

**Pace University**

**Pforzheimer Honors College**

**Faculty Handbook**

Questions? Comments?

Having an idea for an Honors Course?

Interested to supervise an Honors Thesis?

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**PFORZHEIMER HONORS COLLEGE OVERVIEW**

Honors Faculty play several crucial roles in fulfilling the mission of the Pforzheimer Honors College at Pace University. Whether you are teaching an Honors course or directing an Honors Thesis, your work is critical to our efforts to attract students to the program, to provide high expectations for academic excellence, and to provide an environment for student success. The *Honors Faculty Handbook* is a comprehensive resource designed to assist you in working with the Honors College and our students.

**Fast Facts:**

* Pace University established its Honors Program in 1987, which in 2003 turned into Pforzheimer Honors College. Website: <http://www.pace.edu/honors-college/>
* The National Collegiate Honors Council [www.nchchonors.org](http://www.nchchonors.org) is the governing body for all Honors Colleges and Programs in the US. Pace University is a member of this organization.
* Currently over 700 students on the New York City campus and over 200 students on the Pleasantville campus comprise the Pforzheimer Honors College.
* Eligibility:
  + Entering first-year students must have a minimum 90 high school average. Students must also have minimum score of 1270 on the SAT (minimum 610 on the Math component and 570 on the Verbal component) or 27 on the ACT.
  + Students at Pace University who have completed approximately 30 credits (2 semesters) or transfer students who have completed 30-45 credits (2-3 semesters), and have achieved a 3.5 average are also eligible to be considered for admission.
* Requirements:
  + Entering first-year students are required to take a minimum of 8 Honors courses (24 credits) to successfully graduate from the Honors program. Students entering the Honors College at the beginning of their sophomore year are required to take a minimum of 6 (18 Credits) Honors College courses. The Honors courses are taken in place of, not in addition to, non-Honors courses.
  + All Honors College students are expected to write a thesis and defend it successfully before graduation. In developing their thesis, Honors students receive continuous support and guidance from Honors faculty and staff and other Pace University faculty members.
  + Students are required to maintain an overall minimum average of 3.3 and to participate in Honors College events and earn the privilege of priority registration. To receive Honors credit in an Honors College course, students must receive a final grade not lower than B-.

**HONORS EXCLUSIVE COURSES**

Honors exclusive course differ substantially from regular course at Pace University in their depth and breadth and the style of pedagogy. The role and involvement of the faculty in teaching an Honors course is fine-tuned to higher student capabilities and expectations. While it is difficult to ascribe minimum requirements for Honors courses, there is agreement that these classes, purposefully kept small, ought to contain unique aspects which set them apart from other courses.

An Honors course is much more than just a course; it is a unique process where student gain vast and deep experience about the principles of the discipline. It puts a great emphasis on an inquiry-based quest where the instructor lead student to produce and thinking critically, while encouraging them to take initiative in affecting the direction of the course. Such goals are most likely to be achieved in an atmosphere of open communication among students and between students and the professor. While a predominantly lecture format may be appropriate for some Honors courses, most should encourage the active engagement of minds; hence, such methods as discussion, debate, oral reports, etc., are essential to the typical Honors experience.

The Honors College places a premium on student writing and the intellectual skills that can be developed and mastered thereby. Therefore, unless a professor can make a strong case for an exception, Honors instructors are expected to require significant writing from their students. This can be done, as appropriate, by way of a major paper or different essays or exercises. In courses dealing with performance (as in music or drama) or creative activity, writing can be made to support or enhance other forms of creative activity. The intent of a writing requirement is to give students opportunity to collect, generate, and refine their thoughts on a given subject and to produce polished communications. In order for students to learn through writing, however, the professor should establish close contact with the student and the writing involved, and he/she should evaluate such writing in a timely, constructive, and clear fashion.

Quality rather than quantity separates Honors courses from the non-Honors curriculum. While the work requirements in an Honors course may involve larger and harder assignments than would be given in other courses in the University, the goal of the Honors College is to encourage the student to extract more intellectual value out of the work that is assigned rather than simply to do more assigned work.

Honors faculty should be active members of the intellectual community and should seek to include the students in that community. The College encourages in the professor a flexibility of method and creative approach to engaging students in sharing the learning experience.

**HONORS NON-EXCLUSIVE COURSES**

Occasionally the Honors College offers courses whereby several seats in an otherwise non-Honors class are set aside as a separate Honors “section." This permits students to receive Honors credit for that course.

Although such mixed sections fall short of our ideal Honors experience, it can still offer a vital and exciting learning opportunity for some of our students. The Honors College agrees to such sections when an outstanding faculty member is teaching an intriguing special topics course or when we have several students in a particular major who would benefit from an upper-division offering in that major.

It is impossible, of course, to set fixed guidelines for the Honors learning experience in mixed Honors/non-Honors courses; however, we hope that what follows will provide some measure of guidance. The course will be most useful if it stimulates thinking about teaching so that you devise your own creative solutions to this very complex classroom environment. All Honors teaching should be innovative and dynamic, and the mixed sections simply offer a different avenue for innovation.

However, teaching a non-exclusive Honors class presents challenges beyond those of teaching an all-Honors section. You will need to find ways to engage the Honors students in a deeper, more focused learning that reaches somewhat beyond the experience of their non-Honors peers in the same classroom. Moreover, Honors students receive no additional credit hours for these courses, so you need to be careful not to simply assign additional work. Students should not feel penalized for their Honors standing. As is true with all Honors coursework, we encourage emphasis on the quality of the work assigned rather than on the quantity of assignments.

The learning experience for students in the Honors section of a non-exclusive Honors class should be richer and more sophisticated. Students should have the opportunity for in-depth research, field work, collaboration, or presentation. The kinds of work Honors students have completed in these sections have included web-sites, class presentations, interdisciplinary demonstrations, group projects, and more extensive research papers. Depending on the number of students in the Honors section, instructors have worked with the whole group on one project, assigned several smaller group projects, or had students work independently on research appropriate to their individual interests. Other instructors have used service learning as a way to enhance the Honors experience in these classrooms.

We encourage you to allow students to participate in designing the Honors component of the course where appropriate. While you need to begin the semester with clear and reasonable expectations, part of those expectations may be that Honors students reflect upon their own goals for the class and how they can best meet those goals. In this way, students are invited to become active participants in their own learning. Much of the most ambitious and creative Honors student work has come from these kinds of collaborative classroom experiences.

Instructors teaching these mixed classes accept the responsibility and the time commitment inherent in such an unusual circumstance. Along with that responsibility, however, comes the opportunity for innovation as instructors experiment with pedagogical methods unsuited for a larger, more traditional class section. Rewarding, too, is the mentor relationship with bright, highly motivated students.

There are several models in place for the mixed Honors class, some of which are listed below:

* Meet with each individual Honors student as needed during the semester. This works well if very few students are registered in the Honors section.
* Arrange meeting times with the Honors students as a group as needed (typically 3-4 per semester).
* Include an additional separate weekly meeting in the Schedule of Classes. Honors students then build that meeting time into their schedule. (This can be excessive and inconvenient for many students and is discouraged except in cases where the number of students enrolled, or the nature of the course, makes it necessary.)

These models are simply examples of some of the most common ways instructors approach the mixed Honors/non-Honors classroom. They are not meant to limit the possibilities.

We encourage you to consult with colleagues in your department who may have experience teaching these classes for additional insights into what may work well in a particular discipline. Also, all honors faculty members are strongly encouraged to read the National Collegiate Honor Council’s publication *Teaching and Learning in Honors*, <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nchcmono/9/> which is a valuable resource for pedagogical techniques specific to Honors. Please feel free to request a printed copy of this monograph from the Honors College.

Whatever method is finally used, it is important that your expectations, including the expectation that Honors students design the Honors component, are made clear at the very beginning of the semester. A description of the course, including those expectations, should be made available so that students can make an informed choice during pre-registration advising.

**HONORS THESIS AND FACULTY THESIS ADVISORS**

All Honors students are required to complete a research project and write and defend a thesis to graduate successfully from the Honors College. The Honors thesis is a year-long commitment which begins by taking a prep course which might be a capstone class, a senior seminar, or a Research Methodology class called HON 499. There is more information about the thesis process on the Pforzheimer Honors College website <https://www.pace.edu/honors-college/pleasantville-students>

**THESIS COURSES**

* The ***Thesis Preparation*** course focuses on Research Methodology. Students normally accomplish this step by taking HON 499, which is a 1-credit pass/fail course offered every semester. There is an exclusive section of the HON499 for the Honors students in the Lubin School of Business. HON 499 fulfills one of the 8 Honors required courses. After taking HON 499, students are expected to have learned the principles, methods, and steps necessary to establish a rigorous research project. Most importantly, students are required to develop a concrete and well-defined thesis proposal which can be further explored in a subsequent research course as described below. Students are encouraged to take HON499 in their **Junior year, and in particular, in the 6th semester**. This leaves adequate time to conduct the research in the following semester and have an opportunity to present the results in appropriate venues such the annual conference of the NCHC (National Collegiate Honors Council), usually held in early November or the annual conference of the Northeast Regional Honors Council, usually held in early spring.
* A ***Thesis Production*** course enables students to conduct the actual research under the supervision the student’s official **Thesis Advisor**. Students normally accomplish this step by taking a so-called Springboard or Capstone course. For a list of approved Springboard courses see the Honors website. If there is no Capstone course offered in the student’s major, then the student may register for Independent Study.

**THESIS ADVISORS**

* Students may have more than one thesis advisers (co-advisors).
* Students who choose to work with an adjunct professor must also have a full-time Pace faculty member as a co-advisor.
* Students may work in a group with the same advisor on a large project that has different components. Each student is required to write a distinct thesis and defend it separately.

**THESIS AND THESIS PRESENTAION**

* The thesis must be an original and high quality work so it can be presented as a sample of the student’s best scholarly work in his/her field of study. It is normally expected that the thesis must be a minimum of 25 pages (exclusive of the abstract, table of contents, and bibliography pages) unless an exception is granted by the Honors College Director.
* Upon the completion of the research and by the end of the senior year, the student is required to present the work formally in a **Thesis Defense Presentation** session before a the **defense committee***,* which consists of the thesis advisor and a second reader.

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THESIS ADVISOR WITH REGARD TO THE THESIS**

* Read the latest draft of the thesis before the presentation.
* Attend the thesis presentation.
* Facilitate the Q and A session in the presentation. At this session, advisor(s) will ask the student questions about the thesis and offer any necessary revisions. The student’s formal presentation and the Q and A session must last no more than 30 minutes. (MELISSA GIVES STUDENTS 15 MINUTES)
* Inform the student of any necessary revisions. The thesis advisor must e-mail necessary revisions to the student and the Honors College honors\_plv@pace.edu.
* Fill out the *Honors Thesis Assessment* form, indicating your assessment of the student’s thesis—pass as is, pass with revisions, extraordinary cases in need of further review. Drop the form off or email it to Honors College [honors\_plv@pace.edu](mailto:honors_plv@pace.edu).

* Once the student has completed all suggested revisions, sign the *Thesis Advisor Confirmation* form verifying that the student has successfully completed the thesis.