

## Jacksonville State University Honors Program Honors by Contract

*Honors by Contract* is another way to fulfill the Honors Program curriculum requirements. Most courses **numbered 300 or above** at JSU can confer the Honors Program designation. **Effective Fall 2018, the Honors by Contract forms will be submitted online.**

If a student completes the contracted course with a grade of "B" or better and satisfactorily completes the terms of the contract during the semester that credit is earned, the student will earn an Honors designation for the course. Students receiving an "Incomplete" in a course that they have contracted will not receive Honors designation upon completion. Likewise, students receiving an "A" or "B" in a contracted course who had not completed the terms of their contract will not receive Honors designation. If a student is unable to complete the contracted work, the student can still receive credit for the course but cannot receive an Honors designation.

Course contracts enable students to earn Honors credit by incorporating an Honors component within a regularly offered class. Honors contract courses ideally require something qualitatively different rather than something quantitatively more. Enhanced substitutions for the normal course requirements are preferable to more of the same. The component should be designed to incorporate a "consolidating experience," a written paper or report (possibly including a class presentation) that serves to bring the experience together.

Where longer papers, additional reports, etc., are called for, the added work should be designed to fulfill a larger learning objective. Teaching one or more classes and doing special research projects (especially in the STEM fields) have been especially beneficial. Wherever possible, Honors students should share the results of their work with the class in the form of an oral presentation, a poster session, or some other means. Other suggestions are detailed below.

### Suggestions

1. Where the course calls for a research paper, an Honors paper might use primary sources, incorporate a substantial literature review that connects the topic to the broader issues in the field, include primary data derived from student research (oral histories or other interviews, statistical analysis, laboratory experimentation), etc. Honors research papers are **typically 8-10 double-spaced pages**.
2. Where additional readings or reports are indicated, it is best that these readings or reports be synthesized as part of a larger Honors component. For example, an essay involving a comparison/contrast of regularly assigned readings with the specially selected seminal readings would be appropriate.
3. The Honors component might include a substantial programming project or extended fieldwork or laboratory experience, concluding with a final report of at least 8-10 double-spaced pages, including a narrative part of at least 5-7 pages, outlining the experience with the conclusions reached or experience gained.
4. Where teaching one or more classes is indicated, it is best for the professor to provide guidance in organization and content to ensure that the material enhances and supports the intention of the class. In this case, the written component would typically consist of a report of 5-7 pages on the topics covered in the lectures.
5. Where the course is a cross-listed undergraduate/graduate-level course (where the undergraduate and graduate courses are taught by a single instructor at a common time), the student may complete the graduate-level syllabus in order to meet the qualitative, culminating Honors experience that is expected when contracting a course. *Note: The Honors Program student will be enrolled in the undergraduate section of the course and will receive undergraduate credit.*

## Instructions for Getting Your Honors by Contract Approved

Step 1: Discuss your idea with the professor. Contracts are discussed and arranged in the semester prior to enrollment, as you are developing your course schedule for the next semester. All Honors by Contracts must be submitted online by the first day of classes in the semester the student is completing the contract.

Step 2: Following your initial discussion, formalize your ideas with your professor by developing answers to the following questions. The answers to the questions will compose the contract that your professor submits.

- Describe the Honors component of the course, discussing the nature of the project, how this project constitutes "Honors," and the nature of the "consolidating experience." Be as specific as possible in describing what you will do, including references to specific readings and/or methodologies where appropriate, lengths of required papers or reports, number and nature of presentations, etc. Research papers are typically 8-10 double-spaced pages, but certain other projects may include a shorter report (see previous page).
- How does the Honors component differ from normal course expectation? A copy of the course syllabus may be submitted, if needed to illustrate. Address if the Honors component will be factored into the final grade in the course and, if so, what the grading expectations will be.

Step 3: To start the Honors by Contract process, contact your Honors Advisor to explain which class you want to contract and confirm that you have already spoken with your professor. Email your professor the answers developed in step 2 so he/she will be prepared to submit the contract.

Step 4: After completing the attached form and obtaining signatures of the student, professor, and department head, the student must submit the Honors by Contract to the Director of the Honors Program for approval. Contracts that appear to be last minute efforts to gain Honors credit, rather than well-conceived Honors plans, will not be well received. Late contracts will be considered only under truly exceptional circumstances.

Step 5: The Honors Director makes the final recommendations no later than the graduation date of the semester prior to enrollment in the Honors by Contract course. Copies of approved contracts are sent to student, instructor, and department head. Contracts that must be revised are returned to the student with suggestions from the Director.

Step 6: Final completion of your contract will be verified by the instructor at the end of the semester. Instructors are strongly encouraged to establish deadlines throughout the semester or at least a midterm deadline in order to monitor student progress in completing the work. Additionally, students who determine that for whatever reason they will not be able to complete the Honors by Contract requirements should speak to the Honors Director as soon as possible. Failure to submit final certification for the course contract will result in no Honors credit being awarded for completion of the course.

**Step 7: Verification of completion of Honors by Contracts are due no later than the Monday of the last week of classes. This means your projects/papers/presentations will be due to your instructor prior to this date.**

\*This contract is adapted in part from other regional honors programs.