to meet the minimum requirement by the final semester before graduation.

C. Guidelines for Research or Scholarship

Departments or programs should develop clear guidelines for the research or scholarship to be conducted by the student in fulfillment of Departmental or Program Honors. Those guidelines should include

- A description of the type of work acceptable to the program and the method(s) by which the research or scholarship will be evaluated;
- Specific information regarding the length of the written assignments or the scope of other kinds of assignments (e.g., creative or applied projects);
- Specific style or documentation requirements if necessary (e.g., MLA or APA);
- The process and standards for evaluation of the research or scholarship.

D. Supervising Research or Scholarship

Departmental or Program Honors students should work directly with full-time faculty on research or scholarship whenever that is possible, although some applied research may require supervision at a field site. Furthermore, programs should develop clear definitions and guidelines for student research and scholarship. Faculty supervising student research or scholarship should

- Work collaboratively with students in developing and critiquing the research or scholarship project;
- Advise the student regarding resources or coursework needed to accomplish the research or scholarly project;
- Advise the student regarding Institutional Review Board processes if the research involves human subjects;
- Read and critique the written component of the research or scholarly project;
- Help the student find or create a forum in which to share the results of the research or scholarly project, if such a forum is required or encouraged. Such forums may take the form of a program or campus symposium (e.g., the Science Symposium) or may take the form of publication in a refereed medium.

E. Deadlines for Completion of Requirements

Departments or programs must establish clear deadlines for the completion of requirements for Departmental or Program Honors.

**APPENDIX A**

**University of Illinois at Springfield**  
**[Name of Program]**  
**Application for Admission to Candidacy for Departmental or Program Honors**

**Date of Graduation:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Major:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **UIN:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Local Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Local Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Project Description:**

**Signatures**

**Student:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(name) (signature) (date)

**Project Director:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(name) (signature) (date)

**Department or Program Chair:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(name) (signature) (date)