

## Faculty Guidelines and Suggestions for Honors Contracts

### What Is an Honors Contract?

The Honors contract allows a student, through the completion of supplemental work, 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. Additionally, Honors contracts should be reserved for courses that the student has strong interest and intellectual curiosity in.

Honors contracts are only established through collaboration between the faculty and student. Faculty are never obligated to enter into an Honors contract.

### How Is an Honors Contract Constructed?

There are two distinct options for creating honors contracts:

1. Establish an individualized contract with a student.
  - a. This should be initiated by the student. The instructor talks with the student about their specific interests in the course. The two parties mutually agree upon the supplemental work that will be done that goes beyond what the course generally requires. The student then writes up the proposed contract (currently available to the student as a Qualtrics form on Canvas) and submits it electronically. The instructor will then be prompted via an emailed Qualtrics link to approve it. The UHP will check in again with the instructor at the end of the semester to confirm successful completion of the contract.
2. Create a pre-established contract that any Honors student in the course can sign up for.
  - a. To create a pre-contract for a course, fill out the template and email it to [ksuhonors@ksu.edu](mailto:ksuhonors@ksu.edu). Be as thorough and specific as possible. It should be clear exactly what is expected of the student. [The pre-established contract form is available now.](#)
  - b. The UHP will review the contract and, assuming no questions or concerns, add it to our list of pre-established contract options that we share with students.
  - c. The UHP will provide a list of students who have signed up for the contract near the beginning of the semester and then check in with the instructor

again at the end of the semester to confirm successful completion of the contract.

### **What Should an Honors Contract Entail?**

This can vary considerably. We trust the faculty to generate many good possibilities. We do not encourage simply making a course harder for the sake of making it harder. 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 guidelines/suggestions to work from:

1. The contract should require some form of intellectual product or measurable result: for example a paper, annotated bibliography, creative work, case study, materials to lead a classroom discussion, etc.
2. If you add to existing course requirements, have an objective for enrichment. “More for the sake of more” is not the goal, nor is it beneficial for the instructor or student.
3. The student may bring in interdisciplinary perspectives if it fits with their interests and your goals for the contract.
4. You might consider asking the student to develop an academic or professional skill that goes beyond the scope of the course but is still relevant to the content.
5. If multiple students in the course want to pursue an honors contract, we permit group projects if each student is equally involved and if the instructor approves.
6. You might consider asking the student to pursue additional reading, guided research, or other additional exploration of a course topic.
7. Consider offering several options for completion in order to give students some flexibility while still maintaining control over the direction of the contract.
8. Establish how the work will be evaluated and graded. This includes whether it will be counted toward their class grade or just fulfill their Honors requirement.

### **How Much Work?**

Due to the great variation in course structure and content across the university, there is not one answer to that question. An appropriate Honors contract would likely prompt a “yes” from both the instructor and student to the following 4 questions:

- 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?

### **Additional Thoughts**

1. If the student is willing to do the work and do it well, undertaking an honors contract should not make it inherently more difficult to earn a high grade in a course.
2. UHP values developing an interdisciplinary mindset. Any assignments that promote this are welcome.
3. The academic or career goals of students can offer useful direction for creating a contract.
4. We hope that contracts will produce quality interaction between instructors and students.
5. We are 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.