

# Florida Atlantic University Honors Curriculum Manual

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## Section 1 University Honors Council

### Purpose

The Florida Atlantic University Honors Council will:

1. serve as a subcommittee of the University Undergraduate Program Committee.
2. advise the University Undergraduate Programs Committee on curricular matters related to honors education at Florida Atlantic University, including whether:
  - a. courses proposed for honors credit meet appropriate institutional standards.
  - b. newly proposed upper-division honors programs meet the criteria established for such programs.
3. assist in the administration of the Faculty Honors Fellows Program.
4. promote cooperation among the various units that offer honors opportunities to high ability students at Florida Atlantic University.

### Membership

1. The Florida Atlantic University Honors Council will have ten members, eight of whom will be elected annually by those colleges with primary responsibility for the University's undergraduate program. (The Graduate College and the College of Biomedical Science are not represented on the University Honors Council since this body deals exclusively with the undergraduate curriculum.)
2. The presence of four of the Council's eight voting members will be considered a quorum for the purposes of conducting business.
3. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies and the Dean of the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College will serve as *ex officio*, non-voting members of the University Honors Council.
4. It is strongly recommended that individuals elected to membership on the University Honors Council have experience in honors education at the faculty or administrative level either at Florida Atlantic University or at another institution.

## Section 2

### Guidelines for Courses Receiving Honors Credit at Florida Atlantic University

Courses receiving “honors credit” at Florida Atlantic University are distinguished from other courses not simply by dealing with subject matter in a more challenging, detailed, and accelerated manner. Honors credit is assigned to courses that also encourage students to approach material from an advanced interdisciplinary perspective, emphasize critical and creative thinking, and develop highly improved skills of oral and written communication across the curriculum.

Courses receiving “honors credit” at Florida Atlantic University must:

1. have a significantly higher requirement for admission to the course than exists for other courses on similar topics at the University.
2. have lower student-to-faculty ratios than other courses dealing with similar topics. Close student-faculty interaction in honors courses helps promote more intense and reflective discussion, active learning by all students, and strong faculty-student mentoring.
3. offer students extensive access to original research and other primary sources of knowledge.
4. emphasize the process of discovery and interactive learning in addition to the mastery of information.

Courses receiving “honors credit” at Florida Atlantic University also differ qualitatively from other courses that may address similar topics. Honors courses should adhere to at least six of the distinctions outlined below. At Florida Atlantic University, honors courses should:

1. be taught by a faculty member with a terminal degree. While the vast majority of honors courses will be taught by faculty members holding a terminal degree, it is occasionally necessary for exceptions to be made. The administrator in charge of the course (usually a dean or director) should notify the Honors Council whenever an exception is made and provide a rationale for the exception.
2. emphasize written and oral communication skills. Written communication is developed through repeated and substantive writing in forms appropriate to the discipline; honors courses should thus adhere to the University’s Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) guidelines, where applicable. Oral communication skills are developed through formal presentations, debates, informed discussion, collaboration, poster presentations, and other types of oral communication suitable to the discipline and topic of the course.
3. emphasize critical and creative thinking through assignments, exercises, and examinations that require students to evaluate alternative perspectives critically, recognize the assumptions underlying a theory or approach, come to terms with their own preconceptions about a topic, and analyze or synthesize detailed information in ways that are appropriate to the topic of the course.

4. encourage students to approach topics from an interdisciplinary perspective by exploring the limitations of strictly disciplinary approaches and, whenever possible, developing new insights that may be possible only through connections between and across disciplines.
5. provide opportunities for independent research or help prepare students for independent research by fostering such skills as formulating, structuring, and developing arguments, conducting a thorough literature review, maintaining accurate records of data, thoroughly grasping the relationships among variables, understanding developments in their proper social and historical context, and appreciating the contributions to knowledge made by both quantitative and qualitative research.
6. apply theories and principles to “real-life” problems and situations whenever possible.
7. foster teamwork and collaboration both through assignments that students complete in groups and through the development of cohorts, clusters of student peers who learn to work together more effectively by taking several classes together.
8. promote learning outside the formal classroom setting through such approaches as service learning, internships, extended and substantive educational experiences abroad, and the like.
9. provide opportunities for publication or the public presentation of student work in formats where it may be reviewed and evaluated by other scholars.
10. where appropriate, require students to demonstrate their advanced mastery of the subject matter through established national or international exams or other means of assessment.

It is specifically recognized that honors courses offered by individual disciplines (for example, courses that support an upper division honors program) may meet requirements different from or in addition to those outlined above. In such cases, the criteria and recommendations outlined above should be regarded as general guidelines.

### Section 3

## Guidelines for Upper Division Programs at Florida Atlantic University

**Purposes:** To ensure that all honors tracks or upper division honors programs at Florida Atlantic University achieve a high level of standards and expectations; to assist the University Undergraduate Program Committee as it considers new proposals for upper division honors programs; to provide guidance and encouragement to colleges and academic departments as they consider developing new upper division honors programs.

**Note:** The term “upper division honors program,” also sometimes known as an “Honors-in-the-Major program” is used in this document to refer to any upper-division honors opportunity that is located in a college or center other than the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College. It is recognized that, in certain colleges or centers, honors programs may span several areas rather than be tied to specific majors. For this reason and for the purpose of brevity, the term “upper division honors program” is used in this document for all such programs, whether discipline-specific, college-wide, or located in an interdisciplinary center.

1. Upper division honors programs at Florida Atlantic University should consist of at least four components:
  - a. **Entry requirements** that are more stringent than those of the major itself.
  - b. **Standards** outlining what students must do in order to remain in good standing with the program.
  - c. **Honors-level enrichment** that may take the form of honors coursework, honors compacts, or other types of enhancements to a student’s academic program.
  - d. A **capstone requirement** that helps students see connections among their honors experience and to document for others their honors-level achievement.
2. **Entry requirements** should be appropriate to the academic mission of the program.
  - a. While most programs will adopt entry requirements based on a student’s grade point average (either cumulative or in the major), other types of entry requirements are possible.
  - b. Examples of alternative entry requirements include but are not limited to auditions, interviews, portfolio appraisals, evaluation of entrance essays and other written work, and nomination or election by faculty members.
  - c. Programs are encouraged to ensure that their honors programs are truly selective. In most cases, no more than approximately 20% of majors should be admitted to an Honors-in-the-Major program.
3. **Standards** for maintaining active status in the program should encourage students to continue their academic work at an appropriately high level.

- a. Most programs will adopt standards based on the maintenance of a certain grade point average either overall or in the major.
  - b. Programs may, however, establish other standards appropriate to the discipline, including but not limited to:
    - i. Completion of required courses or course sequences in a timely manner.
    - ii. Avoidance of Academic Irregularities (as defined by §4.001 of the Florida Atlantic University Honor Code) to a degree more stringent than that required of the student body as a whole.
    - iii. Adherence to other codes of conduct appropriate to the academic discipline.
    - iv. Attendance at or participation in events required by the program.
4. **Honors-level enrichment** should provide students, not merely with more challenging coursework, but with a meaningfully richer academic experience.
- a. For instance, an upper division honors program might expose its students to a central theme in greater depth than is possible for students not in the program. The theme of the honors track might be:
    - i. Interdisciplinarity and connections among academic fields
    - ii. Research and access to direct sources of knowledge
    - iii. Leadership
    - iv. Service learning
    - v. Creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship
    - vi. Civic engagement
    - vii. Collaboration
    - viii. The unique setting of southeastern Florida
    - ix. Other topics appropriate to the individual discipline
  - b. For programs providing honors-level enrichment through coursework, it is recommended that the program consist of no fewer than three (3) three-credit courses or their equivalent.
5. **Capstone requirements** should draw together the student’s entire honors experience to the greatest degree possible.
- a. In most cases, the program’s capstone requirement will take the form of a thesis. Whenever possible, the thesis should be:
    - i. The product of significantly greater originality and scholarship than is traditionally required for a research paper in other courses.
    - ii. Of appropriate length and depth to warrant its acceptance as honors-level work.
    - iii. Reviewed by more than one faculty member.
    - iv. Discussed orally or “defended” by the student.
    - v. Relevant to the theme or focus of the honors track, where applicable.
  - b. Where a thesis is not required, an alternative capstone experience (such as completion of graduate-level coursework, a solo exhibition or recital, a performance, extended internship, or project) should be developed

that is appropriate to the discipline and the theme or focus of the honors track, where applicable.

6. Departments that wish to develop a new upper division honors program should:
  - a. Have a complete proposal approved by the regular curriculum approval processes of both the department and college. A complete proposal consists of:
    - i. A program summary and justification that addresses the four required components of an upper division honors program discussed above (see §3.1-5).
  - b. Submit the approved proposal to the University Honors Council for review.
    - i. The proposal will be reviewed by the University Honors Council in light of the guidelines above (see §3.1-5).
    - ii. If the University Honors Council votes that the proposal meets these guidelines, it will submit the proposal to the University Undergraduate Programs Committee with its endorsement.
    - iii. If the University Honors Council votes that the proposal does not meet these guidelines, the program sponsoring the proposal may:
      1. Revise and resubmit the proposal.
      2. Choose to have the proposal reviewed by the University Undergraduate Programs Committee without the endorsement of the University Honors Council.
    - iv. Following review by the University Undergraduate Programs Committee, the proposal is then submitted to the University Faculty Senate for approval.



## Section 4

### Guidelines for Honors Compacts at Florida Atlantic University

**Purposes:** To provide a mechanism for students to receive honors credit in a course for which enrollment in a designated honors section is not possible.

**Definition:** An **honors compact** is an agreement between a student and an instructor that, under the instructor's guidance, the student will complete an enhancement of a course that significantly enriches his or her educational experience in a manner consistent with other courses that receive honors credit at Florida Atlantic University.

An honors compact **is**:

- an agreement between an undergraduate student and a professor that they will work together collaboratively in order to ensure that the student has a significantly enriched honors experience in a non-honors section of a course.
- intended primarily to serve as part of an approved upper division honors program.
- a method by which a student's educational experience in a course is enhanced through substantive work that reflects one of the following honors themes:
  - Interdisciplinarity and connections among academic fields
  - Research and access to direct sources of knowledge
  - Leadership
  - Service learning
  - Creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship
  - Civic engagement
  - Collaboration
  - The unique setting of southeastern Florida
  - Other topics appropriate to the individual discipline
- an approach to receiving honors credit to which the student, instructor, and administrator in charge of the relevant honors program must all agree.
- only available to students having a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher, as well as a cumulative GPA of 3.25 or higher in the major itself.
- an achievement that is noted on the student's transcript.

An honors compact **is not**:

- an agreement that can be fulfilled simply by completing an additional paper or a few extra assignments.
- a device that merely makes the material of a course harder or more challenging without providing the type of enhancement typically found in other honors courses at Florida Atlantic University.
- ordinarily an alternative method of receiving honors credit for a course where an honors section is already available to the student. (The department or academic program offering the honors course may waive this restriction if it chooses.)

An honors compact **must**:

- promote academic excellence.
- challenge students to strive toward achieving a significantly higher level of learning than would be possible if this compact were not completed.
- recognize and foster the exceptional abilities and talents of high ability students.
- extend and enrich the cultural or academic perspectives of students
- clearly demonstrate how the honors component
  1. complements and extends the existing content of the course.
  2. is significantly richer than the established requirements of the course both in content and methodology.
- require the student to engage in a high level of critical or thinking, such as analysis, synthesis, innovation, or application.
- culminate in a specific “product” that can be evaluated.

### Procedure

1. As soon as possible, the student will submit to the chair of the department (or the director of the honors program to which the course will be applied) a completed “Application to Pursue an Honors Compact” (see below), which both the student and the instructor of the course have signed. The absolutely last date for the student to submit this form will be the official “Last day to drop/add courses without consequences.”
2. The department chair (or the director of the honors program to which the course will be applied) will review the application as soon as possible and will notify the student and the instructor whether the honors compact has been approved or must be revised.
3. As soon as an honors compact is approved, the department chair or honors program director will notify the University Honors Council that an honors compact is pending. This notification should be submitted to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies who will notify the Registrar of all pending honors compacts.
4. Each honors compact must be initiated by the student and completed with all required signatures no later than the **last official day of final examinations** for any term.
5. The instructor will then notify the department chair or honors program director whether or not an honors compact has been successfully completed no later than the **last official day of final examinations** for any term.
6. The department chair or honors program director will then notify the Dean of Undergraduate Studies of all successfully completed honors compacts no later than **the day following the last day of final examinations**.
7. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies will provide the registrar with a list of all successfully completed honors compacts no later than **the day that grades are due in the registrar’s office**.

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\* These guidelines for honors compacts are based in part on those established by the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith. See <http://www.uafortsmith.edu/Honors/GuidelinesForHonorsContracts>.

8. In the event that, due to circumstances beyond his or her control, the student is granted an official Incomplete in the course, the honors compact must be completed no later than the date when all other course requirements must be complete.
9. Any appeals involving an honors compact should be directed to the chair of the University Honors Council who will consult with the UHC before acting on the appeal. Normal university deadlines for all grade changes will still apply.



# HONORS COMPACT PROPOSAL AND APPROVAL FORM

*Must be completed by the student and submitted to the department chair (or the director of the honors program to which the course will be applied) no later than the "Last day to drop/add courses without consequences" of the term in which the Honors Compact will be completed.*

**Student Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student ID#** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Cell#** \_\_\_\_\_

**Course Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Course Prefix/#** \_\_\_\_\_ **Semester/Year** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructor Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructor Phone** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe what the student will do in order to fulfill this Honors Compact.**

**Describe the tangible and gradable "project" that will be produced as part of this Honors Compact.**

**Describe how this Honors Compact leads to a learning experience that is substantially different from and richer than what the student would otherwise experience in this course.**

**This Honors Compact may best be described as reflecting the following honors theme (check ONE):**

- Interdisciplinarity and connections among academic fields
- Research and access to direct sources of knowledge
- Leadership
- Service learning
- Creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship
- Civic engagement
- Collaboration
- The unique setting of southeastern Florida
- Other (please specify below):

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**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE STUDENT (BEFORE COMPACT BEGINS)**

I agree to complete all of my responsibilities for this project and to submit all required work to the instructor no later than the last day of the final exam period. I agree to meet with the instructor outside of class at least three times during this term to discuss my work on this Honors Compact and my progress towards its completion. My cumulative GPA is 3.00 or higher, and I have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.25 in my major.

**Student Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE INSTRUCTOR (BEFORE COMPACT BEGINS)**

I agree to inform the Dean of Undergraduate Studies (and my chair, where appropriate) whether the student has successfully completed this Honors Compact no later than the last day of the final exam period. I agree to meet with the student outside of class at least three times during this term to discuss his or her work on this Honors Compact and his or her progress towards its completion.

**Instructor Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructor Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR OR DIRECTOR OF THE HONORS PROGRAM TO WHICH THIS COURSE WILL BE APPLIED**

In my judgment, this project fully meets the University Honors Council’s guidelines for an Honors Compact.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE INSTRUCTOR (AFTER THE DUE DATE FOR THE COMPACT HAS BEEN REACHED)**

The student.     **has**                    successfully completed this Honors Compact  
                          **has not**                    by the date on which all requirement were due.

**Instructor Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructor Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_