**A Guide to Distinction in the Major**

**Missouri State University**

**Honors College**



# Contents

[Contents 2](#_Toc529193832)

[Distinction Requirements Course Descriptions 1](#_Toc529193833)

[UHC 396 Honors Independent Study 1](#_Toc529193834)

[UHC 397 Honors Colloquia 1](#_Toc529193835)

[UHC 398 Honors Undergraduate Research 2](#_Toc529193836)

[UHC 410 Senior Honors Seminar 2](#_Toc529193837)

[UHC 499 Honors Distinction Project 2](#_Toc529193838)

[Distinction in the Major Checklist 3](#_Toc529193839)

[Distinction in the Major: What You Need to Know 5](#_Toc529193840)

[Preparation for Distinction 5](#_Toc529193841)

[Self-Reflection Exercise 6](#_Toc529193842)

[Thinking Paper 8](#_Toc529193843)

[Distinction Proposal 10](#_Toc529193844)

[Distinction in the Major Proposal Form 11](#_Toc529193845)

[Experiential Learning 13](#_Toc529193846)

[Funding Requests 14](#_Toc529193847)

[Distinction Project Submission Instructions 15](#_Toc529193848)

[Distinction Project Format 15](#_Toc529193849)

[Distinction Project Preparation 16](#_Toc529193850)

[FAQ 17](#_Toc529193851)

[Honors College Contact Information 18](#_Toc529193852)

[Sample Signature Page 19](#_Toc529193853)

## Distinction Requirements Course Descriptions

Students who complete all distinction requirements and earn a final institutional GPA of 3.25 or higher are eligible to graduate from the Honors College after they satisfy all other University degree requirements. Final transcripts and diplomas will include the notation, "Bachelor of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (with possible grade point honors such as *cum laude, magna cum laude, summa cum laude*) in the Honors College with Distinction in ­­\_\_\_\_\_\_."

To remain in good standing in the program, a student must maintain a 3.25 cumulative institutional GPA or higher and enroll in 12 or more credit hours per semester. Members should normally carry no more than two honors classes in any one semester.

The Director of the Honors College will review the academic progress of all students at the end of each semester. Students who do not achieve the required 3.25 cumulative institutional GPA will be given one semester to achieve that level, provided it is mathematically possible. Students who cannot achieve a 3.25 cumulative institutional GPA or who fail to reach a 3.25 for two consecutive semesters will be ineligible to continue in the program. Students who are removed from the program may apply for readmission after one semester if their academic performance satisfies program requirements. Students who are removed from the program a second time are not eligible for readmission.

### UHC 396 Honors Independent Study

*1, 2, or 3 credits; offered upon demand*

Prerequisite: permission. Students should consult with a professor of the department who specializes in the subject and with the professor's consent present a written proposal to the department head and the Honors College for final approval. Proposals should be presented for approval before final registration for the term in which the independent study is to be done. Only one approved independent study program may be taken in any semester. When appropriate, this course may be cross-listed with independent study courses in other academic departments. Open to Honors College Members only. May be repeated.

### UHC 397 Honors Colloquia

*Prerequisite: 50 hours or permission; 3 credits, F, S*

This course will explore in depth an interdisciplinary topic of intellectual significance related to the University’s Public Affairs Mission. Emphasis is placed upon discussion and individual research projects. When appropriate, this course may be cross-listed with special topics courses in other academic departments. Open to Honors College members only. May be repeated once with content change. Variable content course.

### UHC 398 Honors Undergraduate Research

*1, 2, or 3 credits; offered upon demand*

Allows students to gain research experience by working with an individual faculty member either as a research assistant or as a primary researcher working under faculty supervision. Students should consult with a professor of the department who specializes in the subject and with the professor's consent present a written proposal to the department head and the Honors College for final approval. Proposals should be presented for approval before final registration for the term in which the research is to be done. Only one approved undergraduate research project may be taken in any semester. When appropriate, this course may be cross-listed with undergraduate research courses in other academic departments. Open to Honors College Members only. May be repeated.

### UHC 410 Senior Honors Seminar

*Prerequisite: 75 hours or permission; 3 credits, F, S*

This course will explore in depth a topic of intellectual significance that lends itself to exploration from a number of different disciplines. When appropriate, this course may be cross-listed with senior seminar courses in other academic departments. Open to Honors College members only. Variable content course.

### UHC 499 Honors Distinction Project

*3 or 4 credits; offered upon demand*

The Honors Distinction Project is a creative capstone project prepared in accordance with the requirements for the Distinction in the Major program. Students will complete a significant intellectual project in the major under the supervision of a departmental faculty member. Students should consult with a professor of the department who specializes in the subject and with the professor's consent present a written proposal to the department head and the Honors College for final approval. Proposals should be presented for approval before final registration for the term in which the Distinction Project is to be done. When appropriate, this course may be cross-listed with senior research project courses in other academic departments. Open to Honors College members only. May be repeated for a maximum of 8 hours.

## Distinction in the Major Checklist

Students must complete 12 credits of self-designed honors course work in their major, including a minimum of 3 credits of UHC 499 *Honors Distinction Project*. Students must complete a course and distinction project proposal under the guidance of a faculty member that outlines how the student will complete these course requirements.

This checklist is designed to help students prepare to submit a course and distinction project proposal and to execute that project prior to graduation. The timetables are approximate and will vary depending upon your anticipated graduation date. You are encouraged to review this checklist with your advisors on a regular basis, as your plans may evolve and change over time.

## Distinction in the Major: What You Need to Know

The Honors College offers students the opportunity to graduate with Distinction in their academic major by completing an honors distinction project that explores a significant intellectual question in the student’s area of expertise. Students pursuing this opportunity will prepare and submit a formal plan of study that includes 12 honors credit hours in the major and establishes the foundations for the execution of the distinction project. Students need to complete the following steps:

1. Prepare yourself by identifying a topic of interest in your major. Complete a self-reflection exercise or write a thinking paper to help narrow the focus of that interest into a research project.
2. Submit a Distinction in the Major Proposal outlining the project/class combinations you intend to complete and how they relate to your research project.
3. Submit experiential learning registration forms for each project/class combination you intend to complete. Forms are due within the first week of each semester in which a project will be completed
4. Submit a research funding request if you require special materials to complete your research project.
5. Submit your completed distinction project to the Honors College and to *LOGOS: A Journal of Undergraduate Research*.

## Preparation for Distinction

To focus your Distinction project, you may complete one or both of our preparation exercises. The self-reflection exercise requires you to answer questions that will help pinpoint your areas of interest. The thinking paper is an essay that will help you to articulate your interests as clearly as possible in order to narrow your research topic.

### Self-Reflection Exercise

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student name: |  | M#: |  |
|  |
| Major: |  |
|  |  |
| Projected Graduation: |  |

1. Why did I select my major?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. What do I enjoy most about my major?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. What class (es) have I enjoyed the most?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. What classes am I excited about taking in the future?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. Which professor(s) would I like to work with in the future or study with again?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. What is the most interesting book/article/author that I have read in my major?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. What are my academic goals (publications, conferences, graduate study, etc.)?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

1. What are my professional goals?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

I am interested in… (check all that apply):

* History of my field
* Theories and paradigms in my field
* Methodologies in my field
* Original research in my field
* Collaborative research in my field
* Case studies in my field
* Creative compositions in my field
* Service-learning in my field
* International study in my field
* Interdisciplinary exploration of my field

I am not interested in… (Fill in this section as needed):

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Questions, comments, or observations that I have about my major field of study:

|  |
| --- |
|  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Major Advisor signature: |  | Date: |  |
| Honors College Advisor signature: |  | Date: |  |

### Thinking Paper

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student name: |  | M#: |  |
|  |
| Major: |  |
|  |  |
| Projected Graduation: |  |

The next step in preparing your formal proposal is the completion of a Thinking Paper. The objective of this exercise is to help you to identify an area of research interest, clearly articulate your thoughts in writing, and to begin to narrow your area of interest into a specific research question.

Your paper should begin with the statement “I am interested in learning more about …” Explain why you are interested in this subject. What do you already know? What questions do you have about this subject? What are you hoping to learn as you explore this topic further? Are you beginning with any basic assumptions or predictions? What do you think you will discover as you begin to read more? Your paper should be 1-2 pages long.

Envision this paper as a conversation with yourself. Your goal is to think on paper about your interests, where they come from, and where they might lead you. Ask yourself lots of questions. As you begin your work, you will discover that you don’t know all of the answers and that there are gaps in your knowledge. Thinking through these questions will help you to focus and establish specific objectives for your upcoming research work (What do you need to learn? Where can you look to find this information?).

Remember that this is the first step in a series of steps that will culminate in the formal presentation of your honors distinction project. You probably won’t identify a concise thesis statement by the end of this exercise, but you should identify a clear path that will ultimately lead you to your destination. Think creatively, challenge yourself, and enjoy the journey.

When the thinking paper is complete, discuss it with your major advisor and the Director of the Honors College. We will offer you feedback and help you prepare for the next steps in your journey.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Major Advisor signature: |  | Date: |  |
| Honors College Advisor signature: |  | Date: |  |

## Distinction Proposal

Students must complete a course and distinction project proposal under the guidance of a faculty member in the major department. The proposal must be approved by the Department Head for the major and by the Director of the Honors College before a student may register for honors course sections. Distinction proposals must be approved prior to the beginning of a student’s senior year.

**The Honors Distinction Project must be submitted to the Honors College on the final day of classes prior to a student’s graduation.**

### Distinction in the Major Proposal Form

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student name: |  | M#: |  |
|  |
| Major: |  | Projected Graduation Semester and Year: |  |

1. Outline your academic and research interests within your major.

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|  |

1. List two or more courses in your major that you propose to complete for Honors College credit. Each course should be complemented by UHC 396 Honors Independent Study or UHC 398 Honors Undergraduate Research in order to qualify as an honors experience.

*~Example: HST 350 (3 credits) + UHC 396 (1 credit) = 4 HONR credits~*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |
| Proposed major course + honors component | Total credits | Proposed semester |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |
| Proposed major course + honors component | Total credits | Proposed semester |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |
| Alternate major course + honors component | Total credits | Proposed semester |

1. Explain why you selected the courses above and address how they will assist you in achieving your goals as you pursue distinction in the major.

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1. Each student must complete UHC 499 Honors Distinction Project (3-4 credits) after completing the courses listed above. List any interests or goals that you hope to explore in your distinction project.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |
| UHC 499 Honors Distinction Project | Proposed credits (3–4) | Proposed semester |

1. Students must complete a minimum of 12 credits of honors course work in their major, including a minimum of 3 credits of UHC 499 Honors Distinction Project. Do the courses outlined above equal at least 12 credit hours?

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Once this proposal has been formally approved, your Honors College degree audit will be updated to include pre-approval of all of the course work that you have outlined above.

To register for UHC 396 Honors Independent Study, UHC 398 Honors Undergraduate Research, and/or UHC 499 Honors Distinction Project, you **must** complete the appropriate registration forms through the Honors College.

If you wish to make future changes to this proposal, please submit an updated Distinction in the Major Proposal form.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Signature | Date | Major Advisor Signature | Date |
| Department Head Signature | Date | Honors Director Signature | Date |

**THIS FORM MUST BE SUBMITTED TO THE HONORS COLLEGE BEFORE THE END OF THE FIRST WEEK OF CLASSES DURING THE SEMESTER YOU PLAN TO COMPLETE THE COURSE.**

### Experiential Learning

Experiential learning courses may be completed alongside an existing course (i.e. HST 350 3 cr. + UHC 398 1 cr.) or may be completed as unique stand-alone projects (i.e. UHC 398 3 cr.). Each student’s proposal will be customized to his/her interests and needs.

* 1. Consider what kind of project you wish to complete: do you wish to produce a research paper, an article, a public presentation, an art portfolio, etc.? Students are encouraged to be creative. Remember that your project must be substantial enough to warrant the receipt of 1 or more credit hours.
	2. Identify a faculty member with appropriate expertise in your area of interest. Your advisors can assist you in researching possible project mentors.
	3. Ask for a meeting with the faculty member that you are interested in working with in order to present your ideas. You are encouraged to prepare a written summary of your interests, questions, or goals for discussion. Professors are far more likely to engage you in a meaningful conversation if they understand what you hope to accomplish and why.
	4. If a professor agrees to mentor your project, ask him/her to complete an Experiential Learning Registration Form with you. This form will outline the nature of your course and your professor’s formal expectations.
	5. Submit the completed Experiential Learning Registration Form to the Department Head for your area of study for formal approval.
	6. Once the Department head approves your proposal, submit the Experiential Learning Registration Form to the Honors College for final approval.
	7. **Experiential Learning Registration Forms must be submitted to the Honors College before the end of the first week of classes.** Students are encouraged to begin developing their course proposals during the semester prior to registration (i.e. fall semester for a spring honors course).
	8. Once the Experiential Learning Registration Form has been approved, the Honors College will build your honors course for you and enroll you in the class. Standard tuition and fee rates will apply to individualized course sections.

Please contact the Honors College for additional assistance.

### Funding Requests

Students may apply for an Honors College grant in order to fund their research projects by completing a Research & Development Funding Request form. If approved, students or their sponsoring department will be reimbursed by the university after submitting receipts and formal documentation of all purchases. Research & Development Funding requests should be submitted at the beginning of the semester when the student plans to complete her/his research project.

## Distinction Project Submission Instructions

The Honors Distinction Project must be submitted to the Honors College on the final day of classes prior to a student’s graduation. Students may submit an electronic copy of their project in .pdf format to honorscollege@missouristate.edu. When preparing your project for submission, follow the guidelines listed below. See example pages at the end of this guide.

### Distinction Project Format

The completed project will contain the following components in the order given:

1. Acceptance/Signature Page
2. Title Page
3. Abstract
4. Table of Contents
5. List of Tables (if any)
6. List of Figures, Plates, or Illustrations (if any)
7. Body of Thesis
8. Literature Cited, References, or Bibliography
9. Appendix (if any)
10. Index (if any)

*Title Page.*

The required format is shown below. The title and author entries are centered within the margins of the title page. The title, in all capitals, is double spaced and presented in inverted pyramid style if longer than 48 spaces. This page is counted as "I" but pagination is not shown.

*Abstract.*

The format shown below must be used. The abstract should be not more than 350 words and should contain a statement of the problems, materials, methods or procedures used, a presentation of principle results, and a conclusion or summary. The body of the abstract should be single spaced and limited to one page. Number as "ii" in pagination.

### Distinction Project Preparation

* Spacing
	+ Double space all materials in text. Single space may be used for footnotes or quotations of five lines or more.
* Print Size and Quality
	+ Standard pica (10 characters per inch), elite (12 characters per inch) or proportional spacing is required. Script or slanted faces are not acceptable. Italics may be used for book or journal titles, scientific names of species, and other appropriate situations. Acceptable print quality: letter-quality (laser jet or inkjet).
* Margins
	+ 1.5" left side. 1" top, right side, and bottom. The area within these margins must contain all parts of the project—all parts of illustrations, graphs, the body of the project, and the page numbers.
* Page Numbering
	+ Page numbers should be in the upper right hand corner, 1" from the top and 1" from the right edge of each page. Pages prior to the body of the project should be numbered with small Roman numerals (I, ii, iii, etc.); the body of the project through the index should be numbered with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, etc.).

## FAQ

When do I need to begin working on my distinction project proposal?

Distinction proposals must be approved by the project mentor, department head, and Director of the Honors College prior to the beginning of your senior year. Students often take honors courses in the major during the final four semesters, so we strongly encourage you to begin working upon your proposal five semesters prior to your graduation (spring of sophomore year, which may be in year one for some students).

I am not sure how to begin planning for my distinction proposal. How should I get started?

We recommend that students begin exploring their interests by completing the following exercises:

1. Meet with the Director of the Honors College in order to discuss your interests.
2. Meet with your major advisor in order to discuss your interests and opportunities within your home department.
3. Complete the Distinction in the Major Self-Reflection Guide.
4. Complete the Distinction in the Major Thinking Paper exercise.

## Honors College Contact Information

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John Chuchiak, IV, Ph.D., Director Scott Handley, M.A., Assistant Director

## Sample Signature Page

by

Boomer Bear

An Honors Distinction Project

Submitted to the Missouri State University Honors College in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Distinction in the Major in the Honors College

Date: Approved: Project Director

Department Head Director of the Honors College

Sample Title Page

An Honors Distinction Project

Presented to the Department of [Ursine Studies] and the Missouri State University Honors College in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Distinction in the Major in the Honors College.

by Boomer Bear

Date

PROJECT TITLE (ALL CAPS)

Academic Department Missouri State University, Date Boomer Bear

A B S T R A C T