

## Departmental Honors in Geosciences

*Are you a current or soon-to-be rising senior? Are you thinking about what you need to do to write an honor's thesis? Look no further!*

(This document assumes you already have an agreement to do an honor's thesis with a member of the Department of Geosciences. If that is not yet true, please speak to your GEO advisor about how to initiate that conversation in your **junior year**.)

A student in Geosciences normally applies to do an Honor's thesis during September of their senior year. By the end of the first full week of classes, a student should have completed a thesis proposal and submitted their proposal to the Director of Honors (typically, this is the person in GEO who is advising seniors). More information is available here (<https://www.smith.edu/about-smith/class-deans/honors-apply>) and is summarized below.

### 1. Request a Calculation of Your Grade Point Average

- Write to [honors@smith.edu](mailto:honors@smith.edu) to request the calculation of your GPA
- Include your ID number and your major in the email
- The form will be sent to you as an email attachment

### 2. Calculate your GPA with Your Honors Adviser

Use the GPA form to calculate your GPA inside the major. You should do this with your adviser. Note that the Geosciences department does not have a minimum GPA requirement, but that students with GPA's below 3.3 should consult with their potential thesis and academic advisor(s) to make sure a thesis is the right choice. Note you will also need to decide whether you will register for 8 or 12 credits over the course of the year; discuss this with your advisor as well.

### 3. Submit Your Project Proposal by the Deadline

Be sure to submit your project proposal to the director of honors in your major department on time. For Geosciences, this is at the end of the first week of classes.

Your proposal should contain:

- a signed Application to Enter Departmental Honors Form as a cover sheet (see website above for this form)
- a 500- to 1,000-word description of the broader scholarly issue you will investigate
- the specific issue you will discuss or investigate
- an explanation of your approach and evidence of your experience with this approach

- an account of your relevant preparation and skills (previous coursework related to the project topic, quantitative skills, foreign language ability, etc.)
- a reference list
- a copy of the completed and signed calculation of GPA requirements form
- The application form is double-sided; the reverse side has a checklist of steps you must take to submit a proposal. Please complete all the steps and sign and date the checklist when you hand in your thesis project proposal. If your application is not signed by an adviser in your department, it cannot be considered.

#### **4. Submit a Certification Letter**

You must certify that you have not been sanctioned by the Honor Board at a serious level (one-third-step grade reduction or more) for a serious violation in your sophomore, junior or senior year.

Submit the Departmental Honors Certification Letter to the chair of SHIP by mail to College Hall 101, or attach it in an email to [honors@smith.edu](mailto:honors@smith.edu).

#### **5. Submit Your Thesis Project Funding Request**

If you are applying for funding through the Nancy Kershaw Tomlinson Memorial Fund, please submit your request with your thesis project proposal. This fund is designed to support some of your thesis-related research costs. More information is available here (<https://www.smith.edu/about-smith/class-deans/thesis-funding>), and please see your advisor if you have any questions about what may or may not be appropriate to charge here, and please double-check deadlines to turn in receipts for reimbursement.

#### **6. Invitation to present your research in the Fall Semester**

The Department of Geosciences wants every thesis student to present their research during the Fall semester. Presentations can include a professional presentation (at GSA or AGU) or a 10-minute lunch-bag talk during our Departmental Fall Series in early December. Ideally, students who presented at professional meetings would also provide an update on their work during the December lunch-bag so that all Geoscience faculty and students can hear about all the thesis projects. If you have any questions about this, please see the Director of Honors. These lunch-bags are scheduled by mid-September so thesis students have plenty of time to plan.

#### **7. Turning in the Thesis**

Students should be finishing a first draft of their thesis by the first week of April, and submitting this to their advisor for comments. Also by early April, students must submit their title page on Moodle and their permission form to Libraries. The final honors project is submitted in mid-April, and students should check to see the specific dates for this, as they change every year. The thesis is submitted to 2 Readers, one of whom is the thesis advisor, this document is graded, and comments are provided to the student that

must be incorporated in the final corrected copy of the thesis, submitted to the library in mid-May.

## **8. The Defense**

The Department of Geosciences holds oral defenses in late April-early May. These are typically ~20-minute long presentations of your research followed by questions from the audience, including the faculty. This schedule is set in the Spring semester in consultation with the GEO faculty and all departmental thesis students.

## **9. The Thesis Grade**

The final grade of the thesis determines honors designation at graduation. This is a combination of a thesis student's GPA, the grade of the written thesis document (as determined by the two readers) and the student's oral defense. This calculation happens after the oral defense, and students are notified during graduation. The three honors designations are Highest Honors, High Honors, and Honors. It is the belief of all members of the Department of Geosciences that all designations recognize a significant research achievement for our students.