

Course Contract FAQs for Students

What is an Honors contract?

An Honors contract is an agreement between a student and a professor to do extra work in a regular (non-Honors) course with the purpose of receiving Honors credit for that course. It should exceed the work done in a non-Honors class and should be intellectually challenging and stimulating (and, if at all possible, creative and unique). At the same time, a contract project should not be an overwhelming amount of work akin to taking an additional two or three hours of coursework (think quality, not quantity here). See also page two of the Contract Proposal Form and the list of sample contract projects, below.

Where do I get a Contract Proposal Form?

The form is available online (both on Blackboard, under “Honors Documents,” and on the Honors website). It is also available in the Honors College office.

What courses may be used for contracts?

Any non-Honors course (1000 - 4000 level) — We recommend that contracts be completed in your major or minor, but you may contract any non-Honors course in any discipline.

How do I choose a course to contract, and how do I get the instructor to agree to the contract?

You should try to choose courses that interest you and for which contracts will be real benefits to you. You are encouraged to contract ahead of time (perhaps with an instructor you know), if possible; however, sometimes you will need to size up a course (and the instructor) before asking about a contract. Regardless, you need to form a general idea of what a contract project might be (or at least be able to tell the professor which course topics you find particularly interesting). Don't approach a professor without any ideas. When you have a basic contract idea, approach your instructor and, if necessary, explain what a contract is. Bring in a copy of the Contract Proposal Form and this FAQ sheet for your professor so that she/he/they can see what a contract typically entails. Dean Bell will be happy to discuss contracts further with you or your instructor.

How do I apply for a contract?

Once you and your professor decide on your contract project, you will complete the Contract Proposal Form. Fill in the contract description in detail. Then get the required signature from your instructor. All signatures should either be physical signatures or digitally verified. You will upload a PDF of the Contract Proposal Form to the Honors Blackboard before the deadline. The deadline is the fifth class day.

How detailed does my contract proposal need to be?

Give as much detail as possible. Certainly avoid overly general descriptions, such as “student will write an extra paper.” If your contract description is too general, it will be returned to you for revision before it will be approved.

What kind of extra work will I be doing?

It depends on the course, the topic, and the agreement you reach with your instructor. There are many different forms a contract can take. Some will involve extra reading and extra writing, but you and your instructor should feel free to design the contract that will be the most interesting and the most beneficial to both of you. In the past, students have satisfied contracts in many different ways: teaching parts of the class, leading discussions, designing course or website documents, performing research tasks, tutoring, giving a performance, producing artistic or electronic products, and many other projects. There is no set-in-stone form that a contract must take, but it must result in a deliverable (product). Again, you and your professor may contact Dean Bell if either of you has any questions. See also the list of sample course contracts, below.

What are my professional obligations when my professor and I agree to do a contract?

Your professional obligations are clearly stated in the Contract Proposal Form: namely, that you will complete the agreed upon project by the end of the semester and that you will meet twice per month with your professor. If you cannot complete the contract, you must inform the professor immediately and schedule an appointment with Dean Bell. You will not be cleared to do any future contracts until the matter is resolved with her, and you could be placed on Status 2 (probation) with Honors. We do understand that there can be good reasons for not completing a contract, but it is still your responsibility to remain in open communication with your professor and with Honors. Unless extenuating circumstances arise, we expect you to fulfill the terms of your contract since you are representing the Honors College.

What are the contract meeting requirements?

The contract proposal stipulates “at least twice per month” (bi-weekly) meetings, but there is some flexibility in how meetings are conducted. For instance, it may be acceptable to “meet” with your instructor through e-mail or Zoom, particularly later in the semester, when you are likely to be working more independently. The specific details and timing of your meetings are for you and your instructor to work out. Ultimately, of course, you are responsible for arranging meetings.

What is the deadline for submission of Contract Proposal Forms?

The revised deadline for Contract Proposal Forms is the **5th class day**. Honors staff have worked closely with the Registrar’s office to ensure contracted courses are designated as Honors on both your transcript and Degree Works. While this is an exciting development, it does make the 5th day a hard deadline for submission to comply with state reporting mandates. **Contracts submitted after the 5th class day will not be considered.**

What final form should the contract report take?

That is between you and your instructor, although you may contact Dean Bell with any questions or concerns you might have. For each project, there should be a deliverable of some sort, arranged by you and your professor.

How is the contract finalized?

Your instructor will need to complete the Contract Certification Form. You are responsible for getting this form signed by your instructor and uploading it to Blackboard by the deadline. Again, physical or digitally verified signatures are required.

What is the deadline for turning in the Contract Certification Form?

All Contract Certification Forms must be uploaded to Blackboard by the day on which grades are due (the Monday after graduation).

What if I miss the deadline?

Turn it in anyway as soon as you are able. If by some chance it is not complete, contact your professor and Dean Bell immediately. Contracts that are not certified by the end of the semester with no contact from the Honors student will have the honors designation removed from the course.

How many contracts can I do each semester?

The number of contracts depends on several factors, including your graduation date, semester course load, and whether or not you are also taking an Honors course or seminar. Typically, though, students take three- to six-hours of Honors per semester, so you can do two contracts in addition to a seminar or Honors class. In extenuating circumstances, a student may contract three courses, but the student must have advance approval from the Dean Bell. Under no circumstances can a student contract more than three classes in a semester.

Is it possible to contract a course over the summer?

Students who have extenuating circumstances (e.g. are graduating early or started the Honors College late), might be able to contract a summer course, but only with Dean Bell's approval. You must schedule an appointment with Dean Bell prior to the Summer Session to discuss the additional requirements needed to do a summer contract. Any contract forms submitted for summer will not be considered if you have not received prior approval.

Is it possible to contract an online course?

Yes. Honors students may contract two classes (up to six hours) of online courses. This does not include the Honors online seminar.

Is it possible to contract a study abroad course?

No. However, study abroad courses (up to 6 hrs) can count for Honors credit. Mention that you are an Honors student when meeting with your Study Abroad coordinator, and contact the Honors office with details about the course(s).

How many hours of Honors credit do students earn in variable-hour or six-hour classes?

Students will receive up to four hours of Honors credit for variable-hour and six-hour classes.

Is it possible to do a contract with a professor if I am not taking a course with that professor?

No. Contracts are projects that can only be done in courses in which you are currently enrolled; however, pending your course instructor's approval, you may also work in consultation with another professor on the course contract project. You may also enroll in HONR 4095: Independent Study with any professor that will count for three hours of Honors coursework.

Do I get a grade for the contract?

No, but in order to receive Honors credit for successfully completing a contract, you must earn an A or B in the course.

Sample Contracts

Below is a list of several highly successful contract projects undertaken by professors and Honors students in a variety of disciplines. If you have had any contract experiences that you have found particularly exciting and interesting, please e-mail Honors with details (honors@shsu.edu).

- Learn and recite a passage of a poem in Middle English
- Create a piece of original artwork based on your interpretation of select literary works
- Perform a scene from a play that is included on the class reading list
- Assist with a research project in a lab with the goal of submitting an abstract and presenting a poster at a conference
- Create a power point presentation on the Greek Archaic Age and present it to the class
- Teach the class how to make tabouli in Arabic
- Write a fantasy fiction short story in a non-English class related to the course materials (say, a psychology course)
- Keep a meditation and mindfulness journal and reflect on the efficacy of the various techniques used
- Critique a book related to some topic in class that you find interesting but that is not included on the syllabus
- Create a 10-12 minute research project and present it at the URS

NOTE: If your questions are not answered by this FAQ, contact honors@shsu.edu.