Honors Research Guidelines

All honors scholars must engage in a significant honors capstone research project, which is larger and more challenging than that provided by the usual independent study or discipline-specific capstone. This project will ordinarily begin in the first term of the junior year. Theses or projects may take a variety of forms. They may include experimental research, descriptive research, an art show, a film, a musical composition, a play, a major recital, etc. Projects that are primarily creative in nature must be accompanied by a supporting paper which gives background and/or sets the context for the project. Honors scholars must complete a minimum of 8 credits of honors capstone research, usually during the course of their junior and senior years.

Topic Selection and Honors Board Organization

The Honors Scholar must prepare for the honors project by selecting a faculty adviser from his/her discipline. By Fall Break of the Junior year, the Honors Scholar must decide on a project topic and organize an Honors Board.

Selecting a Faculty Adviser
The Honors Scholar and the prospective adviser should consider their mutual desire to undertake the project, the expertise of the adviser, and the overall work load of the adviser. [NOTE: Some disciplines may encourage or require that the adviser be selected earlier than the deadline, even as early as the end of the first year. Other disciplines assign advisers for the Honors Scholar. Each Honors Scholar should check with the Discipline Coordinator or Division Chair to learn the current policy.]

Determining a General Project Topic
The Honors Scholar might think first about a sub-discipline within a major and then focus on a general area of interest. For example, a molecular biology major might consider the sub-discipline immunology and then select the “circadian rhythm of immune responses” as an area of interest. The project must be creative/original and workable.

Organizing an Honors Board
- The Honors Board consists of three persons whose collective responsibility is to guide and evaluate the Honors Scholar throughout the project. Along with the Honors Adviser, the Honors Scholar will select two faculty members for the Honors Board.
- Honor Boards are authorized to make decisions if two or more members are present.
- No more than two members of the Board may be from the same discipline. Additionally, the Board for interdisciplinary programs must include at least one member who is not in the discipline that sponsors the major (e.g., environmental science major is sponsored by biology, chemistry, mathematics/computer science, and physics; one Board member must be from a discipline other than those listed above). The Honors Program Director will review and advise on the composition of each board.
Notification of Topic

- Once the board has met and agreed on the topic, the honors scholar will e-mail the Honors Program Director with the topic and the names of the lead advisor, the second board member, and the member-at-large.

Formal Proposal

By **April 29 of the Junior year**, the Honors Scholar must have completed a formal proposal, submitted it to the Honors Board and Division Chair and have received approval by the Division Chair and the Honors Adviser. Please note that revisions to this proposal are to be expected and that written drafts of the proposal should be submitted prior to April 29. As with all honors-level work, the proposal must be well-articulated and well-written. The Honors Scholar should attend to proper grammar and appropriate organization, and the proposal should be free of errors. It should follow a form that is acceptable within the discipline; at the same time, it should be readable by a general audience.

The following time schedule for the Junior year must be followed.

- If the first term of work is in the spring:
  - **By February 16** -- The Honors Scholar must meet with the Honors Board to review and obtain approval for the overall course of action for the project.
  - **By April 29** -- The Honors Scholar must complete a formal proposal and submit a copy to each member of the Honors Board. The Honors Board must meet to discuss the proposal with the Honors Scholar prior to this date and to recommend revisions, if necessary. Because the final copy of the proposal is due on this date, Honors Scholars should send first drafts of the proposal to their board and arrange for a meeting several weeks earlier to ensure adequate time for revisions. If the revisions are not approved by this date, the Honors Scholar may petition the Honors Program Director for an extension to a specific date. If an extension is not granted, or if the revisions are still not approved following an extension, the Scholar must withdraw from the Honors Program. In such a case, the department, with the recommendations of the Registrar and the Honors Program Director, will decide the appropriate disposition of the one term of honors research credit (e.g., conversion to credit as independent study), and the adviser will determine the grade.

The proposal must include:

- a cover page with the title of the project, the Scholar’s name and major, the adviser’s name, and the date;
- a topic statement that describes the objective(s), the rationale for undertaking the project, and its scholarly significance;
- a literature review with a bibliography or a literature cited section;
- a discussion of methodology; and
- a description of any research instruments (questionnaires, etc.).

During the time leading up to the proposal, the Honors Scholar is expected to be actively engaged in searching the salient literature and compiling the bibliography. This time may
also be used to develop the research agenda, perform pilot studies, and standardize the methodology.

During the remaining terms of the program, the Honors Scholar is expected to complete the project and prepare a thesis or project report to defend before the Honors Board.

**Registering for Honors Research Credit**

Honors scholars must complete a minimum of eight credits of honors research. During the research semesters, including the proposal phase, Honors Scholars enroll in two to three discipline-specific research courses (600 and above) in which they will successfully initiate and complete a creative/original, workable thesis and research project within a discipline through Capstone and Honors Research courses.

The procedure for registering for these courses is as follows:

- The instructor(s) of record for research (usually your primary advisor(s) for the project) submits the designated form (DSIS) to Academic Affairs.
- Academic Affairs submits a copy of the approved form to the Registrar who then registers the student.
- The course number is designated by discipline, so ENG66x, for example. The credit hours replace the x, so ENG664. Generally speaking, scholars take two semesters of honors research for a total of 8 credit hours and then register for 2 credit hours for their spring honors defense in their senior year.

The potential for Interdisciplinary Honors Projects for double majors exists. Such projects may take one of three forms:

1. A single interdisciplinary thesis incorporating both majors
2. Two separate thesis projects, one in each discipline, or
3. One honors thesis in one of the majors, but not in both.

Honors projects completed in formally-designated Interdisciplinary majors (Intercultural Studies, International Politics, Environmental Science, Financial Economics, International Business, Neuroscience, Psychology-Human Resources, and Quantitative Economics) should incorporate research questions and methodologies from the primary represented disciplines. Interdisciplinary Honors Projects should be approved and supervised by faculty from the primary represented disciplines.

Honors projects completed in Individual Interdisciplinary majors (a student-proposed, departmentally-approved major outside the established disciplinary majors and Interdisciplinary majors (referenced above)) should incorporate research questions and methodologies from the primary represented disciplines. Individual interdisciplinary Honors Projects should be approved and supervised by faculty from the primary represented disciplines. All Interdisciplinary Honors Projects, as do all Honors Projects, require the approval of the divisions/disciplines involved.
Guidelines for Thesis Defense and Final Thesis Manuscript Preparation

- The Scholar will prepare a written thesis or project report. This thesis is in addition to any other required components of the project that are agreed to by the Scholar, Honors Program Director, faculty adviser, and Honors Board. (See Guidelines for Preparing Honors Theses or Projects for format and procedure below.)

  The Scholar is solely responsible for ensuring that all requirements of the All-College Honors Program and his or her individual department(s) have been met.

- The thesis defense must take place before URAC for spring Scholar graduates. The deadline for fall graduates is October 31. Because Scholars are usually asked to revise their thesis after the defense, it is best to schedule the defense several weeks before this date to ensure adequate time for revisions.

- The Scholar is responsible for scheduling the date for the oral defense of the Honors thesis or project. Arrangements should be made no later than March 1 (October 1 in case of fall semester defense).

- The Honors Scholar will arrange for a time and reserve, through the Astra Schedule program (follow the “Reserve a Campus Location” link on My.Westminster), a room for the defense before March 1 (October 1 in case of fall semester defense). It is the Scholar’s responsibility to ensure that the reserved room is equipped with any necessary equipment and that the equipment supports the Scholar’s presentation.

- The Honors Board must receive copies of the thesis or project report and be able to examine the project at least two weeks before the scheduled defense.

- The defense is an opportunity for the Scholar to provide a brief summary of the project (20-30 minutes) in a manner that is appropriate for the project and the professional standards of the Scholar’s discipline. Current students and faculty are invited to attend this presentation. Questions, ideas, and suggestions will be offered at this time. Following the presentation, the Honors Board will privately discuss the quality of the project and decide whether or not the project merits All-College Honors, and if revisions are required.

- Following the defense, the Scholar will submit the thesis or the final documentation of the project, including revisions, to the Honors Program Director. The final thesis must be submitted by May 1 for spring graduates (December 1 for fall graduates). Scholars who fail to submit a final thesis by this deadline will graduate provisionally.

  The Scholar should check with his or her individual department(s) regarding additional requirements for submitting the final thesis.
Final Thesis Preparation and Procedures

This document presents the Westminster College regulations for preparation of an Honors Thesis or Project. Individual departments of the College may add to the requirements herewith specified. It is the responsibility of all Honors Scholars to study these regulations and to apply them carefully in the preparation of the final manuscript.

These regulations govern format and style of the finished thesis or project at the point of submission to the examining committee set up for the thesis or project defense. Scholarly methods and procedures prior to this stage are under supervision of the thesis or project adviser, and are not within the jurisdiction of this manual.

Because approval for Honors Research is granted only to students with an adequate command of the English language, every thesis must exemplify superior communications skills. It is the responsibility of each author to submit a clear, well-organized, error-free draft for final committee consideration.

Number of Copies
The Honors Scholar must submit one digital copy of the final version of the thesis or project to the Honors Program Director after the thesis or project defense for deposit in McGill Library. This copy must contain any and all additions, corrections, and revisions deemed necessary by the examining committee.

Cost of Copying and Binding
Electronic copies of the thesis must be made available to the examining committee at least two weeks prior to the defense. The College will pay for the binding of one copy of the official thesis, which will be sent to the honors student.

Manuscript Preparation
There are two honors thesis templates: one for science theses and one for non-science theses. The honors theses templates have been set up to conform to the formatting requirements (margins, page numbering, etc.) listed below. Templates are posted on the My.Westminster Honors Program page in the “Thesis Resources” section. Tips on using the templates are also posted.

1. **Text.** The student will use a standard word processing program with Arial, Times New Roman, or Verdana 12-point font to prepare the text of the paper.

   All textual material should be typed. Symbols, characters, or special markings not found on word processors may be carefully drawn by hand, with black India ink. Corrections must be undetectable on the original and all submitted copies.

2. **Pagination.** Only one side of the paper is to be used, and each page must be numbered (with the exception of the window title page and the title page proper).
The preliminary pages, including the copyright page (if used), the Acknowledgments, Abstract, Preface or Foreword, Table of Contents, and any lists of figures or tables should be numbered with small Roman numerals (ii, iii, iv, etc.) centered at the bottom of the page one-half inch from the edge. The title page proper is page I, but the page number should not appear.

All remaining pages, including text, illustrations, appendices, and bibliography should bear Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.). On pages carrying a center heading (e.g., first page of a chapter or bibliography), the page number should be centered one-half inch from the bottom of the page. All other pages should be numbered at the top, one inch from the right-hand edge and one-half inch from the top. No punctuation is to be used with page numbers.

3. **Margins and Spacing.** The left margin should be one and one-half inches. The top, bottom, and right margins should be one inch. These margins apply to text, tables, figures, and illustrations.

The text of the thesis or project should be double-spaced. Footnotes, endnotes, bibliographical references, and the Index (if included) should be single-spaced.

4. **Headings, Captions, and Subdivisions.** Any of the systems suggested and illustrated in the various style manuals may be used as appropriate. Students should check current practice in the professional literature of their disciplines and must use consistently whatever method they adopt.

5. **Footnotes and Bibliography.** Citation forms and bibliographic footnotes forms may vary among disciplines and the style manual recommended by the department should be consulted. Whichever forms are adopted should be used consistently.

6. **Special Pages**
   a. Title Page Proper – see template
   b. Table of Contents – see template

7. **Tables and Figures.** Tables and figures should be typed. The form should be consistently followed.

**Evaluation of Honors Work**

- Honors Research courses may be graded with a letter grade, or the advisor may choose to give the project a T grade until the completion of the thesis or project. The T grade will be equated to the average of the other grades received during the term for which the T is recorded. A course graded T will be considered a graded course for Dean’s and Honors scholarship list eligibility purposes.

If a T grade is assigned, it will be replaced with a letter grade at the time of the thesis or project evaluation.
• Upon completion of the defense and submission of the final copy, the adviser, in consultation with the Honors Board, will determine a grade to replace the previously recorded T grades in Honors Research courses.

• When a Scholar chooses not to complete a thesis or project, the primary project adviser shall submit a grade for the Honors Research course(s) completed. This letter grade (or grades) shall replace the former T grades in Honors Research. These are then converted to Independent Study courses.

• For those who finish their Honors research courses before their last semester in school, all work, including the defense of the thesis, must be completed by the Registrar’s deadline for removal of incomplete grades following the term in which the Honors Scholar was registered for the last unit of Honors Research. Scholars failing to do so will be dropped from the program and appropriate letter grades will be assigned.

**Audience Awareness and Presentation Expectations**

Honors Scholars are expected to be able to communicate with various audiences. While the honors thesis or project itself is under the direction of a particular discipline and should be written in a discourse and style acceptable to a particular discipline, both the proposals and the defense are presented to wider audiences and must be clear and comprehensible to those audiences. Generally, avoid jargon and/or provide a glossary.

Scholars are **required** to participate in the annual Westminster College Undergraduate Research and Arts Celebration (URAC) and are also encouraged to present at a discipline-specific conference determined by the Honors Adviser. Scholars can present their projects and/or support their peers who are presenting research. The Faculty view URAC as an excellent opportunity for Scholars to see the kinds of projects that merit All-College Honors, to stay current on multidisciplinary research, and to strengthen the academic community that is fostered in the Honors program. A call to submit proposals for URAC is made during the spring semester.

Additionally, graduating scholars are expected to participate in the Honors Convocation that is held each spring on the same day as URAC. During the convocation, Scholars are recognized by their Faculty, peers, and larger community. Scholars will receive a medallion that can be worn during the commencement ceremony.