

## GEORGIA HIGHLANDS COLLEGE Honors Option Contract

The Honors Option allows students to earn honors credit in a course not specifically designated as an “Honors” course. The contract is implemented when a professor and a student draw up an agreement specifying the work necessary for the student to perform to earn the credit. The Honors student and the instructor work together to modify the requirements of a regular class in a significant manner.

### Guidelines

The criteria for making a regular course count for Honors via an Honors Option contract match those used in evaluating whether any course can be offered as an Honors section. Honors courses do not qualify as Honors courses simply by adding work for students on top of what is required in non-Honors courses; instead, they aim to enhance students’ scholarly experiences. They should be more rigorous, including more depth and/or breadth in the topic, and more student engagement, involving for example more discussion, writing, and focused projects. They should include components that teach advanced critical and creative thinking (e.g., interdisciplinary elements, engagement with primary sources, diverse perspectives and critical approaches, ethical issues, epistemological issues), and may include innovative pedagogy. In these classes, students are encouraged to engage with difficult issues and learn from each other through their exchanges.

The Honors Option standard for student work will be above and beyond the usual course requirements. Through the Honors Option, students should be absorbed into the inquiry of a course in such a way as to give them more than ordinary appreciation for and mastery of the intellectual discipline in question. **Whatever form they take, the assignments should encourage work that is higher in quality, more deeply analytical, and more challenging, rather than simply multiply work assignments. The most important components of an honors projects are are the quality of the research, the originality of the author's thinking, the author's ability to link her work to theoretical issues of importance in the field, and the quality of idea communication (written and/or oral).** A professor who agrees to work with a student under the Honors Option acts as that student’s mentor or guide, but the work should be self-directed. A grade of no less than “B” for the regular course is necessary before honors credit will be given.

The contract for the Honors Option will be supplied by the Honors Program. The faculty member, student, and Honors Director will sign the contract **within the first four weeks of the beginning of the semester**. At the completion of the semester, the student will submit their project (paper, video of presentation, website, etc.) to the Honors Director for review. The instructor may cancel the agreement if the student has not fulfilled the terms of the contract. If the agreement has been satisfied, the Honors Director will inform the proper Academic Office that the student should receive honors credit for the course. This credit, so designated, will appear on the student’s academic transcript.

## Elements of the Honors Project:

Honors Option projects may be traditional research projects, a creative project, or a service-oriented exercise that is conceptually grounded in key concepts of a body of knowledge. The projects may be within a discipline or interdisciplinary. The goal is to engage honors students in a direct and participatory learning experience. Most students do a research/literature review appropriate in their discipline, and offer a recommendation/thesis statement in part based on that knowledge. Students are encouraged to understand the expectations of research in their discipline before beginning their project and to shape the project accordingly. Honors Option assignments will necessarily vary, but below are a few suggestions for transforming a course into one that might satisfy the Honors Option.

1. A special research project introduces the student to aspects of the course not normally covered in class.
  - Example: A paper disputing an existing disciplinary theory or methodology
2. In performance courses, the student is asked to undertake a project of unusual complexity or breadth, or undertake research that provides a context for such a project.
  - Example: Writing a work of historical fiction
  - Example: Using the methods of communication to design a brochure for an animal shelter
3. A special research and presentation requires students to undertake research into an aspect of the course and then present it to the class
  - Example: Comparing concepts of prayer and meditation in different religions

## Eligibility and Limitations

- Students must be admitted to the Honors Program.
- Students may contract no more than two courses per semester.
- Students may contract no more than one course per semester with a single faculty member.
- If a proposal is denied approval, the student may then resubmit a revised proposal addressing the issues specified in the “Reasons for Denial” section of the Notification Form.

## Procedures for the Applicant

1. Meet with the designated professor to discuss the plan of study.
2. Prepare the plan of study proposal in accordance with the Honors Option Guidelines.
3. Obtain the approval of the sponsoring professor by the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the semester.
4. Obtain the approval of the Honors Director by the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the semester.
5. Fill out the Honors Option Contract, plan of study, and attach a course syllabus.
6. Submit the completed Honors Option Contract to GHC Honors Program Director, by the 4<sup>th</sup> week of the semester for which the course will be taken.
7. Receive project approval from the Honors Committee. The Honors Director will communicate feedback and let you know whether you are ready to begin work within 5 business days.
8. Submit a copy of the completed project to the Honors Director by the 14<sup>th</sup> week of semester.