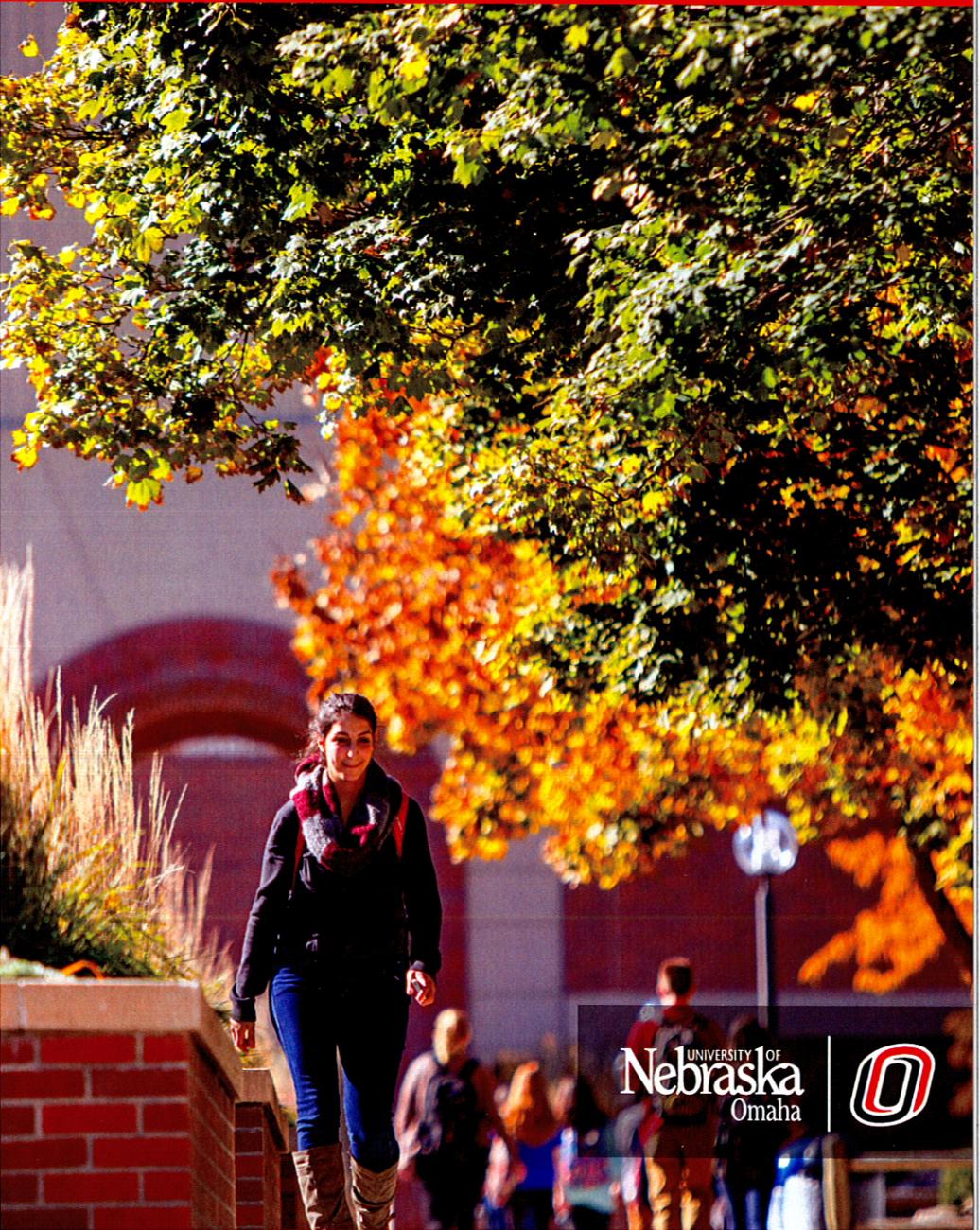


UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM CONTRACT GUIDELINES



UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Omaha



Purpose

Honors Contracts allow students to enroll in and receive Honors credit for most courses. Honors students may thus take initiative in their Honors work, responsibly negotiating with professors to design learning goals and then activities to achieve the goals as well as working independently while using mentoring feedback from the professor.

Requirements

- **Kind of work:** The faculty member(s) should introduce the student(s) to graduate or professional level expectations (or upper level undergraduate work if the student is a freshman)—in short, add depth or advanced work. Students might investigate areas or read research articles related to course sub-topics.
- **Product:** Examples include journals, papers, creative efforts, and videos (and many more possibilities). In general, the contracted work is about adding depth or advanced work, not about piling on more papers. The contract's value lies in its intellectual content.
- **Schedule of regular meetings outside class/regular contact:** Faculty should meet regularly with student(s) outside of class and throughout the semester to discuss the work and provide feedback and guidance—how regularly depends on the nature of the contracted work but it should be ongoing and not an add-on activity at the end of the semester. Thus skills, understanding and knowledge develop over time with the faculty member's guidance. Contact may include formalized e-mail reports and journals as well as face-to-face meetings. Meetings and/or contact should occur no less than five times each semester.
- **Give back:** In return for the enriched learning and extra attention, Honors students should enrich fellow students' learning by (for example) sharing what was learned in a class presentation, subsequent tutoring, or designing / implementing a learning activity for the class.

Steps and Rules for Completing a Contract

- Fill out the contract, get student AND faculty signatures, and submit it to the Honors Program in KH 208—DEADLINES are the end of the last business day of the THIRD week of the regular semester; FIRST week for a summer course.
- LATE contracts will NOT be accepted.
- DO THE WORK! The student is responsible for undertaking the project, for meeting with the faculty member in a timely and considerate manner, and for course and contract learning investment.
- Students must MAINTAIN a B or better average in the course (and earn a final grade of B or better) in order to undertake and complete a contract.
- Students cannot UNDERTAKE more than TWO contracts in any given semester; faculty should ONLY mentor FOUR or less contracts in one semester.
- Students must KEEP copies of all contracts in case they are needed for review in the last semester before graduation.
- Complete (self) ASSESSMENT rubric by semester's end (students) / next semester (faculty).
- If a student wishes to withdraw from a contract, the student is required to notify the faculty member and Honors Director. Consequences may result for students repeatedly failing to complete contracts.

Examples of Contracts:

Undertake original lab research and present to peers on what was learned — both results and about how a researcher in a particular field or in a particular methodology works.

Create videos or artistic pieces that connect to but extend beyond course content and knowledge; perform or show these works publically.

Read professional articles on a particular topic; meet to discuss articles with professor; explore professional or scholarly standards, tools, methods, etc.; craft original argumentative paper of at least 10 pgs.; report learning to peers.

Investigate plant growth under different circumstances; share lab results with peers.

Develop new algorithm with purpose extended beyond course boundaries; share development and implementation with peers.

Create or extend a service learning component to a course; involve peers or report to peers.



Study car usage on campus and explore sustainability options.

Shadow teachers and explore pedagogical theories; analyze techniques and practices in reflection journal.

Go through IRB and conduct interviews with tornado survivors; prepare a chapbook of nonfiction pieces.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

- Students will complete a project that deepens their knowledge of the disciplines or fields in which they are working.
- If more than one field or discipline is involved, the student and faculty member supervising the contract may agree on what disciplines / fields to include in the contract.
- Discipline-specific objectives are defined by the course instructor; they may include use and critique of original scholarship and / or use and critique of evidence acceptable to the discipline involved.
- Students will demonstrate an ability to review their own work and make substantial improvements to a project beyond the feedback provided by faculty.
- Students will demonstrate an ability to comprehend and discuss specifics concerning methodological analysis, argument structure, or other aspects of constructing knowledge in a discipline.
- Students will demonstrate an ability to maintain professional, timely, and effective e-mail conversations with faculty.
- Students will demonstrate an ability to conduct productive, ongoing meetings with faculty.
- Students will use their learning from the contract and individual attention from the professor to enrich the learning of classmates and / or peers.

Evaluation and Assessment

- **Completion:** All honors contract work should be completed and submitted ON or BEFORE the last official class meeting.
- **Students:** Please consult the rubric on the back page of this booklet and use it to assess and monitor your own contract progress. ALL STUDENTS must complete the rubric as self-assessment and submit it to the Honors office NO LATER THAN the last day of classes for the semester.
- **Course Grading:** The student should not be graded harder or, conversely, more easily in the course for attempting more challenging work in a contract. However, if the contract work is not completed, please inform the Honors Director so that the student's records may be adjusted accordingly.
- **Contract Rubric for Instructors:** Please submit the Honors Option Assessment Rubric (sample on back page) to the Honors Program office in KH 208 (electronically to lxmorrison@unomaha.edu) as soon as possible following the end of the semester and NO LATER THAN the first week of classes of the next semester. This form will be emailed to you in the penultimate week of classes. Faculty are asked to evaluate students on the four outcomes using the Likert scales, wherein we are asking faculty to make professional judgments about a student's performance in the contract work over the course of the semester. The value of each scale is defined for each question. Faculty may also mark a zero if the minimum criteria were not satisfied.

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The University of Nebraska at Omaha shall not discriminate based upon age, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, gender-identity, sex, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran's status, marital status, religion, or political affiliation.

HONORS OPTION ASSESSMENT: Rubric

The student has successfully demonstrated a deepened knowledge of the discipline(s)/ field(s) through his/her project; contract work exceeded course expectations.

[1-Student demonstrated minimal growth in discipline specific knowledge. 4-Student demonstrated growth expected of first year graduate students.]

1 2 3 4

The student has completed substantial improvements to the project between receiving the professor's feedback and submitting the final project. [1- Student completed minimal improvements beyond the professor's feedback. 4- Student completed major changes to the paper beyond the professor's feedback, improving the overall quality of the final product.]

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1 2 3 4

The student's project demonstrates an ability to manipulate detail and master nuance using discipline-specific scholarship. [1-Student relied on general summaries or categorical statements in the project. 4- Student used and manipulated specifics expected in a first year graduate student in the discipline.]

1 2 3 4

The student reliably maintains professional e-mail communication with the course professor throughout the semester. [1-E-mail communication was intermittent and/or not professionally constructed. 4-Student's e-mails were reliably formatted correctly, timely, and were articulated well]

1 2 3 4

The student conducted productive, professional ongoing meetings, usually biweekly, with the professor. [1-Student missed meetings and was unreceptive to professor's comments; lacked materials required for the meeting. 4-Student attended meetings, conducted him/herself professionally, came prepared with questions, comments, and ideas.]

1 2 3 4

The student enriched the learning of classmates through a well-crafted presentation or other contribution. [1-Student was prepared with minimal insights beyond the discussions with the professor. 4-Student prepared a dynamic and intellectually engaging presentation.]

1 2 3 4

Student / Professor Comments to explain ratings (optional):