Guidelines & Expectations for Honors Mentors

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**Mentoring Guidelines:** Because the Honors Program and Undergraduate Research Program believe high quality mentoring is essential to student success, we have tried to articulate a set of guidelines regarding mentoring in Honors.

* Mentors in Honors must be full-time faculty on long-term contracts teaching within the undergraduate curriculum.
* An Honors mentor must be in the department of the student’s major.
  + Since the thesis should be high-quality academic work, the thesis must be written within the student’s major (ideally where they are taking the bulk of their coursework).
  + Departments or programs may make additional stipulations and guidelines for finding an appropriate mentor, so please check the “Thesis Guidelines by Major” on the Honors website to check for your specific major.
  + If a student is pursuing an interdisciplinary project that does not align with a current major on campus, they are encouraged to develop an independent major and to work with a faculty member appropriate to that field of study. The Honors program will work with the student on identifying a mentor in that field.
* Final decisions about mentors are approved by the student’s department chair and the Honors program.
* The limitation on the numbers of Honors theses that faculty can supervise is three over two years, and no more than two in the same cohort. This is because of the time commitment necessary to provide high-quality mentoring.
* Faculty must be able to mentor the student for the length of the thesis work.
  + It is essential that faculty mentors plan the two years with the student, accounting for study abroad semesters, sabbaticals, and so forth.
  + The mentor must be on campus in the spring semester of the student’s senior year, in order to guide the final thesis production and defense meeting.

**Faculty Benefits:** Mentoring students capable of high quality of work is an intrinsically gratifying experience. It is satisfying to see them become accomplished, guide them, partner with them, watch them grow, and witness the creation of a capstone project. Still we recognize that the time and work required in mentoring should be fairly compensated. To this end, faculty mentoring in honors will be compensated at a rate of 4:1 (that is, four student credit hours = 1 faculty load hour) for 498 research hours. This rate is significantly higher than supervising 499 research hours, and with that greater rate come important responsibilities and a substantial commitment on the part of faculty.

**Faculty Responsibilities to the Program:**

* Comply with Honors Program expectations, policies, and deadlines. This includes completing semester contracts with the student taking 498 hours and writing short end-of-semester evaluations of student progress, in addition to the traditional reporting of grades.
* Attend mentoring workshops held by the Honors Program, such as the new mentor meeting during planning week and a joint workshop with students in the fall of their senior year.
* Attend presentations-in-progress in the fall of their student’s senior year.
* Help coordinate and conduct a thesis defense and serve on one additional thesis defense committee during the student’s final year.
* Help keep the Honors Directors up-to-date on any changes in the student’s performance, including whether the student is in danger of not passing their thesis defense.
* Keep the program updated about student accolades, presentations, and notable experiences, even after the student has graduated. (Tag Honors when posting on E-Net, please.)

**Faculty Responsibilities to the Student:**

* Assist the student in developing a long-term realistic research plan and the skills necessary to accomplish it.
  + That means helping students navigate the key elements of the thesis process, including the proposal, research, production, and defense; helping them find and use appropriate resources; breaking their project into manageable units and holding them accountable for meeting deadlines in a semester contract ; guiding them in the work habits necessary for success (planning, flexibility, disciplined work patterns, etc.); encouraging the intellectual exploration and ability to adapt when the project goes in unexpected directions.
* Hold regular, substantive meetings with your student. For most mentors, this means meeting at least once a week for 1 to 2 hours, in addition to reviewing drafts of documents or other work outside of the meeting time.
  + Meetings with students can involve a number of different things, including discussing readings, working together in a lab to teach research skills, showing students how to use a particular database or resource, watching a rehearsal. Faculty should make sure their student understands disciplinary (or interdisciplinary) standards in terms of ideas, methods, citations, institutional review board approval for research on human subjects, etc. Expectations for communication are for regular semesters – there is not an expectation that faculty work with students during Winter Term or breaks.
* Set high expectations and convey them clearly with respect to content, quality, substance of work, and also help the students understand what the experience will be like.
* Provide feedback that is extensive, constructive, clear, and prompt (preferably within a week); comment on multiple drafts/iterations of the final product and/or parts of the product.
* Grade the thesis work (each semester) and provide feedback/evaluative comments to the Honors Program using the appropriate forms; address problems clearly and promptly when the student’s work is not meeting the expected level, especially if the student is in danger of not passing the defense.
* Help students find and explore appropriate venues for presentation of their work and mentor students in preparing and rehearsing their presentations.