Honors Policies and Procedures for the Department of Engineering

This document outlines the policies and procedures for conducting an Honors Capstone Project within the Department of Engineering. Where there is absence of guidance in these policies and procedures, the current policies of the Honors College should apply[1].

Definitions

*Engineering Honors Liaison***:** an Engineering faculty member appointed by the Engineering AUH to oversee the Honors process and curriculum within the Engineering Department.

Honors Capstone Project: a culminating thesis or portfolio within the Honors College[2]. The Capstone Project is approved by the Honors College and overseen by the Project Advisor.

Project Advisor: a tenured or tenure-track Engineering faculty member responsible for supervising an Honors Capstone Project.

Guidance for Establishing an Honors Project

- Currently, the Engineering Department only supports Honors Capstone Projects consisting of Honors Thesis credit (ENGR 499ABC). Appropriate timelines for establishing an Honors Thesis are available through the Honors College website[3].

- An Honors Thesis is "*grounded in the individual research proposal developed by the student with assistance from one or more advisors*" and "*should be like a graduate thesis in a particular discipline, a blending of disciplines in the case of multidisciplinary projects, or in the style of an academic journal article*"[4] Consequently, collaborative and team-based experiences may not quality as an Honors Thesis because it is usually the case that a student cannot identify an individual and coherent contribution.

- Honors students wishing to pursue an Honors Capstone Project are strongly encouraged to reach out to potential Project Advisors in the first semester of their Junior year (or three semesters before graduation). An advisor should be identified before enrolling in ENGR 499A.

- Upon enrolling in ENGR 499A, honors students must meet with their project advisor no later than the first week of class to define their topic and establish a committee.

[1] https://www.jmu.edu/honors/capstone-project.shtml
[2] https://catalog.jmu.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=44&poid=19149
[3] https://www.jmu.edu/honors/handbook/basic-guidelines.shtml
[4] https://www.jmu.edu/honors/handbook/research-projects.shtml

Honors Thesis Committee

- Honors thesis committees are composed of three members: the project advisor and two additional readers. The project advisor will serve as the committee chair. It is particularly important that the committee chair have expertise that will allow the student to successfully complete their project.

- In most cases, readers will also be faculty members in the Department of Engineering; however, relevant expertise and experience may be found outside the Department and appropriate substitutions can be made. With the prior approval of the project advisor, a reader may be from another JMU department. With prior approval of the project advisor and the honors liaison, a reader may be a person external to JMU with appropriate experience and/or credentials. At a minimum, the committee must contain at least two full-time JMU faculty members.

- It is the joint responsibility of the project advisor and honors student to identify and recruit readers with appropriate expertise to advise the project. While the student may often take the lead in recruiting and identifying readers, it is the overall responsibility of the advisor to ensure the committee is appropriate for the project.

Deliverables

In all cases, students must complete and submit a properly formatted written document following the appropriate disciplinary norms in which their work was conducted and the requirements of the Honors College.

It is the practice of the Engineering Department to assign the Engineering Honors Liaison as the course instructor for ENGR 499 A, B, and C. In this role the Liaison is required to assign a grade at the completion of each course. In general, the Liaison will evaluate the following deliverables on a complete/incomplete basis:

Course (Typical Semester)	*Deliverables*
ENGR 499A (Spring Junior)	• First week of semester: email from honors student to Liaison indicating their Advisor and general thesis topic. • ~February: email including committee composition and extended abstract (~500 words) describing overall project goals, methods, and expected results. • ~Mid-April: Thesis Proposal and Honors Application form submitted to Honors College based upon published guidelines and timeline. Liaison is copied on communication with Honors College.

	• End of Semester: written literature review based upon submitted to Liaison.
ENGR 499B (Fall Senior)	• ~October: short presentation emailed to Liaison providing an update of thesis progress including results to date, potential roadblocks, and plan for thesis completion.
ENGR 499C (Spring Senior)	• ~March: email to Liaison indicating anticipated thesis public presentation date/time. Student is responsible for scheduling room and committee availability if presented outside the Honors Symposium. • ~April: full thesis submitted to Honors College along with application forms before deadline. Liaison is cc'd on communications and provided a copy of the thesis.

Note: deadlines may be adjusted if a student is outside the typical 499A,B,C sequence

Progression Through Engineering Honors Process

While it is generally expected that a student entering ENGR 499A will complete the sequence to 499B and 499C, situations may arise where a student is unable to continue with the thesis and will need to exit the process. In this event, the student will communicate with the Liaison to determine the appropriate actions to take. In general, a student would complete the current ENGR 499 course they are enrolled in. Students may be able to enroll in subsequent courses to maintain other minors/certifications within the larger Honors College.