



The
HONORS
College

THE THESIS HANDBOOK

2011



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Introduction

The thesis process is an exciting time to delve deeply into the academic areas that interest you with the help of a knowledgeable professor. It can also be an intimidating, scary process. However, many honors students point to the thesis as one of the most fulfilling experiences of their undergraduate careers.

The thesis serves as the culmination of your interests and academic studies and presents an opportunity for focused study within your major. Your thesis serves as a successful conclusion to your undergraduate studies by contributing to your field of study.

Professors cannot explore all of your interests during class meetings 2-3 times a week. Instead, your classes represent the professor's interest and knowledge on a subject given to students across a variety of majors. Your thesis is your chance to really explore something that fascinates you! It is not, however, just a really long research paper. For a thesis, you select the topic, you do most of the research independently, and you get to set the work schedule for your thesis. Along with honing your research and writing skills, the thesis process serves as a crash course in project management and independence. You will be taking your thesis from its inception as an idea through development and into a fully realized end product.

The commitment and skills learned through the thesis impress many graduate programs, professional schools, and prospective employers. Some graduate programs require a certain proficiency in research skills that are developed by undertaking the thesis process. Faculty members involved with a student's thesis often serve as excellent references for future education and employment.

And don't forget, a thesis is required for the Honors College Degree and the College/ Departmental Awards. The Policies & Procedures of The Honors College at Oklahoma State University (4-5) requires the application form for the Departmental or College Honors Award "shall contain a working title for the senior honors thesis, report, or creative component," and (4-8), states "[t]he deadline for filing the approved copy of the thesis, report, or other creative component shall be the last day on which grades may be reported for the semester or summer session."

Common Honors Thesis Process

Start Here

HONR 3000 Thesis Prep Course (A&S Students)

Completed the semester before enrolling in thesis course.



Departmental/College Honors Award Application (Blue Form)

Must be submitted (with required signatures) before enrolling in thesis course.



Penultimate Draft

Your thesis director and second reader should receive your presentation draft no later than the 14th week of the semester.



Thesis Course HONR 4993 or alternative

Taken the semester you intend to complete your thesis (typically senior year). Register for your thesis class no later than the first week of the semester.



Oral Presentation

Usually takes place during the 15-16th week of the semester. Coordinate the date and time with your thesis director and second reader.



Thesis Defense

Can be concurrent with Oral Presentation. Usually takes place during the 15-16th week of the semester. Coordinate the date and time with your thesis director and second reader.



Final Draft

The final copy is due to the Honors College office before grades are due for the semester in which you are enrolled in your thesis course. It should be submitted with a coversheet and abstract. The Honors College will bind your thesis.

Getting Started...Writing a Thesis can be Rewarding!

What exactly is a thesis?

So, what counts as a Thesis?

There are many ways to approach this capstone to your honors education. Most students research a topic of interest in their majors and develop an independent paper on that topic. Other students utilize the “Creative Component” option to fulfill their thesis requirement. For example, in the past, students have written or directed plays, written and performed musical works, and written creative works for publication.

The main focus should be on developing a thesis or project that represents original scholarly or creative work. The Honors College will provide you with the support you need, but we also recognize that many times professors and those working in your field of study will be in the best position to determine and evaluate your thesis topic and final project.

Can I use my Thesis to complete requirements in my major?

Yes, you are strongly encouraged to investigate linking your Honors thesis with major requirements such as a departmental thesis, design project, artistic project, research, and/or capstone. In some cases, a major requirement can be augmented to satisfy the requirements of the Honors thesis.

Does my thesis topic have to be something in my major?

No. Students often find their thesis topic touches on several disciplines including their majors. Occasionally, students find themselves fascinated by an aspect of study that is related to their major, but might be best advised by a thesis director in another discipline area. However, your last year at college is probably not the best time to master a new major. Carefully consider your reasons for choosing a topic that is outside your major and discuss the amount of background reading that will be required with your thesis director. Also remember that any thesis being used as a capstone requirement must be within your major.

What length is required for my thesis?

There are no formal requirements as to length of the honors thesis. Additionally, The Honors College does not specify a thesis format (other than including the approval signature page at the beginning and following with a one-page abstract). This is because length requirements and formats for the theses vary according to discipline. Your thesis director should be able to guide you in selecting the proper length and format for your field of study. The most important thing to remember is that your thesis represents a significant piece of independent research. Your thesis should be well written and should reflect the outcome of 3-4 hours of upper-division Honors credit.

When do I need to start thinking about my Thesis?

Thesis work is inspired by classes, research, and interests that arise during your previous undergraduate career. As a general rule, many students begin thinking (or at least asking questions) about a thesis during their junior year. The earlier you begin to think about your thesis, the more time you will have to explore various research topics.

College of Arts & Sciences CAS students must enroll in a one-hour thesis preparation course (HONR 3000) the semester prior to enrolling in the thesis course. The Arts and Sciences Honors Committee can waive this requirement on the basis of a written recommendation from the faculty thesis director. More about HONR 3000 can be found in the section below.

Enrolling in the thesis prep class: Students in Arts and Sciences

I keep hearing about HONR 3000. What is this class?

HONR 3000 is also called the **Thesis Proposal Development Course**. It is required for all students within the College of Arts and Sciences in order to earn the Departmental Honors Award in Arts and Sciences. HONR 3000 is a one-hour thesis preparation course taken in the semester prior to undertaking the senior honors thesis or senior honors project.

The thesis preparation course is a one-hour independent study course. It is for you and the professor to decide on the structure of the course and the nature of your thesis preparation. For many students, the thesis preparation course will yield one or more papers specifying the thesis question, justifying the choice of topics, identifying hypotheses, and reviewing the existing literature.

Who teaches HONR 3000?

The professor who supervises the thesis preparation course should expect to serve as your thesis director. This means you need to have a general direction for your thesis topic, a mentor, and your second reader picked out a full semester before you plan to undertake your thesis!

How do I enroll in HONR 3000?

To enroll in HONR 3000, you should ask a faculty member in the department of your major to supervise you in a one-credit thesis preparation course. The faculty member who agrees to supervise the thesis preparation must then send an e-mail message or written letter to Dr. Spurrier (robert.spurrier@okstate.edu) indicating that s/he will supervise you. The Honors College Office will then enroll you in the thesis prep course. You must complete this process by the end of **Drop/Add Week**.

I've already done a ton of research. Can I skip HONR 3000?

No, you must contact The Honors College first! HONR 3000 may be waived by special exemption of the Arts and Sciences Honors Committee. This requires a petition form along with a written recommendation from the faculty thesis director stating that you already have sufficient research experience to undertake the senior honors thesis/project without the one-hour preparation course.

To request an exemption, pick up the form "Student Petition for Exemption from Arts and Sciences Thesis Preparation Course Requirement" in The Honors College Office. Ask the faculty member who will serve as your thesis director to complete the form and return it to 101 Old Central. The request should detail your research experience and indicate how this experience prepares you for the project you're planning to undertake. The Honors College Director will notify you of the committee's decision.

Funded Research and the Thesis: Special Considerations

Can I use my Wentz Project, Niblack Scholarship, Steele Scholarship, etc. for my thesis?

Yes! In fact, many students use the opportunities provided by funded research to develop independent research that can also serve as a thesis. One project, with small alterations, may meet both the requirements for The Honors College and the scholarship in question. You **MUST** tell your Honors Advisor early and you should be enrolled in upper division research hours.

What class do I enroll in for my Honors Thesis if I am also completing funded research?

This is the perfect time to get to know your thesis director better. In general, your thesis director will have an understanding of the courses usually associated with your scholarship. A few specific scholarship opportunities are addressed below. If you have funded research not listed here, or if you have other questions after speaking with your thesis director, please **ASK** your Honors Advisor. In most of these cases, a contract stating “thesis course” could be required!

Niblack Scholars - Take note - you are generally enrolled in UNIV 2910 unless a different course is requested. UNIV 2910 is a lower division course and cannot be used as your thesis. Instead, talk to your Niblack professor about enrolling in an equivalent upper division course such as BIOC 4990, ZOOL 4750, or speak with the Niblack Scholarship Administrator to see about establishing an upper division equivalent to UNIV 2910.

Wentz Research Projects – The Wentz Project awards are fairly flexible. While all students chosen for an award must arrange with their professors to receive at least two hours of academic credit. If you have a Wentz Research Project, plan to enroll in a three-hour research course during the spring semester. Sample courses include HONR 4993, CHEM 4990, MC 4993, and BHON 4990, but every major has an upper-division course specifically for research hours. If you have problems locating it on SIS, ask your thesis director or honors advisor.

Steele Scholars – In the past, students have enrolled in HIST 4903 to satisfy their thesis requirement and fulfill their Steele Scholarship concurrently (HIST 4980 or HIST 4993 are also options). The most important thing to remember is that you must complete your thesis during the semester you complete your Steel Scholarship research. If the research is a two-semester project, then you will want to enroll in thesis hours during your second semester.

I didn't realize I could use my funded research until too late. Now what?

Use your funded research as a jumping off point for your Honors thesis. You will need to complete an additional research project, but you will be way ahead! You have already developed the background information, found contacts within the department, and perfected research methods. If you are in the College of Arts and Sciences, you can apply to waive the thesis preparations course HONR 3000. Ask your honors advisor for an exemption petition.

I'm ready to enroll in my Thesis Course.

Do I need to file anything with The Honors College before I begin?

YES! The Departmental or College Honors Award application form (also called the Blue form) must be filed with The Honors College office BEFORE you begin the semester in which you plan to write your senior honors thesis or undertake the senior creative component.

What information is required on the Blue Form?

The Honors College at Oklahoma State University requires the award application form contain:

- (1) General student information, such as major, college, G.P.A, etc.
- (2) The list of courses that satisfy the upper division requirements for an Honors College Award and information on your General Honors Award, if any.
- (3) A working title for the senior honors thesis.
- (4) The names of two faculty members who will serve as your committee.
- (5) Prior to submission to The Honors College office, the award application shall be approved and signed by the faculty member responsible for directing the senior honors thesis, report, or creative component, the second reader, and by the Honors Director of the student's college.

If you are planning to pursue the International Endorsement to the Honors College Degree, you must fill out BOTH sides of the award application.

If you are unsure about anything on the form, please contact your honors advisor. We can help you fill out the form and answer any other questions you may have.

How do I enroll in my thesis course?

If you have turned in your blue form, and are planning to take your thesis course next semester, you should have secured a faculty member in your department to act as your thesis director.

If you will be enrolling in HONR 4993, then have your thesis director send an email message or written letter to Dr. Spurrier (robert.spurrier@okstate.edu) indicating that s/he will act as the thesis director. The Honors College office will then enroll students in the thesis course.

If you will be enrolling in a course other than HONR 4993, your thesis director or your academic advisor in your college will be the best sources of information in enrolling in your thesis course. Honors theses may serve as projects for college requirements, especially college capstone courses. Many departments require a senior project course and offer an honors section of the class that can fulfill the thesis requirement. *Engineering* students must complete a senior project in order to graduate. With careful planning, one project, with small alterations, may meet both the requirements for the College of Engineering and The Honors College.

When does the class meet? It says TBA.

No regular meeting times are scheduled for your thesis course. This is an independent study course and you will have several meetings throughout the semester with your thesis director. Of course, you are welcome to set up appointments with your Honors College Advisor as well to ask questions or get help.

The Thesis Process: Inception to Final Product

Do I choose a thesis director or topic first?

In all honesty, students pick either their topic or their director first in about equal proportions. To some extent, you should know which approach you are more comfortable with. If you have an idea as to your thesis topic, then you can choose a director with that area of study. If you have a favorite professor, but are less defined as to the topic, then ask them about thesis advising first.

How do I choose my director?

I know my topic, how do I pick my thesis director?

If you have a thesis focus area in mind, then search the hallowed halls to find a thesis director who can compliment your study. Realistically, this will take some research on your part – you don't really want to wander around your department aimlessly asking for a thesis director. Generally, students begin by searching the department's website for each faculty member's specialty areas. This is as easy as pulling up each professor's information and checking out their vita (the academy's word for resumé) for the areas in which they have studied and published. Take the time to have an informal chat with a couple of faculty members you have worked well with in the past. You may find one of them is a good candidate or they may be able to recommend a faculty member for whom your topic is better suited. It may take you a while to find the right thesis director, but don't be discouraged. You are learning about the breadth of your discipline and about each faculty member in the process. A few last words of encouragement – don't be afraid to knock on professors' doors; most of them do not bite.

To be a faculty thesis adviser, he or she must:

- 1.) Work at Oklahoma State University as a regular full-time, regular part-time, tenure track academic faculty member (Assistant, Associate, Professor, or Professor Emeritus).
- 2.) Have attained a doctorate (Ph.D.) or the terminal degree in his or her field
- 3.) Be on campus during the semester in which you are completing your research (e.g., not on sabbatical leave)

Exceptions to these criteria must be approved by the academic department and the Honors Program Director.

Roles and Responsibilities

Student Responsibilities

What am I responsible for while I write my thesis?

Well, beyond the obvious, **you agree to:**

- Turn in the required thesis forms on time and completed to the Honors College office;
- Organize and schedule an initial thesis meeting with your thesis director and second reader before the third week of your thesis semester;
- Attend and *be prepared* for regular meetings with your thesis director – if a meeting must be cancelled, provide plenty of notice. We recommend bi-weekly meetings;
- Secure, with the thesis director's assistance, any necessary special approval for the research;
- Keep all thesis members informed as to the progress of the thesis project;
- Inform the Director of The Honors College if there are concerns with the process or indications that the thesis project is not on track for completion;
- Participate in the Honors Thesis Symposium if appropriate; and
- Enjoy the Honors College Hooding Ceremony!

Faculty Roles during the Thesis Semester

What exactly does my thesis director do?

The most important aspect of your thesis will be to communicate with your prospective thesis director regarding your commitment to your thesis and their commitment to your thesis.

Ultimately, you have the responsibility for researching, writing, and compiling a timely and scholarly thesis. The independence required for a thesis is part of what separates the thesis from all other undergraduate work.

That said, **the thesis director agrees to:**

- Work with the student to refine the student's interests into a suitable thesis project;
- Provide a clear expectation for the thesis/project, which addresses benchmarks, length, assessment, and other aspects of scholarship particular to the particular discipline;
- Help identify an appropriate thesis second reader;
- Meet with the student and second reader to work together to establish appropriate deadlines for drafts;
- Be prepared to meet with the student regularly (at least biweekly; we encourage weekly meetings) throughout the thesis project;
- Inform the Director of the Honors College if there appear to be indications that the thesis project is not on track for completion;
- Read and comment on drafts of the thesis as it develops;
- Chair the student's thesis defense;
- Grade the student in HONR 4993 or the equivalent; and
- Participate in the year-end Honors College Hooding Ceremony if possible.

What does my Second Reader do?

Your second reader generally has a working knowledge of your thesis area. The second reader can provide balance to your thesis by giving you guidance and another perspective. The second reader is expected to meet with the student and thesis director to establish appropriate deadlines for drafts and other "milestones" in the thesis project. The Honors College expects the second reader to participate in the thesis defense, whatever form that takes, and to attend the public presentation.

Before you ask a faculty member to be your second reader, talk about your choice with your thesis director. Be sure to have your second reader sign the Blue Form in the appropriate place the semester before you begin your thesis.

What do I tell my second reader about their role in the thesis?

For your thesis semester to run smoothly, it is best to let all the faculty members involved in your thesis know what your thesis area is, how the thesis process works, and what their role will be throughout the semester. Your **second reader agrees to:**

- Provide the student guidance and information on their thesis when appropriate;
- Be available to meet with the student periodically during the semester;
- Attend an initial meeting with the Thesis Director and the student to address expectations and deadlines;
- Read and comment on drafts of the thesis as they materialize;
- Participate in the student's defense of their thesis during the public presentation.

What if I am not getting along with my Thesis Director?

Thankfully, this situation occurs only rarely; however, if you are not happy with the interaction between you and your thesis director there are a few steps you can take to change the circumstances. Sometimes, tension is created simply through a simple miscommunication. Make a point to talk to your thesis director **face to face** about your concerns. Context is often lost in email – what came across as a blasting critique might have started as a simple suggestion. If your thesis director seems to have disappeared now that you are knee deep in the process, figure out their office hours or catch them after a class to ensure you set up a time to meet that day, if possible, or later the same week.

Can I change my thesis director/second reader?

Only if you really need to make a change, but make this a carefully considered move. Occasionally, a faculty mentor might be out of the office for an extended time due to illness, professional commitments, or something unforeseen. When this happens, discuss the situation with your director/second reader and ask for a recommendation of an appropriate replacement. Or as your thesis progresses, you might feel you the need for expertise in an area outside those of your director/second reader. You can ask for help informally, or you can rearrange your thesis director and second reader positions as necessary. If the decision is based on a conflict, make see your Honors Advisor for suggestions on handling the situation.

For any major changes, you will need to retrieve your Blue Form from the Honors College Office, update the information, gain the appropriate signatures, and resubmit the form.

How do I select a topic?

I know which professor I would like to work with, but how do I pick my topic?
Completing a thesis is a rigorous endeavor, so you want to select a topic that is intellectually exciting, challenging, and fun. The following are some helpful hints about finding and choosing a topic:

- If you have a professor in mind your next step is to talk with that particular professor about ideas for a topic. Keep an open mind and enjoy talking with scholars in your field until you find a professor with interesting thesis ideas. Feel free to look up the last paper or two they authored. It never hurts to make a good impression and the articles will give you an idea of the specific interests of the faculty member.
- You can start a “topics file” where you keep track of potential areas of interest. This can include course syllabi, seminar papers, news clippings, etc. Occasionally review your file to see if there are recurrent themes to your interests.
- For class paper assignments, choose topics that are potential thesis ideas and use them to explore the ideas further.
- Ask yourself the following questions: What courses have most engaged me? What am I most curious about? What do I enjoy? What academic interests am I most passionate about?
- Many students are engaged in undergraduate research and this may make the selection of an Honors thesis topic and adviser a clear choice.

Is there anything special I should know as I begin my thesis?

Most honors theses do not require special permissions. However, please be aware that if your thesis involves human subjects you will need clearance from the IRB. Additionally, if your thesis involves animal care or hazardous materials, you may need to secure additional clearance. You should discuss this with your thesis director who usually has experience in securing the proper form of authorization.

I will be working with Human Research Participants and I think I need IRB clearance. Who do I contact?

OSU’s Institutional Review Board must review all research projects involving human research participants before any research activities with humans may be started. In order to determine whether your research project qualifies as *research with human participants*, please consult your thesis advisor. If questions arise, you and/or your thesis advisor may contact Beth McTernan, IRB Manager, in 219 Cordell North, 744-1676 or irb@okstate.edu.

Information about IRB review and application forms can be found on the IRB webpage: <http://compliance.vpr.okstate.edu>. It is important to note that OSU requires all researchers preparing studies with human research participants to complete an online training course in research ethics. Student researchers must also complete this requirement before IRB approval for any study can be obtained. More information about this requirement can be found at: <http://compliance.vpr.okstate.edu/hsp/training.htm>.

Sample One-Semester Timeline:

This is just a sample. Your thesis director can help you set a more definite schedule. However, this is one way to map out your semester and establish workable goals throughout the semester.

	First 4 Weeks	Middle 6-7 Weeks	Next 3 Weeks	Last 2-3 Weeks
Reading/ Research	Meet with Thesis Director ASAP! Background Reading Secure IRB clearance, if needed	Focused research and planning	Fill-in research Identify potential weaknesses for defense	Research and address any questions brought up at the defense
Writing	Proposal and revised proposal Develop Bibliography Begin rough draft	First rough draft completed Write and revise middle portions – run these multiple versions by your thesis director & 2 nd reader Write and revise introduction and conclusion	Pre-defense draft Edit/revise entire paper Locate or reprint signature page for defense.	Thesis Presentation and Defense Edit/revise entire paper Turn in final draft, abstract, and signature page to The Honors College

Writing your Thesis

I have my thesis topic. I have my thesis director and second reader. Now, how do I write a thesis?

Well, truthfully, it's something you just sit down and write one page at a time. The most important thing you can do for yourself is to map out your thesis semester and keep to your schedule.

Keep in mind as you begin to map out your semester that you will need to give your thesis director several opportunities for input and revisions. In addition, you will want to schedule your defense a few weeks before the end of the semester to give yourself an opportunity to address questions that arise during your defense and make necessary revisions. No one writes a thesis in one draft.

Please remember that this is a 3-hour course for credit. That means you should be spending around 10 hours a week on your thesis! This includes research, meeting with your thesis director, working with librarians, and writing among other things.

The Fundamentals

The written component of the thesis experience will incorporate the fundamentals of writing that you have learned in your Honors seminars. You need to pay particular attention to:

- organizing your writing for your particular audience;
- engaging in writing as a process which includes formal and informal writing, and writing multiple drafts that are reviewed and subsequently revised;
- utilizing the writing expertise you have learned while writing summaries, syntheses, evaluations, and arguments in your Honors seminars;
- strategizing for cohesion;
- editing and proofreading; and
- utilizing appropriate documentation styles.

Who is my audience for my thesis?

You will want to discuss this with your thesis director, obviously. If you are planning on using your research for submission to a technical journal, or if your thesis director has strong feelings about your audience, a higher level of knowledge may be necessary. But, in general, you are writing to a well-educated audience, but not an audience who are experts in your field. You will figure this out as you discuss your thesis with your director, second reader, and even friends - one more reason to give yourself plenty of time to revise your thesis as necessary.

OK, so how long does my thesis need to be?

Once again, there are no formal requirements as to length of the honors thesis. What is important is that the thesis represents a significant piece of work that is well written and well presented. Again, keep in mind that this is the culmination of your undergraduate work and should represent the time and effort put into a 3-hour upper division course.

If you are intimidated by the thought of writing a long paper, think of the short papers that have been required of you over a semester. A seminar course may require 5 five-page papers. So, writing a twenty-five or thirty page thesis should not be unmanageable. In fact, many students find writing on a topic of their choosing to be very engaging and have a hard time editing their papers down to a manageable level. Your thesis director will give you their expectations when you have your first meeting with them.

What Format should I use?

Honors Theses vary from department and research discipline but all include a formal written component, a formal oral presentation, and an oral defense. Examples of theses can be found in the Honors College Office. Students have used the following formats in the past:

- Research paper - This is a paper including first-hand data from experiments and surveys. It may include laboratory, fieldwork, surveys, or scholarly research.
- Scholarly paper - A paper that uses original and secondary published sources to formulate a question and make a creative contribution to the literature. The paper may be a review and synthesis of the literature or an original paper (some students have published their work).
- Business plan – The student conceptualizes a business, including a plan for marketing, finance, and implementation. Students who are interested in business and entrepreneurship find this format very appealing.
- Portfolio –A formal compilation of a student’s artistry created as part of their fine arts thesis.
- Education unit – Primarily for students who are student teaching as part of their education certification. Students create an educational “unit” that includes lesson plans, instructions, and pedagogy.
- Fine arts display or performance - Presentation of a student’s creative artistry (e.g., dance, music, and vocal recitals; art, film, theatrical performance, and photography exhibits).
- Design project – Some students complete a senior design project. Groups of students work together to complete projects that are used to fulfill the Honors thesis requirement.

Thesis Components

The Honors College does not specify a thesis format, but in general, theses have a few components in common.

- Honors College Title Page with appropriate signatures (required)
- Abstract (required)
- Table of Contents (if appropriate)
- List of graphic evidence – tables, figures, etc. (if any)
- Text
- Endnotes (if appropriate)
- Bibliography/References
- Appendices (if any)
- IRB or other authorization (if required)
- Author Biography (for fun and totally optional)

What do I turn in to The Honors College for a Creative Component?

Completion of a creative component requires turning in the Honors College coversheet (with signatures), the one page abstract, and a representation of your thesis. The following are examples of creative components and the representation submitted to the Honors College:

writing/performing music – turn in the score and/or a DVD of your performance; documentary – turn in a completed DVD; senior design project – generally a written report including appendices. Other examples of creative components are a block of lesson plans, a book about travel experiences, public information pamphlets on developmental issues, fully planned fictional event.

Campus Resources

Is there anything on campus that will make my life easier during my thesis semester?

Part of the reason for Thesis Information sessions and this handbook is to get support from your fellow Honors College students, particularly those also writing their thesis, your thesis director, and second reader. Of course, the Honors College staff is always available to help in any way we can. Here are some good perks of being an Honors College student and other resources available on campus that will help during your thesis semester –

- **Honors College**
 - **Forms.** All the required thesis forms are available in the Honors College office and online. You can find a copy of the forms by going to <http://www.okstate.edu/honors/thesisInfo.html>
 - **Thesis Master List.** The Honors College keeps a master list of all theses completed within the college since the early 1990s. The list is arranged by department allowing you to easily find the types of theses that have been completed in your area of interest.

- **Thesis Files.** In addition to the master list, the Honors College also has archived full copies of the theses listed. These files are located on the second floor of the Edmon Low Library, in Special Collections and University Archives. Many students find looking at theses that have been completed in their areas an invaluable resource for ideas and insight on the thesis process.
- **Library**
 - **Check out privileges.** All of our Honors College students have extended library privileges at Edmon Low Library. This is something you may have heard about since you joined The Honors College, but haven't really taken advantage of. During your thesis semester, you will come to appreciate the fact that you can basically check most books out for the entire semester.
 - **Interlibrary Loan.** This is a service that is available to all patrons of Edmon Low Library. Interlibrary Loan systems allow you to borrow books that may not be housed within OSU's library system.
 - **Subject Librarians.** Most subjects taught at OSU will have a subject librarian who is an invaluable resource to thesis students. Subject Area librarians will let you know the extent of the library's collection in your area and can help you find resources. Contact your subject librarian by phone or email by visiting <http://www.library.okstate.edu/services/liaisons.htm>
- **OSU Writing Center**
 - **One-on-one Conferences.** The OSU Writing Center is located in 104 Morrill Hall and offers one-on-one consultations with a writing consultant. Consultants are graduate students who can help guide students and improve their writing styles. However, please note that these appointments are only 50 minutes long. This means the consultant will be able to discuss the overall format, a general outline, and a small section of your writing. They do not serve as your personal editor and would be unlikely to help you with revising your entire final product. That said, it is especially helpful during the thesis process to have someone outside your project read and give you ideas for improvement. Appointments can be made online at okstate.mywconline.com.
 - **Tip Sheets and Solutions Online.** The OSU Writing Center also produces a variety of hands-on resources to aid in the writing and citation process, including handbooks at the Center, tip sheets, and a series of on-line materials. More information about these services can be found at <http://english.okstate.edu/writing/services.htm>
 - **The Outpost.** An extension of the OSU Writing Center, the outpost offers the same services as the OSU Writing center. It is located in 102M Edmon Low Library and serves OSU from 7:00-10:00 p.m. Sunday through Thursday.
 - **The Writing Studio.** Tutors are also available in the Cunningham Library of the Reynolds School of Architecture. They take walk-ins Tuesday through Thursday from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. and Monday through Thursday from 7:00-9:00 p.m.
 - **The Business Lab.** Tutors in the Business Writing Lab (Room 103Q SSB) also accept walk-in appointments from 11:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Penultimate Draft

Students submit the penultimate (next to the last) draft of their thesis to their thesis director and second reader before the scheduled presentation and defense (**around week 14 or when requested by the thesis director**). Your director and second reader should have time to review it prior to the presentation. The thesis director and reader will comment and give feedback to you after the thesis presentation. You can incorporate changes (if any) into the final thesis copy.

Thesis Presentation/Defense

What is required at my thesis presentation and defense?

Generally, these can be held at the same time. You might be allotted 10-15 minutes to present a summary of your thesis, report, or creative component in front of your thesis director, second reader, Honors College staff, and other interested students. After your “presentation,” the audience will have an opportunity to ask questions about your thesis project. You will ‘defend’ your research by showing how your methods, research, and findings adequately address their questions.

How do I schedule my thesis defense?

Talk with your thesis director and second reader to find a date and time for your thesis defense. Your department may hold its own presentation day, or you may need to schedule the room yourself. For example, The College of Business usually holds a thesis colloquium near the end of each semester. Your College Honors Director will notify you and your thesis director of the time and place of any such presentation opportunities. If possible, schedule your defense before finals week. This gives you time to make any revisions you feel necessary after your defense. Please note that you are responsible for scheduling your defense.

It is important that you try to get your defense scheduled as early in the semester as possible! Faculty calendars generally fill up and become more difficult to coordinate as the semester wears on, so try to make your life easier by scheduling when their calendars are at their lightest. This is especially true in the spring semester when faculty have professional commitments, such as conferences to attend.

Tell your Honors College advisor and the Director of the Honors College of the time, date, and place of the defense at least a week before your defense. We know you have been working hard and would love to come learn more about your research!

Is there anything different about a creative component defense?

You and your thesis director should decide upon the mechanics for the defense portion of the creative component. CEAT students may present and defend their thesis in a “jury” format. Other creative components may have a public presentation (such as a reception or performance) and choose to conduct the defense at a different time. In any event, you must defend your thesis/creative component before your thesis director and second reader before submission of the final paperwork to The Honors College.

How can I prepare for my defense?

One of the best ways to get ready is to do a trial run! Schedule an informal time and place with your friends and family and present your findings to them. This will give you a sense of timing for your thesis presentation and build your confidence.

Another idea is to think about which of your professors was the most effective at communicating information in your classes. You might try to emulate this professor and even ask if you can sit down and talk with them to get tips for presentation. I guarantee they will be flattered!

What else needs to be done before the defense?

Your most important task is to provide a final, thoroughly edited version your thesis director and your second reader, if possible at least a week before your thesis defense. You should also confirm that any equipment (overhead or computer projectors, screens, computers) that you need are available for the defense.

Can I invite other people to the defense?

Yes. If you wish to have friends or family attend your defense, you are welcome to do so. As with any public presentation, think about how observers affect the experiment and what sensitivity, if any, they may have to your presentation. You may also want to talk this over with your advisor.

I'm excited, but anxious. What happens at the defense?

A thesis defense is designed to last approximately 30-45 minutes. Typically, the first 15 minutes is devoted to your thesis work. Usually you will be asked to present a summary of your thesis, after which your thesis director, second reader, and the audience will engage you in a question and answer session. During this discussion, as well as after the defense, suggestions for revisions may be made. The presentation is sometimes done simply as a "talk," but it may also involve a computer (PowerPoint) presentation or some other form. This is something you should talk over with your thesis director.

What are "tips" for a successful defense?

A few questions to think about:

- Do you want your advisor to introduce you?
- Do you want to take questions during your presentation or wait until it's over? (Don't forget to tell your audience what you have decided!)
- Many students use PowerPoint to present their thesis. It's not a requirement, but you might want to consider it.
- Regardless of what method you choose for presentation, practice! In many cases, your advisor would be glad to sit down with you and listen to your presentation, providing some suggestions. You might also try it out on friends and fellow thesis-writers.
- Think about how you will be most comfortable in the thesis defense.

Revisions and Final Submission

What is this about revisions? I'm not done?

Done? A thesis is never done! Just kidding, but in almost every thesis some amount of revisions work before submitting the final version is required. In the vast majority of cases, this is nothing more than minor, word processing changes. In a very small number of situations, it might entail more serious changes and revisions.

How long do I have to get my final revisions in?

After making the revisions, if any, after your thesis defense, submit a copy (paper or electronic – ask your advisor!) of your post-defense thesis to your advisor, second reader, and Honors College Director. Remind them that each of them will need to sign the Honors College Thesis Cover Sheet.

After receiving the signed Honors College Thesis Cover Sheet submit one copy to the Honors College and one copy to your thesis director of:

- (a) Honors Thesis Cover Sheet with required signatures,
- (b) Honors Thesis Abstract, and
- (c) Honors Thesis final copy with all appendices. Binding is not necessary for the Honors College.

The Director of the Honors College will transmit the information to the Registrar where the appropriate Honors award will be recorded on your diploma and transcript.

What do I turn in to The Honors College for a Creative Component?

Completion of a creative component requires turning in the Honors College coversheet (with signatures), the one page abstract, and a representation of your thesis. The following are examples of creative components and the representation submitted to the Honors College: writing or performing music – turn in the score and/or a DVD of your performance; documentary – turn in a completed DVD; senior design project – generally a written report including appendices. Other examples of creative components are a block of lesson plans, a book about travel experiences, public information pamphlets on developmental issues, fully planned fictional event.

What is the deadline for submission to the Honors College?

Your thesis director will aid you in determining a project timeline for the completion, defense, and presentation of the thesis. We (the Honors College) have to get the information to student records before they finalize graduation degree materials. In order to do this, the deadline for filing the approved copy of the thesis, report, or other creative component is the last day on which grades may be reported for the semester or summer session. If you have any questions about when this date is, talk to your Honors College Advisor.

On the Home Stretch...

What, exactly, do I need turn in to The Honors College at the end of the semester?

You MUST turn in a copy of your thesis, report, or other creative component, a one-page abstract of findings with the Honors College office, and the approval page with the appropriate signatures. All honors theses are on file in the Special Collections Department in the Edmon Low Library and are open to students. An index is available in the Honors College office, 101 Old Central.

What is the approval page?

In addition to the text, the thesis copy filed with the Honors College must include an approval page, which contains

- (a) Original signatures of the thesis director and second reader,
- (b) Signature of the honors director of the student's College, and
- (c) Date of the successful defense of the senior honors thesis, report, or creative component. All honors theses are on file in the Honors College office and may be consulted. Just go to 101 Old Central and ask an honors advisor to show you theses from your area of interest.

What is an abstract?

An abstract is a one-page summary of your thesis addressing the scope, methods, purpose, and results of your thesis. You MUST include a one page abstract with your thesis. You can find examples of abstracts at <http://www.okstate.edu/honors/thesisInfo.html>

Where are these forms located? Can I find examples?

You can find the forms in the Honors College office, in your thesis packet, or online at the Honors College Website (<http://www.okstate.edu/honors/thesisInfo.html>). If you have any questions about filling out the forms or gaining the proper signatures, talk to your honors advisor.

What about my grade?

Your thesis director assigns letter grades for your thesis course.

And you're DONE!!!

You have just completed the Honors College Thesis Handbook! We hope this information will make your thesis semester manageable and productive. Your thesis is your chance to really explore your interests and make a contribution to your academic field. We know you will write a wonderful thesis. YOU CAN DO IT!!

Appendix I

Thesis Checklist

SEMESTER I (SEMESTER BEFORE THESIS WORK UNDERTAKEN)

Arts and Sciences Students ONLY

_____ Secure professor for HONR 3000	Before Semester Begins
_____ Enroll in HONR 3000 Thesis Preparation Course	Before Add/Drop Deadline
_____ Honor 3000 Thesis Preparation Course Completed	Last day of classes

ALL STUDENTS

_____ Secure Honors Thesis Director	Before Semester Ends
_____ Secure Honors Thesis Second Reader	Before Semester Ends
_____ Submit D/CHA Application (Also known as the <i>Blue Form</i> – requires information concerning your work within The Honors College, the working title of your thesis, and the signatures of your Thesis Director, Second Reader, and Honors College Director. Some majors may require an additional departmental signature. International endorsement candidates must complete both sides.)	Semester End

SEMESTER II (SEMESTER OF THESIS WORK)

_____ Enroll in Thesis Course (Some departments allow students to undertake their thesis work as part of a capstone requirement for the department. All other majors enroll in HONR 4993.)	Before Add/Drop Deadline
_____ Hold Expectations Meeting (Thesis Director, 2 nd Reader) Week 3	
_____ Schedule Honors Thesis Oral Defense	2 to 3 weeks before defense
_____ Distribute Penultimate Draft to thesis director and second reader	At least one week before defense
_____ Honors Thesis Oral Defense	Usually Week 14-15
_____ Submit Post-Defense Thesis (One copy should be submitted to thesis director and one copy to The Honors College with (a) Honors Thesis Cover Sheet with required signatures, (b) Honors Thesis Abstract, and (c) Honors Thesis final copy with all appendices.)	Before semester end

Appendix II

Tips for Sustained Writing Projects

(like an Honors thesis)

1. Take careful notes

If you're planning to spend the first few months of your thesis work researching or collecting data, don't count on your memory to keep all that information handy when it comes time to write up your results and conclusions. Take careful notes -mark down all of the necessary information, including:

- interesting points about the topic/article you are reading
- page numbers,
- author's name,
- the date you accessed a website, etc.
- Information you need for your footnotes, bibliography (printing out the website, or copying the publisher's page of a book will usually give you most information)
- If a brilliant idea comes to you that might be helpful, *write it down*.

2. Make a writing plan –

Not everyone uses outlines when they write, but for longer papers, some kind of sketch of the overall layout of your paper can save you time in the revision process—remember, it's much easier to restructure an outline than an entire 40-page paper. Outlines can also provide momentum for your writing; once you complete an item on your outline, you'll already know what to work on next. Outlines do not need to be formal or very detailed to be effective. (Be sure to consult your thesis director on this, too!)

3. Start anywhere, anytime

Even though your readers will start at the introduction, who says the writer has to? If you are struggling to get that first sentence of your introduction written, try starting somewhere else in your paper, where you feel the most confident about what you have to say. (This is where your outline comes in handy.) You also don't need to wait until you've read every single book in the library on your subject before you start writing—if you have enough information for a paragraph, why not get started on it now? You can always add new ideas later on. Just make sure that you revise your complete draft to make sure all of the pieces you've written transition into one another, so your writing is smooth and seamless from start to finish.

4. Talk about your project

Drive your committee, friends, family members, pets, professors, classmates, and anyone else you meet crazy by discussing your writing with them. The more you explain your project to others, the clearer it will be for you, and the easier it will be to write about. Meet with your thesis director regularly during the writing process to talk about passages you've written; you may not realize your errors until you've had the opportunity to really talk about your writing with a critical audience. Some students even read their writing out loud to themselves to catch any missing words or awkwardness during the proofreading stage.

5. Don't let writer's block shut you down

We all get it, and it can be difficult to overcome, but you should never let writer's block derail you for long. There are a variety of causes for writer's block, ranging from boredom to anxiety, and there are different strategies for each cause. (Note that writer's block and procrastination are not the same thing!) First, think about why you're having trouble: are you setting your standards too high to get something on paper, or are you simply bored with your thesis? If you are having trouble getting started, here are a few things you can do to get you "unstuck":

- Freewriting: this means turning off your internal editor and just writing whatever comes to your mind, even if it's ridiculous; sometimes writers block themselves by having an overactive internal editor—don't expect yourself to choose the perfect word or phrase every time you write. Just worry about getting your point across first, and then go back and polish it later.
- Talking: if you're unsure of the direction your project is taking, talk to your thesis director or someone who can help you find footing to get started.
- Start somewhere else: find yourself struggling to write section 2 because you keep thinking about what needs to happen in section 3? Write section 3 first!
- Get organized: This can mean two things; if you haven't planned a clear outline, you may need to write one (or develop the one you have) to give yourself a better picture of what your prose should discuss. The second organization problem may be outside your writing—if you keep checking email, chatting with friends, answering your cell phone, watching TV, or singing to music, you probably are setting yourself up for some serious interference. Create an environment that allows you to focus without stress-inducing interruptions. (Note: this does not mean redecorating your entire living space to make it feng shui—that's called procrastination!)

6. Don't let procrastination prevent your success

If you're a procrastinator when it comes to writing, relax: you're normal. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't try to overcome the tendency to procrastinate when there is a deadline to meet. Long-term projects can be especially dangerous for procrastinators, since the illusion of "lots of time" can fool you. To avoid that awful day when you realize that your 30-page paper is due in a week, and you haven't even begun it yet, start scheduling appointments with your writing project.

- Figure out what time of day you work best: in the morning after your first cup of coffee? At 1:00am when your roommate is asleep? The two hours before dinner? Once you've identified your peak productivity time, make the effort to keep that block of time free of other activities so you can work regularly—when it becomes a habit, you'll be less likely to procrastinate.
- Be honest with yourself. Procrastinators are really good at rationalization—be willing to identify the difference between real excuses ("I can't write when I have to go to class") and procrastination excuses ("I can't write when it's sunny outside").
- Tell your friends and family about your goals. If you have a friend who often says, "Come on, you can work on it *after* we go to the movies," you may want to tell them about how important your project is and how susceptible you are to distractions. You may find that your friends will encourage you to keep going once they understand your challenge. (Even if they still try to distract you, it's a good idea to learn how to say no.)

Although you clearly can't spend all of your time writing, don't let distractions prevent you from even getting started.

7. Keep going!

The writing process can stall or become stale if you don't work at it *consistently*. Plan regular writing sessions so that you don't waste time trying to regroup each time you return to your project. If you work at your writing project consistently, you should resist the urge to reread everything that you had written previously before writing something new; as long as you catch any inconsistencies or transition problems in the revision process, pushing forward every time you sit down to write will save you time and keep you on schedule. You should also try to fight the urge to do research during the writing phase; if you come to the point in a paragraph where you think you'll need to do some further reading, make a note to explore that problem later and press on. Think of how long it would take to write if you stopped to read or look up words every few sentences!

8. Budget time for final revision

Very few writers (even professional writers) get it right on the first pass, especially in a long-term project. Always leave plenty of time for you to discuss a complete first draft with your thesis director and to make any necessary revisions. Revision doesn't just include proofreading; it could also mean adding or deleting entire sections of your paper, so be sure to prevent some serious stress by giving yourself plenty of time for major revisions.

9. Get a writer's guide and use it

Something about academic writing makes writers forget everything they learned about grammar, style, and documentation. Make sure your writing is professional and polished by looking up the correct way to document sources, punctuate quotations, or use words. To prevent interruptions to your writing momentum, highlight areas that you aren't sure you've written correctly and check them after you've finished writing that particular passage. Better yet, brush up on your documentation format (APA, MLA, etc.) before you start writing.

10. Save your work in three different places (paranoia can be a good thing)

You finish your final draft, you are just about to click "Print," when your computer crashes. In addition to saving your file to a hard drive, create occasional backup files saved off your computer (burned to a CD, for instance) and print hard copies every once in a while. To be extra safe, keep some version of your thesis in a completely different location from your computer; in the unlikely (but always possible) instance that fire or other disaster occurs, you'll still have a backup file available. As you revise and make major changes, always save new versions of your work as separate files—don't totally replace older versions, just in case you decide to switch back or borrow passages from previous edits.

[This section is reprinted from the Thesis Handbook of the University of Maine. Lauren Marshall graduated from the University of Maine with a B.A. in English in 2004. Her Honors thesis was entitled *To Dream the Rest: A Novel*. She completed her M.A. in English in 2006 and was an Honors College Associate the following academic year. She is currently working on her Ph.D. in composition and rhetoric at the University of Illinois.]