

Faculty Guidelines and Suggestions for Honors Contracts

What Is An Honors Contract?

In short, the honors contract allows a student, through the completion of supplemental work and activities, to obtain Honors credit for a course that is not designated as an Honors course.

The goal of the honors contract is to provide motivated and capable students in the University Honors Program (UHP) with an opportunity to enrich their education.

Honors contracts are only established through the mutual agreement of both the instructor and the student. *Faculty are never obligated to enter into an Honors contract.*

In addition, honors contracts should be reserved for courses for which the student has a strong interest and real intellectual curiosity.

How Is An Honors Contract Constructed?

There are two distinct options for creating honors contracts:

1. Establish an individualized contract with a student.

This should be initiated by the student. The instructor talks with the student about his/her specific interests in the course. The two parties mutually agree upon an enrichment or series of enrichments. The student then writes up the proposed contract in HAL (www.k-state.edu/ksuhonors/hal) and submits it electronically for e-signature by the instructor.

2. Create a general contract for UHP students who wish to earn UHP credit for the course.

This can be initiated by the instructor. Following the format of the contract (see Page Four) the instructor simply proposes supplemental expectations in writing and sends those, as an e-mail attachment, to Jim Hohenbary (jimlth@ksu.edu). For context, a copy of the regular course syllabus, or at least a brief sketch of the regular requirements, is also appreciated.

The UHP then approves and enters the contract into a menu of options in HAL. Students can then select and sign onto that contract through HAL. The UHP then provides a list of contract participants to the instructor at the beginning of the semester.

In either case, at the end of the semester, HAL sends an automated e-mail to the instructor. That e-mail prompts the instructor to login and verify (or not) successful completion of the honors contract.

What Should An Honors Contract Entail?

This can vary considerably, and we trust that the creativity and knowledge of the faculty will generate many good possibilities. *We do not encourage simply making a course harder for the sake of making it harder.* The UHP would prefer to frame the contract in terms of “What can I ask an academically strong student to do that will deepen or add another dimension to their learning?”

Here are several general (and potentially overlapping) suggestions.

1. The contract should require critical evaluation of information and synthesis that leads to some form of intellectual product.
 - a. If the course does not have a strong writing component, asking the student to add a written component is recommended.
 - b. If the course does have a strong writing component, you might consider asking the student to further develop their presentational skills in some way.
 - c. If you will add to existing written or presentational requirements, or to the design/production requirements of a studio/workshop/laboratory course:
 - i. Have an objective for enrichment. “More for the sake of more” is not satisfying for the instructor or the student.
 - ii. Consider asking the student to expand or supplement the scope of inquiry.
 - iii. Consider asking the student to bring an interdisciplinary perspective or additional analytical focus into play.
2. You might consider asking the student to develop or hone an academically or professionally useful skill that is beyond the scope of the regular syllabus but still relevant to the content of the course.
3. If multiple students within a course will pursue UHP credit, asking them to undertake a supplemental group assignment to build their collaborative skills could be possible.
4. Requiring some additional readings or guided research is a common (but certainly not exclusive) form of enrichment.
 - a. The UHP values the development of an interdisciplinary mindset. You might ask the student to create or supplement an intellectual product in a way that engages a higher level of interdisciplinary thinking and/or or makes additional connections between concept and application.
 - b. Courses, due to time, often touch only briefly on certain topics. You might ask the student to undertake additional exploration in regards to one of these topics for purpose of deepening their expertise.
5. If the instructor establishes a general contract, he/she might consider outlining several options for completion in order to give students some flexibility while still maintaining adequate control over the direction of the work.
6. We would hope that some aspect of the contract promises to produce quality interaction between the student and the instructor.

How Much Work?

This is a good question that resists an easy answer due to the great variation in course structure and content across the university. Here is a simple rubric:

- Will the student improve their skills and learn something additional and meaningful through completing the Honors contract?
- Will the student still have adequate time and capacity to complete the regular assignments of the course at a high level?
- If the student has an interview in the future (with a scholarship panel, professional school or potential employer) could they proudly discuss the honors contract in that setting?
- Would the student be happy to undertake a similar contract again?

We would like to think that an *appropriately* demanding Honors contract would permit both the student and instructor to answer “Yes” to all four questions.

Additional Thoughts

1. If the student is willing to do the work and do it well, we do not think that undertaking an honors contract should make it inherently more difficult to earn a high grade in a course.
2. Various faculty partners hold differing opinions regarding whether an honors supplement should be graded as part of their overall grade for the course or whether satisfactory completion of the honors supplement is simply considered on a Yes/No basis. Thus, we do not take a dogmatic stance on this.

We only ask that the instructor establish, as part of the initial contract, clear expectations for what should be done and how it will be evaluated. This includes whether or not (and how) the evaluation will factor into their letter grade for the course.

3. The UHP is always open to questions and collaboration. We appreciate your help and are eager to help you come up with possibilities or address any concerns that you might have.

Sample

The following illustrates what the contract form actually looks like in HAL. To review:

1. A student fills out this form after they have discussed the matter with their instructor and come to a mutual agreement OR
2. If an instructor wishes to offer a contract option to multiple students, the instructor supplies verbiage to the UHP for the three substantive boxes in the middle of the form. We can then create a contract in the system that students can review and opt to pursue.

FOR-CREDIT COURSE CONTRACT

Instructions:

1. Fill in all fields on the Contract form.
2. Once saved, you must submit the form for electronic signatures.

ALL FIELDS ARE REQUIRED

Student Name

Course Subject and Catalog (e.g., ECON 520)

Term

Credit hours requested to be applied

Description of Contract:
 For a contracted course, please indicate what you will do that is distinct from the regular requirements of the course. Detail and topical specificity are appreciated. If you are contracting undergraduate research for which you are earning academic credit, please describe the research, including your planned role in it.

Describe the goals and/or learning objectives for this contract. What skills do you hope to develop or enhance?

How will successful completion of this contract be documented, or what intellectual products will be generated? Key details include the agreed upon scope of the intellectual product (i.e. length of paper or duration of presentation) and whether the contracted work will be graded.

Course Instructor:

First and Last Name

First Last

eID Fill out the first and last name above and click to search for their eID
 eID is the first part of their K-State email address. For example, your eID is mirandamoore24.
 Do not include the '@ksu.edu' part.

Phone

Department

→ ONCE SAVED, CLICK HERE TO SEND FOR SIGNATURES
 (Do this ONLY AFTER discussing this contract with your course instructor or activity advisor)

Name	Approvals		Contract Completed	
	eID	Date	eID	Date
Student				
Instructor				
College Representative				
University Honors Program Director				