

ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT

Policies and Guidelines for Departmental Honors and Awards

The Economics Department offers an honors option to help talented students develop their potential. The Departmental Honors Option provides challenging and enriching educational experiences for the department's most talented and motivated students. Those who choose this option are encouraged and guided by their faculty mentors to fully realize their academic and professional potential and to raise their sights and ambitions beyond what they felt was possible for them to accomplish. Students who complete the program earn special recognition upon graduation. The program is also designed to give the students the knowledge, skills and self-confidence they will need to prosper in graduate and professional school as well as in the world of business.

I. Departmental Honors

The Economics Department provides an opportunity for students exhibiting superior capability and motivation to intensively and independently research a specialized economic area of interest. With successful completion of the Departmental Honors Option, students are recognized for their achievements at graduation with the designation of Departmental Honors on their diplomas and on their university record. To be eligible for the honors option students must have a cumulative QPA of at least 3.0 and the endorsement of a faculty member.

The program consists of two to four semesters of supervised tutorial work, reading, self-instruction, creative inquiry, and research that culminates in the production of a thesis project. One to four credits may be earned for each of the departmental honors courses (HNRS 489 and HNRS 499). An economics honors student planning to take HNRS 499, Honors Senior Thesis, shall take HNRS 489, HNRS Independent Study, the semester before taking HNRS 499. The principal purpose of HNRS 489 is to survey the background literature of the thesis topic, assemble a comprehensive bibliography and initial thesis proposal and write an analytical bibliographical essay. The faculty supervisor and departmental committee determine the course grades.

The thesis title, a one paragraph summary of the nature of the research project and the names of the faculty advisor must be submitted to the Departmental Honors Committee for approval no later than the end of the junior year. Students with demonstrable extenuating circumstances may apply to the Departmental Honors Committee for permission to take both HNRS 489 and HNRS 499 during the same semester. The departmental committee evaluates the student in three ways. First, at some point during the research process, the student is required to give a public presentation of their work to other students and faculty. Second, the completed honors thesis is graded by the committee. Third, the student must pass an oral defense of the thesis presented to the committee. A grade of A or B must be earned for the thesis and oral defense for the student to obtain honors credit for

HNRS 499. After the thesis has been successfully defended, the student must submit two copies of the corrected thesis to the Economics Department office. Students who have successfully defended their theses are encouraged to present them at the Ursinus College Undergraduate Economics and Business Conference and at the Millersville University Undergraduate Student Research Conference.

In order to graduate with honors, the student must earn grades of A or B on both the thesis and the oral defense, and the student must have held a public presentation of their work. Titles of completed works are published in the annual university commencement program. The honors thesis is bound and published in Ganser Library special collections.

Contact the Economics Department for an application and more information. The following handouts will help you begin your endeavor: “Choosing a Thesis Topic - Questions to Ask Yourself,” “‘Anatomy’ of a Thesis,” and “The Road to the Honors Thesis: A Checklist.”

II. Fulton Bank Award

The Economics Department offers the Fulton Bank Award each academic year. The Department nominates students with outstanding academic records and an exceptional paper concerning money and banking. All honors theses concerning the subject of money and banking will automatically qualify for consideration to receive the Fulton Bank Award. The Department requires that faculty members nominate students before April 30. The award is presented at the annual University Honors and Awards Ceremony held in the spring of each year.

III. National Economics Honor Society

The Economics Department at Millersville University is the alpha sigma chapter of Omicron Delta Epsilon, the national economics honor society. Undergraduate candidates for election to any chapter of Omicron Delta Epsilon must have completed a minimum of 12 semester hours of economics courses, have earned at least a B average in the economics courses and have an overall scholastic average of B or better. They do not necessarily have to be economics majors, but they must have a genuine interest in economics.

IV. Breidenstine Award

In recognition of his service as academic dean of Millersville College from 1955 to 1965, friends of Dr. A.G. Breidenstine established a fund to provide an annual award to a student whose work is judged most outstanding by the MU Honors Committee. The deadline for submission of completed student research projects falls in the late spring of each school year. Only work submitted by current undergraduate students of MU will be accepted for consideration. See the “Breidenstine Award: Evaluation Guidelines” handout for more information regarding this award.

APPLICATION FOR DEPARTMENTAL HONORS
Economics Department

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Major: _____

Date: _____

Faculty Advisor of Honors Project: _____

Thesis Title: _____

Nature of Research Project: _____

Current QPA: _____

"Anatomy" of a Thesis

A thesis is not a term paper. In the process of completing a thesis, you will do a thorough investigation of background literature/research (referred to as a "Review of Literature," a "Bibliographic Essay," or simply "Background") related to your thesis question and to your mode of inquiry. This portion of your thesis is similar to what is typically thought of as a "term paper." However, a thesis goes far beyond the requirements of a term paper in that it involves original inquiry or creative activity of some kind.

In general, every thesis project requires that you:

1. explain clearly what you are up to and why.
2. review thoroughly the research/thinking that has already been done relative to your particular issue of interest.
3. explain how you will conduct your inquiry or creative activity.
4. carry out some inquiry or creative activity that has not been done before.
5. Present the results of your inquiry or creative activity.

All Departmental Honors Theses require:

Title Page
Signature Page
[Table of Contents]
Abstract

The format for these items is specified by the Department.

An Economics Department Honors Thesis will typically (though not always) consist of the following parts:

Introduction
Background/Review of Literature
Statement of the Problem/Hypothesis
Materials and Methods/Methodology
Data
Discussion
Conclusion
References/Works Cited

In some economic fields (particularly economic history and history of economic thought) and in some instances, a particular thesis problem or topic will dictate a looser, more problem-determined structure for the written thesis.

Students are urged to consult closely with their thesis advisor regarding the layout appropriate to their particular thesis project. It is also helpful to take a look at theses completed by past Honors graduates which are available through the Economics Department.

The Road to the Economics Department Honors Thesis: A Checklist

Check items as completed; fill in information as needed. (This is intended as a guide, NOT as a "script.")

1. Attend a Thesis Orientation Seminar organized by the University Honors Program.
2. Take a look at past theses available in the Economics Department.
3. Choose an area of interest.
4. Make a "contract" with an advisor. Be sure your advisor will be available when you plan to complete your project.
5. Develop/choose a preliminary question/creative task/analytic problem.
6. Ask yourself: do I have the skills/background knowledge needed to complete this project? Consult with your advisor about courses/experiences to acquire necessary skills/knowledge.
7. Determine whether you will need financial support to complete the project you are interested in. Investigate grants possibilities. For example, the Neimyer-Hodgson Grants provide grants-in-aid for student research; the deadline is usually around mid-October and again around mid-March of each year. The Undergraduate Research Committee Grants is a second potential source for research funds.
8. Register for HNRS 489, Independent Study. This is done through your advisor.
9. Attend a Proposal Development Seminar as offered by the University Honors Program.
10. "Read" all about it!! Make sure to keep a listing of sources "checked out."
11. Reframe/revise your question/task/problem as needed based on preliminary investigation.
12. Develop a written thesis proposal. This should include
 - Introduction/statement of interest
 - Statement of the problem/task/question, etc.
 - Background/context/review of literature (An annotated bibliography may be substituted here based on the preference of the thesis advisor.)
 - Method/procedure/process
13. Choose a committee of three faculty, including your advisor and at least one other member of the Economics Department.
14. Set a proposal defense date with all committee members.
15. Defend your thesis proposal to fulfill the requirements for HNRS 489.
16. Deliver a copy of your defended thesis proposal to the Economics Department along with a completed "Intent to Graduate Form."
17. Begin in earnest with your inquiry/data gathering/creative activity.
18. Register for HNRS 499, Thesis. This is done through your advisor.
19. Express results in draft form. Share with advisor/committee members.
20. Set defense date and location.
21. Inform the Economics Department, your advisor and other committee members of your defense date and location.
22. Incorporate advisor/committee feedback into defensible version of your thesis.

23. Provide committee members with "clean copy" (appropriately formatted, proofread, fully referenced, etc.) at least one month prior to your defense date.
24. Defend your thesis.
25. Revise/improve as required by your committee.
26. Obtain committee signatures following successful revision.
27. Deliver two clean, unbound copies (including Cover Page, Signature Sheet and Abstract) to the Economics Department at least two weeks prior to your expected graduation date. One copy is bound and kept on file in the department. The other copy is bound and available in the library.
28. Pick up appropriate cord(s) (Purple = University Honors, Green = Departmental Honors) when you pick up your graduation regalia.

Choosing a Thesis Topic - Questions to Ask Yourself

To select a thesis topic, ask yourself:

1. What am I interested in? What am I good at? What puzzles me? Which courses have stimulated my interest and captured my time and attention?
2. What problems exist in my field (that can be resolved with new knowledge)? What seem to be the primary targets of interest and inquiry?
3. What "sites" of inquiry are readily available to me in my circumstances?

Based on your answers to the above questions (as well as on discussion with one or more faculty members), identify a preliminary topic/area of interest. To generate a research question/"quest" based on that topic, ask yourself:

1. What do I know about this topic? How can I find out more?
2. What don't I know?
3. What do I want to know?
4. What are possible sources of information about this question?

Based on these questions, and on preliminary reading, library research, and discussion regarding the topic, formulate a preliminary question or describe a possible project or "quest".

To refine/test that research question/quest, ask yourself:

1. Does somebody already know the answer to this question? Has somebody already completed this project? (Do I need to do more reading/research to find out?)
2. Is this question too narrow? Too broad?

To determine feasibility, ask yourself:

1. How might one answer this question? (methodology)
2. Are the necessary data readily available?
3. Do I have (at least potentially) available to me appropriate time, support, equipment, and resources to answer this question or complete this quest?
4. Do I have the skills to do this? If no, how can I prepare myself to complete this project? If I can't, how can I revise my question?

Go through this series of questions again and again until you have a question/quest you can live with. As you consider these issues, write down your thinking and your attempts to formulate a question/quest.

Breidenstine Award: Evaluation Guidelines

Friends of Dr. A.G. Breidenstine in recognition of his service as academic dean of the college from 1955 to 1965 established a fund to provide annually an award to the student whose work was judged most outstanding by the Honors Committee.

Deadline for submission of a work to the Honors and Awards Committee, Room 240 in Lyle Hall, is May 20. Only work submitted by **current** undergraduate students of Millersville University will be accepted for consideration of this award. If a department wishes that a student's non-thesis work be considered for admission, then the Chair of the Honors and Awards Committee should be contacted as soon as possible so that appropriate means of evaluation may be determined.

For evaluation of a **thesis** work, two major questions should be considered:

1. How well does the work and the paper satisfy the objectives of a thesis?
 - a. Thesis statement: At the beginning of the paper, a novel question or problem is presented which the student addresses in his/her research.
 - b. Introduction: The paper includes the appropriate background and significance to the thesis question or problem (see above). This introduction should also consist of a review of the current primary and secondary literature in the field.
 - c. Original Research: The thesis paper must report on research which is original and novel in an attempt to create new knowledge or a new way of thinking. Original research may include, for example, lab or field work, formation and distribution of surveys, interviews, theoretical studies, or review of original documentation or literature. Whatever kind of research the student used to solve the thesis question, it should have been logical and performed in standard methods according to the respective discipline.
 - d. Analysis of Research: In the paper, the student must analyze the information uncovered in the course of the research with emphasis on how it answers or solves the thesis question. The student should also critically evaluate the information and the method(s) with which the information is ascertained.

NOTE: Any thesis that would not easily be understood by a committee member should be accompanied by a **summary** that describes the work in less complex terms. Examples of such thesis might be those that are scientific or those written in a foreign language. The summary should not replace the "Abstract" required on most scientific works. Included with the summary, when appropriate, should be a **glossary** of words/phrases used in the thesis that are not of common knowledge.

2. Is the paper well-written?
 - a. Unity: The composition keeps its focus on a single idea.
 - b. Coherence: There is a logical connected flow to sentences and paragraphs.
 - c. Adequacy of Development: Readers are given enough information about the central idea of the paper and the topic ideas of its paragraphs.
 - d. Maturity of Style: Sentences are varied in length and structure, while preserving their clarity, conciseness, and gracefulness.
 - e. Mechanical correctness: Sentences adhere to the usage of punctuation conventions and spelling of Edited American English.

Prepared by S. DiBartolomeis, Member, Honors and Awards Committee, 1995, 1996.