

**HONORS  
CONTRACT  
GUIDELINES**



**THE HONORS PROGRAM**

**September 15, 2016**

The Guidelines have eight sections:

- I. Purpose of Honors Option Contracts
- II. Four Requirements for Contracts
- III. Examples of Contracts: brief descriptions
- IV. Template for Contracts
- V. Bureaucratic Part of Completing a Contract
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## I. Purpose of Honors Option Contracts

- These contracts allow students to enroll in and receive **Honors credit for any course**, except for courses already designated Honors sections or courses.
- Please see Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) below for contracts.
- **Strong value-added benefits** include: developing the ability to take the initiative in a project, responsibly negotiating with professors to design learning goals and activities to achieve the goals, and working independently while using mentoring feedback from the instructor. Each of these value added skills are hugely important for success in the Capstone for University Honors as well as in graduate school and the professional world.

## II. Four Requirements for Contracts

1. **Kind of work:** The faculty member(s) should introduce the student(s) to graduate or professional level expectations (or upper level undergraduate work if the student is a freshman)—in short, add depth or advanced work. Often students investigate a particular area or read research articles related to some course sub-topic(s). This work may contribute directly to a capstone project as well as indirectly by building expertise or narrowing a topic for a Capstone.
2. **Product:** Examples include journals, annotated bibliographies, papers, and videos. In general, the contracted work is about adding depth or advanced work, not about piling on more papers. That said, however, additional papers, longer papers, or extra reading may be the natural result of the work that the student, professor, and Honors Director agree on.
3. **Schedule of regular meetings outside of class/regular contact:** Faculty should meet regularly student(s) outside of class and throughout the semester to discuss the work and provide feedback and guidance)—how regularly depends on the nature of the contracted work but it should be ongoing, not an add-on activity at the end of the semester. The schedule allows skills, understanding and knowledge to develop over time with the guidance of the instructor. This attention characterizes one of the benefits of Honors as well as providing an opportunity for faculty to mentor a well-prepared, intellectually curious, ambitious, and dedicated student. Contact may include formalized e-mail reports and journals as well as face-to-face meetings. Meetings and/or contact should occur no less than bi-weekly.
4. **Give back:** In return for the enriched learning and extra attention, Honors students will enrich the learning of fellow students by, for example, sharing what was learned (a report), tutoring, or designing/implementing a field trip. Sharing the Honors student's learning in some way that enriches the course for fellow students and the instructor builds leadership and values important for civic responsibility.

### III. Examples of Contracts—brief descriptions:

1. Investigate scholarship in Spanish on gender relations and create a bibliography to supplement the professor's bibliography on gender scholarship in English; compare scholarship in Spanish versus English.
2. Read professional articles on a particular topic, meet bi-weekly to discuss articles with professor and professional or scholarly standards, tools, methods, and the like; create annotated bibliography and report learning to peers.
3. Do background reading in preparation for a conference; attend conference; report on experience to peers.
4. Create videos of minority signers; analyze differences from mainstream, white signing; present findings to peers.
5. Assist professor in lab research or other research and present to peers on what was learned about how a researcher in a particular field or in a particular methodology works.
6. Create a service learning component to a course; involve peers or report to peers.
7. Connect or apply ideas from the course to a different context.
8. Compare an author's work read in the course to other works by the same author or to other novels of the same sub-genre or with similar subject matter.

Please note an Honors level contract is not about specific contents; it's about the level challenge appropriate to the student but always beyond or creatively diverging from expectations for all students in the course.

#### **IV. Template for Contract**

Note: Word versions of the template are available for you to use for your contracts—you simply fill in the categories with your specific information and remove the descriptions in the template.

### **HONORS OPTION CONTRACT**

Course (dept, number, and title):

Semester:

Student:

Instructor:

### **SEMESTER ONGOING PROJECT**

Here you will describe the topic and work involved that will take place over the entire semester.

### **PRODUCT**

Here you will describe the product that comes out of the ongoing project.

### **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS/CONTACT WITH INSTRUCTOR**

Here you will specify a day and time for regular meetings. It is suggested that meetings happen at least biweekly. Some contact may also include formal e-mail reports or journal assignments as long as the work and timing are specified and some indication of feedback and guidance is mentioned as well.

### **GIVE BACK**

Here you specify how the student will enrich the learning experience of her peers in this class.

Add to every contract—filling in the information needed in brackets—the following language:

### **HONORS CONTRACT RUBRIC**

[Student] has provided [instructor] copies of the Student Learning Outcomes for all contracts, the guidelines for formatting a contract, and the rubric [instructor] will use to evaluate the contract. At the end of the semester, [Instructor] will open a link Dr. Myers will send to the instructor to complete the online rating rubric and submit it online.

## V. Bureaucratic Part of Completing a Contract

- Type up the contract and send it to the Honors Director: Once a faculty member and a student agree on a contract, the student needs to make sure it is typed up in a Word file which is then sent via e-mail to the Honors Director for review and feedback.
- Sign the Registrar's form: When the contract is finalized, an electronic copy of the registrar's form will be sent to the student, the faculty member, and the Honors Director—signing the form is necessary to record H credit on the student's transcript.
- When you fill out your biannual report (update on Honors progress), take time to review your transcript and make sure the H for contracts shows up on your transcript for all courses with contracts.
- Students must keep records of their contracts as part of their biannual progress reports.
- All negotiation and paperwork for an Honors Option Contract **must be completed within the first two weeks of the semester**. Because we esteem professionalism, consequences are sharp: If you miss this deadline, you will lose the next priority registration, use up your sabbatical option, and you may lose your active status. If you have already used your semester off, you will automatically lose your Honors placement (and any Honors scholarships you receive).

**NOTE:** Instructor and student commitment to create a contract the semester before is needed when a student does not intend to enroll in another Honors course for the semester for which he or she is seeking priority registration. The student must approach the instructor and secure evidence of a commitment before priority registration (the semester before—by spring for the fall and by fall for the spring). An e-mail from the instructor to the Honors Director suffices as evidence of commitment.

**If a contract is not completed:** In the event that a student registers for a contract but does not complete it, the student is required to notify the Honors director who will have the H-designation removed from the course. Failure to notify becomes a misrepresentation of academic work and therefore a violation of academic integrity. Such violations may result in dismissal from the program and referral to the academic integrity committee.

In addition, if the student notifies the director but does not have any additional Honors courses, the student loses priority registration for the next semester and may have further consequences depending on the situation: (1) have this semester count the student's semester off and (2) may lose the Honors portion of their scholarship.

## VI. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for Contracts

1. Students will complete a project that deepens their knowledge of the standards of the discipline or field they are working in.
  - If more than one field or discipline is involved, as in GSR courses or any other course, the student and faculty member supervising the contract may agree on what disciplines/fields to include in the contract.
  - Discipline-specific objectives are defined by the course instructor; they may include use and critique of original scholarship, use and critique of evidence acceptable to the discipline involved, and/o conformity to linguistic conventions of the field or discipline, among other parts of a discipline/field as appropriate.
2. Students will demonstrate an ability to review their own work and make substantial improvements to a project beyond the feedback provided by the instructor.
3. Students will demonstrate an ability to comprehend and discuss specifics concerning methodological analysis, argument structure, or other aspects of constructing knowledge in a discipline<sup>1</sup>.
4. Students will demonstrate an ability to maintain professional, timely, and effective e-mail conversations with the course instructor.
5. Students will demonstrate an ability to conduct productive, ongoing meetings (usually biweekly) with the course instructor.
6. Students will use their learning from the contract and individual attention from the professor to enrich the learning of classmates; various means can be used, such as presentations to classmates, field trips, film showings with discussions, distribution of annotated bibliographies, or the provision of tutoring or research assistance to classmates.

*<sup>1</sup>E.g. in a political science text, this could be the student's ability to take specific coefficients in results and use them to form a different analysis. Or it could be a student's discussion of the standard errors of different coefficients used to question the validity of the results. For a philosophical argument, it could be taking certain elements of logic and disagreeing with the steps made and using those disagreements to construct a different, but related, argument.*

## VII. Evaluation or Assessment

Students and Instructors: At the end of the semester, you will be sent a .PDF form to fill out that will look like the following:

### Honors Contract Evaluation

[Message when sent online in PDF version:] Please fill out the demographic information below. Once you've completed this part of the form, you will be automatically directed to the evaluation appropriate for your role. Students will be directed to the self-evaluation form and faculty will be directed to the instructor form. Please direct any questions or concerns to [honors@gallaudet.edu](mailto:honors@gallaudet.edu).

#### \* Required

1. What course was the contract in? (i.e. GSR 240) \*
2. Semester Year of Contract (i.e. Fall 2016) \*
3. Student Name \*
4. Faculty Name \*
5. Your Role \* *Mark only one.*

Student

Faculty/Instructor

### Student Self-Evaluation

Please answer the following questions on your Honors Contract. Your answers will help us understand your experience in the contract and develop a more meaningful contract experience for your peers. Your answers will not adversely affect your H credit from this course.

6. How much did you invest in making the contract a meaningful project for you? \*  
*Mark only one.*

1 - minimally engaged

2

3

4

5 - made it a high priority

7. Please explain your answer above

8. Did you and your committee meet regularly as scheduled? \* *Mark only one oval.*

Yes No Other:

9. Please explain your answer above

10. We emphasize professionalism in the contracts. How professional do you consider your conduct to be? \*

*Mark only one.*

1 - Not very

2

3

4

5 - Highly professional

11. Please explain your answer above (and provide example of professional behaviors) \*

12. Did you learn advanced knowledge or skills? \* *Mark only one.* Yes No

13. If yes, what knowledge or skills did you learn?

14. Do they connect to your capstone? Yes No

15. If yes, how?

16. Students are expected to give back to the community. How valuable was this component of the contract to you? Please explain your answer. \*

17. Faculty are key partners in making contracts successful. How likely are you to recommend your instructor for future contracts? \*

1 - Not very

2

3

4

5 - Extremely likely

18. Please explain your answer above

19. Please provide any additional thoughts, comments, or feedback on Honors contracts here.

### **Instructor Evaluation of Student**

A Note on Course grading: The student should not be graded harder or, conversely, more easily for attempting more challenging work. However, if the work is not completed, please inform the Honors Director so that the H designation for this course on the student's transcript is removed.

Course instructors are asked to evaluate students on contract outcomes using the following Likert scales. We use Likert scales because we are asking professors to make professional judgments about a student's performance over the course of the semester. The value of each scale is defined for each question. These scales are used to provide the program with direct feedback about the instructor's evaluation of a student's work (essential for measuring learning within the program). Instructors may also mark a zero if the minimum criteria were not satisfied.

### Contract Rubric

- After you have filled out the demographic information, please complete the following Likert Scale evaluation and provide any written comments to help us understand your ratings or provide additional information.
- At the end of the semester, please complete and send via e-mail to the Honors Director at [shirley.shultz.myers@gallaudet.edu](mailto:shirley.shultz.myers@gallaudet.edu)

Please evaluate the student's performance in the Honors in the Honors contract. Students must have a minimum of 2 on all measures to receive H credit for your course.

The student has successfully demonstrated a deepened knowledge of the discipline(s)/field(s) through his/her project. \*

Mark only one oval.

- 1-Student demonstrated minimal growth in discipline specific knowledge
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - Student demonstrated growth expected of first year graduate students

The student has completed substantial improvements to the project between receiving the instructor's feedback and submitting the final project. \*

Mark only one oval.

- 1- student completed minimal improvements beyond the professor's feedback
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - student completed major changes to the paper beyond the professor's feedback, improving the overall quality of the final product

The student has completed substantial improvements The student's project demonstrates an ability to manipulate detail and master nuance using discipline-specific scholarship. \*

Mark only one oval.

- 1- student relies on general summaries or categorical statements in the project
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - student uses and manipulates specifics expected in a first year graduate student in the discipline

The student reliably maintains professional e-mail communication with the course instructor throughout the semester. \*

Mark only one oval.

1- e-mail communication was intermittent and/or not professionally constructed

2

3

4

5 - student's e-mails were reliably formatted correctly, timely, and articulated at a level expected of a colleague in the discipline

The student conducted productive, professional ongoing meetings, usually biweekly, with the instructor. \*

Mark only one oval.

1- student did not reliably attend meetings

2

3

4

5 - student attends meetings, conducting him/herself professionally coming prepared with questions, comments, and ideas

The student enriched the learning of classmates through a well-crafted presentation or other contribution. \*

Mark only one oval.

1- contribution was minimally beneficial to peers

2

3

4

5 - student prepares a dynamic and intellectually engaging contribution

In your conversations with the student, he/she demonstrates an understanding of and investment in the civic obligation to give back to the community (via a presentation or other contribution) because of the added opportunities to learn the student has accepted.

Mark only one oval.

- 1 - does not demonstrate significant investment in the civic obligation and/or does not understand the importance of the "give back"
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - Thoroughly invests in fulfilling the civic obligation and demonstrates a strong understanding of the civic obligation

How satisfied are you with your leadership in the contract? \*

Mark only one oval.

- 1 - not satisfied
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - very satisfied

Please provide any general comments that will help us better understand the ratings you gave. Written comments not only help us understand ratings but also intervene effectively in our advising of Honors students.

### **VIII. Minimum Standards to Receive Honors Credit**

Students will generally receive automatic credit for completed Honors Contracts if students meet the following criteria:

- All ratings are 2 or higher
- A student receives no more than two 2s
- Course instructors do not report additional problems beyond the numeric evaluation that may suggest you did not rightfully earn credit (exempli gratia, plagiarism)

In rare cases, students will not be able to score adequately on a measure due to the nature of the contract or because the faculty member did not meet expectations. In these cases, decisions about awarding credit will be adjudicated on a case-by-case basis by the Honors Director. If students notice a problem, they should communicate concerns immediately. Waiting until the end of the semester to communicate concerns implies negligence on the student's part, thus weakening any appeal.