

Texas A & M University–Commerce
HONORS COLLEGE HANDBOOK



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HONORS COLLEGE HANDBOOK

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Introduction

This handbook is intended for all students interested in or involved in the Honors College at Texas A&M University-Commerce. Please read it carefully because the handbook contains specific information about what students must do during various phases of their pursuit of an Honors degree. The handbook concludes with appendices on the most important materials associated with Honors at TAMU-Commerce.

This handbook is divided into five main sections. Section One focuses on elements that are unique to students who enter the Honors College as part of the freshman cohort (the Cohort Program). Section Two focuses on elements of the college that are unique to students who enter the Honors College after they are already students at TAMU-Commerce, or who enter as transfer students (the Current and Transfer Student programs). Sections Three through Five focus on issues that are of concern to students in all programs within the Honors College (e.g., Honors theses and proposals, student organizations, etc.).

SECTION ONE: THE FRESHMAN COHORT PROGRAM

The Cohort Program of the Honors College is an undergraduate living-learning community, with dozens of academic scholarships awarded to incoming freshmen each year. While Honors students major and minor in degrees offered through the other academic colleges, they complete roughly half their core courses in Honors sections, attend a series of colloquia within the Honors College, and complete a capstone project. Classes are a key part to the learning experience, but the College also emphasizes learning opportunities that exist outside of the classroom and high-impact educational experiences. All incoming freshmen members of the Cohort Program are required to live at least one year in Honors housing, and Honors students have the option to continue living in Honors housing following the first year, as well.

Benefits

The Honors College Cohort Program is designed to increase the educational opportunities for students while engaging them in a four-year college experience. The benefits of the Cohort Program include:

- Access to Honors courses capped at an enrollment of 25 students
- Priority registration
- Housing in an Honors-only residential hall floor, fostering a sense of community
- Scholarship opportunities that can cover up to 100% of the cost of attendance
- A challenging curriculum that culminates in a high-impact capstone experience, such as research and completion of an Honors Thesis, study abroad, or a meaningful paid internship
- An emphasis on educational practices that provide students marketable skills and career readiness

Admission into the Freshman Cohort Program

We are looking for students who have demonstrated an ability to excel in school and those whose standardized test scores or alternate application materials reflect an ability to thrive in an academic environment. Although the Honors College does not use cutoff scores during the admissions process, on average the students entering the Cohort Program are in the top 10% of their graduating class, with average SAT scores (combined math and critical reading) of 1200 or higher and ACT composite scores of 25 or higher.

Admission into the Honors College Cohort Program is based on a holistic review of the candidate's application packet—which includes an application form, transcripts, short essay, and either test scores or instructional video—and interview with members of the Honors administration and faculty Council, for qualifying applicants. The interview helps to determine a student's fit into the program and whether our program, in turn, fits the educational and personal needs of the applicant.

Apply to the University first!

Before applying to the Cohort Program of the Honors College, students must first apply to the University itself, although they do not need to await an admissions decision before submitting their application to the Cohort Program. (Note: The Honors College cannot provide an admission decision until after the University has made its formal admissions decision.)

Honors Application next!

After students apply to the University, they are free to apply to the Honors College through an online form, which students must submit prior to the published deadlines; see application at www.tamuc.edu/honorsapp.

Class rank, essay, and either test scores or Test-optional video (see Options 1 and 2 below) are used to create an application score, which in turn determines if a student will be invited for an interview. (Note: The rubric used in application scoring is available as Appendix A, at the end of this handbook.)

Qualifying for an Interview

All students in the top 10% of their graduating class automatically qualify for an interview, though they must still complete the Honors College application, including the essay and either standardized test scores or the Test Optional portion of the application (see Option 2, below). (Note: Homeschooled applicants and students from non-ranking schools cannot automatically qualify for an interview.)

Students ranked below the top 10% of their graduating class have two routes to qualify for an interview:

1. **Option 1:** Eligibility is determined through a combination of points accumulated based on class rank percentile, test scores, and essay score (see Appendix A). A student must accumulate a minimum of 45 points to qualify for an interview. (Note: Homeschooled applicants and students from non-ranking schools will be scored as in the top 10th percentile of their graduating class.)

2. **Option 2:** Eligibility is determined through a combination of points accumulated based on class rank percentile, essay score, and a recorded lesson, detailed below. Students must obtain a minimum of 45 points to qualify for an interview. (Note: The test optional consideration is not available for homeschooled students or for students from non-ranking schools.)

Test-Optional Applications: Recorded Lessons

Although standardized tests may provide useful information about an applicant's ability to succeed at the college level, evidence suggests that standardized testing does not reflect the true academic potential for all candidates. The Honors College prides itself on removing barriers for students, and a test-optional admissions policy provides access to exceptional students who may lack the resources that would better prepare them for standardized tests.

Students who choose the test-optional application to the Honors College (Option 2) must submit a recorded lesson, in which the student teaches the audience how to do something. This is an opportunity for students to showcase a skill they have, demonstrate their persuasive skills, display organizational skills, and highlight creativity. The recording could be a video the applicant creates and uploads or a PowerPoint/Prezi that the student narrates. Students should adhere to the recorded lesson guidelines provided with the application materials.

Curriculum

Cohort Program students should consult with the Honors Advisor to determine the particulars of their Honors degree plan. The typical Cohort student will complete 30 Honors semester credit hours (SCH) in the process of completing a bachelor's degree, and for the most part, those hours are part of the student's overall major degree plan, not hours *in addition to* their major degree plan. These credits fall into 3 groupings:

(1) Honors credits. Cohort Program students must complete a minimum of 21 semester credits of Honors classes. These credits will come primarily, but not exclusively, out of the University Studies core. All students must take a writing course during their first year. Cohort students who have completed ENG 1301 and ENG 1302 before attending TAMU-Commerce will enroll in an upper-division Honors English or Philosophy class that is focused on writing during that first semester.

(2) Colloquia and Seminars. All Cohort students will take three seminar courses toward their degree. The first, HC200 First Year Experience, functions as a seminar for entering Honors College students as they transition into university life. The second, a 300-level course, is tied to a student's chosen capstone experience. The third is a 400-level class designed to tie the college experience together and is specific to a student's capstone.

(3) Capstone Hours. Each capstone experience is worth the remainder of required Honors credits.

Levels of Honors

The Honors College includes three levels of honors designation:

- A. **Honors**. Students may earn their degree with Honors if, in addition to meeting all other degree requirements, they complete any of the three capstone pathways (detailed below). If a student begins a fifth semester in the Honors College, they **must** complete a capstone.
- B. **High Honors**. Students may also earn the designation of High Honors with any of the three capstone pathways. For thesis students, High Honors may also be awarded following the final defense, based on criteria used for assessing that process. For non-thesis students, High Honors may also be earned through the Honors Senior Capstone presentation. Additionally, if a student successfully completes two or more of the three capstones for credit (i.e., thesis, international travel, internship) they will be granted High Honors graduation status.
- C. **Highest Honors**. Only students who defend a thesis that is viewed as exemplary by their committee will earn the designation of Highest Honors at graduation.

Capstones: Pathways to Honors Graduation

Members of the Honors College Cohort Program have three pathways to completing their degree, and one of the goals of HC 200, the First Year Experience course, is to help students determine which pathway is best suited to their resources and goals. The information provided below details the three pathways and the associated Capstone opportunities and requirements for each.

- A. **HONORS THESIS CAPSTONE**. The thesis experience strengthens a student's research and critical thinking skills, serves as preparation for continuing education in graduate or professional school, develops marketable skills, and improves writing and oral presentation skills. The thesis capstone is required of all students who receive a full scholarship, and it is the default option if a student does not complete an approved internship or study abroad experience. In addition, students defending a thesis in their final Spring semester before graduation are required to present their research at the University's Annual Research Symposium. Students who successfully defend an Honors thesis are eligible for all three levels of Honors designation (i.e., Honors, High Honors, and Highest Honors). Thesis students must complete HC 300, the thesis preparation class designed to help them understand what a thesis comprises and walk them through the early stages of the process. Optimally, students take the course during their second year in the program, though they may take it earlier after consultation with the Honors Advisor.
- B. **STUDY ABROAD CAPSTONE**. International travel can be a life-changing experience that allows students to see the world from other perspectives and practice vital problem-solving skills. Participants in the study abroad capstone enroll in HC 301, Global Research, during their third semester in the program, a class that focuses on the many ways that the countries and systems of the world are connected and that prepares them to journey outside of the United States. Study abroad students must also complete HC 401, the non-thesis senior capstone class, which includes a presentation focusing on marketable skills. The study abroad capstone is eligible for Honors or High Honors designations only.

Students may complete this pathway in one of two ways:

- a. Traveling with the annual study abroad class offered by the Honors College, featuring a 2 or 3-week summer trip. Although there is a cost to students, substantial funding for approximately twenty students helps offset expenses. Students must apply for participation; a spot on the trip is not guaranteed to all Cohort Program students.
- b. Participating in a separate study abroad program through TAMU-Commerce or another approved university's program. Alternate programs will not be funded by the Honors College, and prior approval from the Dean is required for an external trip to count for fulfilling requirements.

C. **INTERNSHIP CAPSTONE.** Internships are high impact educational experiences that allow students to hone their problem-solving and communication skills as they prepare for life after college. Students who follow this pathway enroll in HC 302, Applied Leadership, during their second year, a class designed to enhance team-building and leading abilities, with a goal of assisting them in maximizing the internship experience. Students must also complete HC 401, the non-thesis senior capstone class, which includes a presentation focusing on marketable skills. The Internship capstone is eligible for Honors or High Honors designations only.

Students can fulfill the Internship capstone in a variety of ways:

- a. Honors College-sponsored internship. Each semester the Honors College will provide funding for university departments to employ a student intern. Departments compete for this opportunity and must assure that students are provided with a meaningful, project-based assignment during the internship.
- b. Department/University-approved internship or career preparation. Students may request approval to count internship programs that are part of their Degree Plan as their capstone experience for the Honors College. Examples include student teaching or clinical hours within the nursing program. Students can also request that internships they obtain through the Career Development office count for the capstone. Prior approval from the Honors College is required for internships in this category.
- c. External internship. Students may also secure external internships with companies, non-profit organizations, or other similar entities. Prior approval from the Honors College is required for internships in this category.

Capstone Process and Notes

- Students receiving an Honors College scholarship that covers up to the full cost of attendance are required to complete the thesis capstone. They may also complete another capstone pathway, pending availability, opportunity, and approval.
- Students receiving a scholarship that covers less than the full cost of attendance will be assigned a capstone experience through an application they will complete at the end of their second semester at the university. Students will rank the capstone pathways in order of

preference, but they are not guaranteed their first choice. Any student who does not submit a capstone application will automatically be assigned to the thesis track.

- Upon review of the capstone applications, the Director of Honors Programming will assign a capstone pathway to each student, taking into consideration available spaces, level of demand, projected time to graduation, student major, potential for student growth and development, and student preference. In the event of a tie, GPA may be used as a determining factor.
- Students will be notified of their capstone assignment no later than March 15 of their first year, to allow for appropriate Fall registration in prerequisite courses.
- For students who wish to complete a capstone pathway other than the one assigned, an alternative pathway (such as an external study abroad trip or internship) may be considered, pending approval from Honors College administration. Alternative capstones must be completed by the end of the fifth long semester (i.e., by the end of the Fall semester of the third year) in order to count as fulfilling the Honors capstone requirement. Otherwise, the student will be held to the originally assigned capstone experience. Alternative capstones will not be funded by the Honors College, but they are still subject to the final presentation that is part of HC 401.

Additional Requirements of the Honors College Cohort Program

In addition to curriculum requirements, all Cohort Program students must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Cohort Program students who receive a scholarship must accept this scholarship prior to their first semester of enrollment at Texas A&M University-Commerce to continue the scholarship in subsequent semesters.
- Students must complete a FAFSA/TAFSA each academic year. Students must also respond to all financial aid requests for verification of FAFSA/TAFSA form. Completion of the FAFSA must occur by June 1st each year.
- Cohort students are required to attend the orientation session specifically designed for them in the summer before beginning at the university.
- Students must complete a minimum of 15 semester hours from Texas A&M University-Commerce each semester to receive and maintain an Honors College scholarship.
- Cohort Program students are required to maintain a minimum 3.3 cumulative GPA. Students whose cumulative GPA falls between 3.0 and 3.29 will be assigned Probationary status, which allows them to raise their GPA while continuing to enjoy the benefits of the Honors College. An exception is allowed for first-semester freshmen, who may be assigned probationary status with a GPA between 2.7 and 3.29. Students may be on probation for a maximum of two consecutive semesters. However, a second semester of probationary status is not automatically guaranteed—students must show progress in their GPA status to earn the second semester of probation.

- Cohort Program students must live in Honors-designated housing during their first year at the university in order to receive an Honors College scholarship, even if they are otherwise exempt from university housing due to university policy. After year 1, students who receive a scholarship with room and board benefits must continue to live in Honors-designated housing in order to receive that part of the scholarship package.
- Cohort Program scholarships are awarded for eight academic year semesters (Fall and Spring) or until the bachelor's degree is conferred, whichever comes first. Students may opt to use their scholarship for 12 concurrent summer hours (i.e., full load during consecutive summer sessions) in place of a long semester.
- Students may drop no more than three classes over the course of the eight semesters on scholarship. This cap on dropped courses does not include changes made to a schedule before the semester begins.
- Cohort Program students must adhere to the University's Code of Student Conduct. Scholarships may be revoked for violations of this policy or for behavior that does not reflect the standards of the Honors College. Neither abusive behavior toward peers, faculty, and staff, nor violations of academic conduct (e.g., cheating, plagiarism) will be permitted.
- Honors College students must complete a public display of their capstone experience to graduate from the university with a bachelor's degree; this presentation occurs through HC 401 or through the thesis defense that is part of HC 490. Students who withdraw from the Honors College before enrolling for their fifth semester at Texas A&M University-Commerce will not be held to this requirement.
- Cohort Program students on scholarship are required to complete 24 hours of community service each semester during their second and third years in the Honors College, and a total of 96 hours total over the course of their time at the university. Hours must be documented, and participation must be verified by the event coordinator. Students will log their volunteer hours through the "Mane Sync" app in myLeo. Serving as a tutor, SI instructor, or writing lab instructor may count as community service even if a student is paid for the activity because it involves direct service to other students. Students can "bank" hours—for example, if someone accumulates 30 hours this semester, they can apply the "extra 6 hours" to the next semester's requirement. Finally, community service must occur locally, defined as anything within Hunt, Delta, and Hopkins counties.

SECTION TWO: CURRENT AND TRANSFER STUDENT PROGRAM

The Honors College programs for current and transfer students (formerly known as the “Honors Scholar Program”) provide opportunities to reap many of the benefits of the Honors Cohort Program experience and to graduate with an Honors designation. Students in this program take Honors classes and engage in high-level creative and critical thinking and research. Students may apply for the program at any time after completing their first semester of undergraduate classes.

Basic Requirements

To graduate with an Honors designation, students must:

1. Maintain at least a **cumulative 3.3 GPA** at the time of graduation.
2. Complete at least **TWO Honors classes** (i.e., classes for which enrollment is restricted to Honors Students), earning a B or higher to receive Honors credit for the course. These courses will be marked with an H on the student’s transcript. Occasionally, students may not be able to fit Honors only classes in their schedule, but they may receive Honors credit by contract. Contact the Honors Academic Coordinator Lindsay.Svane@tamuc.edu for information.
3. Complete a Capstone Project:
 - i) Option 1: Complete HC 300, **Honors Colloquium: Thesis Preparation**, and complete 491 and 490 (Honors Readings and Honors Thesis) courses within the student’s relevant department, culminating in the defense of an Honors thesis.
 - ii) Capstone Option 2: Complete an internship, research opportunity, or study abroad opportunity, along with the relevant HC course and capstone presentation.

Honors Readings, 491

Students enroll in 491, Honors Readings to prepare the Honors thesis proposal; the class prefix corresponds to the department in which a student is planning to research and write an Honors thesis. Each student works with a faculty advisor within their chosen field, and after the proposal is filed electronically, both the advisor and the Dean of the Honors College approve the proposal before it is submitted to the student’s thesis committee, in accordance with deadlines announced by the Honors office. The thesis committee consists of the student’s advisor, a second faculty member from the department (or an expert in the topic area), and a member of the University Honors Council, appointed the Dean of the Honors College. Upon approval by the committee, the proposal receives final approval from the Dean of Honors.

Occasionally, personal or professional commitments prevent students from completing the Honors thesis proposal and thus failing to complete the 491 class. If a student registers for Honors Readings class, fails to submit the written proposal to the Honors College, and does not withdraw from the course, a grade of I (in progress) will be entered on the transcript and will remain unchanged.

Honors Thesis, 490

Once an Honors thesis proposal has been accepted by a student's committee and the Dean of the Honors College, the student, under the direction of their advisor, completes the thesis. The student must also successfully defend the Honors thesis prior to graduation, working with the Honors office to schedule the defense time.

Occasionally, personal or professional commitments prevent students from completing the Honors thesis and thus failing to complete the 490 class. If a student registers for the Honors Thesis class, fails to complete the thesis, and does not withdraw from the course, a grade of I (in progress) will be entered on the transcript and will remain unchanged.

Levels of Honors

Participants in the Current and Transfer Student Programs are eligible for three levels of honors designation:

- A. Honors. Students may earn the designation of Honors if they complete and defend a thesis of notable merit, as judged by their committee.
- B. High Honors. Students may earn the designation of High Honors if the thesis they complete and defend significantly exceeds the basic level of "Honors," as judged by their committee.
- C. Highest Honors. Students may earn the designation of Highest Honors if the thesis they complete and defend is judged by their committee to be truly exemplary, or if they complete the Option 2 Capstone opportunity.

SECTION THREE: HONORS-AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

Many Honors-affiliated organizations exist at Texas A&M University-Commerce. Generally speaking, each academic department or specialized area has an affiliation with an Honors organization at the national level. For example, Sigma Tau Delta is the international Honors Society for English Majors and Minors, and Psi Chi is the national Psychology Honors Society. However, these and other specialized honors societies are not technically part of the Honors College programs. This section highlights the organizations that are housed within the Honors College for students and for faculty.

Student Organizations

Two Honors organizations fall under the supervision of the Dean of the Honors College.

1. **Student Honors Council (SHC)**. Application for membership in the Student Honors Council is open to any student who currently is or has been actively involved in some phase of the Honors College; someone who has completed an Honors course; a person who is taking or has taken Honors Colloquium; or a student who is actively engaged in some phase of the Honors Thesis. Members elect a President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, Student Representative and Social Media Chair. for each academic year. Duties of the SHC include:
 - Proposing modifications to the Honors College
 - Publicizing the Honors College through social media, visits to classes, etc.
 - Selecting the Honors Professor of the Year
 - Recognizing contributions made by faculty and staff involved in the Honors Program
 - Providing suggestions for programming, including speakers, films, field trips, etc.
 - Organizing and planning annual activities for the Honors programs, such as the Honors Banquet, Welcome Back event, etc.
 - Participating in and recruiting for public community service events around the campus and city
2. **Phi Kappa Phi (PKP)**. Phi Kappa Phi is the oldest and perhaps most prestigious general honor society in the country; Texas A&M University-Commerce was awarded a chapter of PKP in 2013. Requirements for invitation to Phi Kappa Phi include: (a) completion of at least 24 semester credit hours at TAMU-Commerce, (b) for juniors (defined as students with 72 SCH or more), academic work that places them in the top 7.5% of their class, (c) for seniors and graduate initiates, academic work that places them in the top 10% of their class. Eligible students are invited each spring following a review of student GPAs by the Honors College. Faculty members are also eligible for membership in PKP.
3. **Alpha Lambda Delta (ALD)**. Alpha Lambda Delta is an Honor Society that recognizes first-year academic success. Founded in 1924, ALD has honored academic excellence in first-year students for a century. Inductees into ALD are invited if they have earned a 3.5 GPA or higher in their first semester of classes at the University.

Faculty Organization

The advisory body for the Honors College is the Honors Council, which consists of faculty members from across the university who are actively involved in the work of the College. The Honors Council serves at the discretion of the President of the University, and the Dean of the Honors College chairs the Council. The duties of the Council include:

- Providing a representative to act as an outside committee member for Honors thesis proposal and final defenses
- Instituting changes or modifications to the programs of the Honors College
- Providing assistance in the interviewing and selection of Honors College applicants

SECTION FOUR: HONORS PROPOSALS, THESES, AND DEFENSES

Thesis capstone students will learn about writing a proposal and a thesis with much more detail in HC 300 and through their work with faculty advisors, but the following is a general timeline for this pathway. It is not meant to be a complete description of everything students need to know about the thesis process, nor will every student experience the thesis in this exact order. Instead, its purpose is to lay out the basic steps that you will undertake and to get you thinking about what you need to do.

General Timeline

Step 1: Choose a general topic. Your thesis ***does not*** have to be done in your major. However, most people do the thesis in their major area for obvious reasons (e.g., familiarity with and interest in material).

Step 2: Enroll in HC 300, Thesis Seminar

Step 3: Choose an advisor. This is the single most important step in the process. There are numerous things to consider in making this choice. Is the person knowledgeable in the area that you want to pursue? Is their personality a good match with yours? Does their working style complement yours? Do they have the time to commit to the thesis process?

Step 4: Choose another faculty member to serve as a second committee member. This person should also have some knowledge in the field, and like your advisor, they should be someone you feel comfortable working with.

Step 5: Enroll in 491, Honors Readings, and write your proposal. Your advisor and the Dean of the Honors College must approve your proposal before moving on to your proposal defense. Prior to submitting your proposal, you must complete Responsible Conduct in Research training, as required by the university (<https://inside.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/training/Responsible-Conduct-in-Research.aspx>). You will be required to submit a certificate of approval when you submit your proposal. When you are ready to submit your proposal, use the following form: <https://dms.tamuc.edu/Forms/The-Honor-College-Process-for-Thesis-Proposal>.

Please note that if your research involves human or animal subjects, you are required to obtain institutional approval before you can begin collecting data. Your advisor will guide you through this process, and the Appendix includes more detailed information and links for those types of research.

Step 6: Defend your proposal for your thesis committee, which consists of the student's advisor, a second faculty member from the department (or an expert in the topic area), and a member of the Honors Council, appointed by the Dean. Upon approval by the committee, the proposal must receive final approval from the Dean of the Honors College. The defense generally consists of a 10-15 minute presentation, followed by questions and suggestions from your committee. **The thesis proposal must be defended no later than one semester prior to the semester in which a student plans to finish the thesis and graduate.** For instance, if a student plans to graduate in the spring semester, the thesis proposal must be defended no later than the preceding fall semester.

However, recognize that finishing a thesis normally takes longer than expected, and it is preferable to defend the proposal in the semester following completion of HC 300.

Step 7: Enroll in 490, conduct research, and write and defend your thesis. Again, the thesis process often takes longer than expected, and you may find that you need to enroll for one more semester in order to complete the degree. (Remember: Students who are completing the thesis capstone cannot receive a bachelor's degree until they have successfully defended their thesis project).

General Proposal and Thesis Guidance

Although researching and writing a thesis is a process that requires attention to detail, many of the most important points can be boiled down to some key ideas.

Thesis Proposals

- Proposals do not need to be lengthy. The best proposals tend to be in the 6-15 page range, excluding references, appendices, etc. You are providing a “roadmap” to your project—not writing a full-length term paper.
- Although an in-depth review of important secondary, scholarly literature should occur before any project is undertaken, students should only provide a brief review of the most relevant literature in their proposals. This summary of the literature should clearly lead the reader to the proposed project and/or analytical argument of the project.
- Methodology should be as detailed as possible. This section, if done right, will be cut and pasted into your final thesis, although you will change the verb tense from future to past.
- Proposals are defended in front of a committee that includes a member drawn from the Honors Council, who is unlikely to be an “expert” in the proposed field. Thus, proposals should be written so that “non-experts” can understand them.
- Grammar and syntax matter. Honors students should demonstrate above average writing ability, and the proposals they submit should be polished and professional.
- Remember that students must complete Responsible Conduct in Research training, along with additional training/approvals if their study involves human or animal subjects, prior to submitting the proposal and collecting data.

Theses

- There is no single correct format for the thesis. The conventions and dictates of your field should guide the presentation.
- Choose the style manual most relevant to your field of study and then use it assiduously. APA, MLA, Turabian—whatever you use, use it well and consistently.
- Assume that you will make changes before the thesis is sent to the library to be digitally archived (i.e., after the thesis defense).
- Certain projects may benefit from different thesis formats. For example, for a photography student, a process journal in conjunction with a gallery show may be a more appropriate written document than a lengthy analytical thesis. If you and your advisor believe that an alternate format may be in order, please contact the Dean of the Honors College to discuss options.
- Again, grammar and syntax matter. Honors students should demonstrate above average writing ability, and the these they submit should be polished and professional.

Proposal and Thesis Defenses

- Students will defend their theses to their committee members (advisor, second faculty member chosen by the student, and member of the Honors Council, chosen by the Dean of the Honors College). The Dean may also be in attendance and participate in the defense but is a non-voting member unless invited into the committee.
- Oral defenses are an opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to speak about their project intelligently in an academic setting.
- Defenses typically last between 45-60 minutes.
- Students should provide a **brief** (10-15 minute) overview of their project. Then committee members will ask questions and make comments and suggestions.
- Although questions will generally focus on the research project, students may be asked to assimilate other relevant information (e.g., relation of their research to the “real world”) into the defense.
- If students have technical requirements (e.g., Power Point, DVD player) for the defense, they should indicate those needs when scheduling the defense.
- All defenses are open to the public, though typically the only people in attendance are the student, committee members, and sometimes the Dean of the Honors College. Students may opt to invite family or friends to attend, as well.
- **Thesis students are required to present their research at the Annual Research Symposium in the Spring semester**, which offers a great opportunity to practice for the final defense.

SECTION FIVE: FAQs

1. Why should I join the Honors College?

It sets you apart from the average undergraduate. Even if you take only one Honors course, it is listed on your transcript with an H designation. If you pursue and acquire an Honors degree, you stand apart from the ordinary Texas A & M University-Commerce graduate, and you become a more notable applicant to graduate or professional schools and to potential employers.

2. Who is eligible to take Honors courses?

Registration for all Honors courses at the university are by permit only, and students in any Honors College program are permitted to enroll in these courses. Students in the Current and Transfer Student Program should contact the Honors Academics Coordinator to receive a permit to enter an Honors section (Lindsay.Svane@tamuc.edu). In addition, individual departments can “nominate” students for an Honors section. These nominations should be sent to the Dean of the Honors College so that information concerning Honors can be sent to the student. Please check the university’s Schedule of Classes to see which Honors classes will be offered in upcoming semesters.

3. What are some of the benefits of being part of the Honors College?

- a) **Small classes.** Each Honors course is usually limited to 20-25 students, and classes are taught by seasoned, full-time faculty members who are invested in student success.
- b) **Mentoring.** Students who elect to pursue graduation with Honors have the unique opportunity to work one-on-one with faculty members while completing their Honors thesis. Undergraduates are rarely afforded access to the excitement and personal fulfillment generated by such scholarly endeavors.
- c) **Community.** Students in the Honors College form strong bonds with other students who are looking for an enhanced educational experience.

4. What will graduation with Honors do for me?

All students who graduate with Honors have their names, thesis or capstone titles, and advisors listed in the commencement program, and each Honors graduate receives a blue and gold *foutragere* from his or her advisor during the Honors graduation ceremony. More importantly, an Honors degree follows students for the rest of their lives. Recent Honors graduates have confirmed that they had an advantage in securing jobs, winning scholarships, and gaining admission to graduate or professional schools because they graduated with Honors.

5. Whom do I see if I have a question about . . .

- a. Classes, majors, degree [plans, scheduling—Miranda.Phillips@tamuc.edu](#)
- b. Internships, events, the Current and Transfer Student Program, basic support—Lindsay.Svane@tamuc.edu

- c. Study abroad, thesis questions, problem-solving, capstone options, basic support—Brittney.Yager@tamuc.edu
 - d. Thesis questions, academic standing, formal approvals, problem-solving, basic support—Karen.Roggenkamp@tamuc.edu
 - e. Volunteer hours, book checks, grants, general office/business issues—Leanna.Vannoy@tamuc.edu.
6. What can I do to help the Honors College?

Promote the Honors College on campus and in your network of friends and family outside of the university. All the advertising in the world does not match word-of-mouth praise for an instructor or a valuable Honors experience. Many students at TAMU-Commerce do not know that the Honors College may be accessible to them—help spread the word!

HONORS COLLEGE SCORING RUBRIC



Section 1: High School Class Rank Percentage*	
1st or 2nd in Class	60
Top 1%	55
Top 5%	50
Top 10%	45
Top 15%	35
Top 20%	30
Below Top 20%	0

Section 2: Supplemental Assessment (choose one)	
Test Score Option Choose best ACT or SAT score	
1490+ or 33+	30
1390-1480 or 30-32	25
1270-1380 or 27-29	20
1160-1260 or 24-26	15
1080-1150 or 21-23	10
1070 or 20 and lower	0
OR	Test Optional Up to 30 points available See additional document for guidance on recorded lesson.

Section 3: Essay
0-5 points to be scored by Honors Council

**Add point totals from all three sections.
45 points needed to qualify for interview.**

- Homeschooled applicants will be slotted in the top 10% and must submit test scores.
- Students from schools who do not rank must submit test scores.

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH TRAINING AND APPROVALS

Submission of the thesis proposal is a major step in the academic journey of many Honors College students at Texas A&M University-Commerce. Below are guidelines to help you navigate through this important time. Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of research conduct and strictly adhere to all federal, state, and local regulations involving research.

To ensure integrity and compliance in research, all students involved in research activities must successfully complete training in Responsible Conduct in Research and Scholarship

(<https://inside.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/training/Responsible-Conduct-in-Research.aspx>).

Additional training is required for individuals whose research involves human or animal subjects. All required trainings and approval from the TAMU-Commerce Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) must be obtained before you submit your thesis proposal. Only students who have met the above requirements will be eligible to receive approval for a proposal. Proposal approval, not just submission, is required before any research/studies may be conducted.

1. You must complete the online training for *Responsible Conduct in Research and Scholarship* (<http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/training/Responsible-Conduct-in-Research.aspx>) before you submit your schedule form. Attach a copy of the certificate of training to the schedule form. **This training is required of all thesis students and is good for three years.**
2. You must complete the following if your proposed research/study involves:
 - **Human Subjects:** Human Subjects research is defined as a systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalize knowledge, which involves the collection of data from or about living human beings. In addition, all student research involving human subjects outside the classroom is considered to be in this category (see <http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/training/protection-human-subjects-training.aspx>).
 - a. You must complete the Human Subjects online training **and** gain approval for the inclusion of human subjects in your research/study from the IRB for the Protection of Human Subjects. The online training can be accessed at the following website: <http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/training/protection-human-subjects-training.aspx>.
 - b. You must gain IRB approval for your study. The process to gain approval from the IRB includes completion, submission, and revisions (if required by your Departmental IRB Representative and/or IRB) of the IRB protocol form (see http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/IRB-Protection_of_Human_Subjects/default.aspx). IRB protocol forms must be submitted to the Office of Sponsored Programs by your thesis advisor. Students may not submit the IRB protocol. Final approval for the inclusion of human subjects in your research/study rests with the IRB.
 - **Animal Subjects:** Animal subjects are defined as any live, vertebrate animal (see <http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/IACUC-Animal-Research/default.aspx>).
 - a. You must complete the Animal Subjects online training **and** gain approval for the inclusion of animal subjects in your research/study from the Institutional for care of use of animals. The online training can be accessed at the following website:

http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/IACUC-Animal-Research/Training_Information.aspx

- b. You must gain IACUC approval for your study. The process to gain approval from the IACUC includes completion, submission, and revisions (if required by the IACUC) of the IACUC protocol form (see Research Protocols Form A at <http://www.tamuc.edu/research/compliance/IACUC-Animal-Research/AUP%20Creation/default.aspx>). IACUC protocol forms must be submitted to the Office of Sponsored Programs. Final approval for the inclusion of animal subjects in your research/study rests with the IACUC. Attach IACUC approval email to schedule form.