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Honors College Courses

Criteria for Honors College Courses

The program approved by the IUP Senate in December 1992 proposed that the major differences between honors courses and other IUP courses should be:

1. they are populated by outstanding students whose presence will in itself change what happens inside the classroom.
2. they will involve students in qualitatively different work rather than simply assigning more work.
3. their pedagogy would show a preponderance of the following characteristics: a) more student-centered, interactive pedagogy, b) concern for affective as well as cognitive growth, c) higher expectations for self-initiated learning, d) integrative or synthetic approach to knowledge, e) opportunities to enhance written and oral communication skills, f) development of critical thinking skills, g) movement at a pace appropriate to outstanding students, g) enhancements such as guest lecturers and trips, and h) limited enrollment [presented in the budget as enrollment of maximum 20 students].

Additionally we would emphasize that because these students are on the whole outstanding in ability it does not follow that we can assume basic skills are already developed. For example, while the honors student may have much ability as a reader, it does not follow that we can assume he/she will already know how to identify voices in a text or be familiar with the technical jargon and paradigms of literary analysis. Skills cannot be assumed and must still be taught.

The program approved in December 1992 further specifies that the Honors College Committee has the responsibility to develop a proposal for honors sections of LS 499 (which will provide closure to the four years of honors work. As with the Honors College core courses, Honors LS499 will meet the objectives of all synthesis courses but will also address objectives unique to the Honors College section.

In December 1994 the University Senate adopted the following criteria for Honors Courses:

- a. honors courses will be limited to an enrollment of 20 honors students. However, at the discretion of the instructor and his/her department, an honors course which is unable to fill with students enrolled in the Honors College will be allowed to enroll non-Honors College students whom the instructor assesses as being capable of doing honors-level work in this particular course with the approval of the Honors College Committee. These non-Honors College students would receive the "H" prefix for the course on their transcripts.

This option should be used primarily for upper-level, discipline-specific courses where there won't be enough majors in the Honors College to fill, for example, a 300-level biology course with all of its prerequisites. This option also provides a way of increasing student and faculty participation in the Honors College beyond those students officially accepted into the total program.

- b. honors courses will evidence a commitment to an interactive pedagogy and the characteristics of that pedagogy described in the original program approved in December 1992 (see above). Proposals should at a minimum show evidence of an integrative learning

environment (synthesis skills) that promote student discovery of models or learning paradigms.

c. honors courses will evaluate students in accordance with the principles of an interactive pedagogy. Honors courses should emphasize student projects, presentations, and papers. A minimum of 33% of the final grade in H courses will be based on projects, presentations, writing assignments, and/or performance. It is presumed that honors courses will rely primarily on essay examinations rather than objective exams for their testing.

d. honors courses should not attempt to have students "cover" more information and should recognize that honors students also need training in the skills which comparable traditional courses at IUP provide. Differences in course content may exist, but the focus should be more on depth of content.

While the Honors College Committee recognizes that there are legitimate alternative pedagogies to those implied by the criteria and that there are some courses for which these criteria are not well suited (as is also the case for writing-intensive courses), we maintain that honors students will be exposed to these alternatives in the 102 credit hours of non-honors IUP courses they will take before graduation.

What kinds of honors courses may be proposed?

Honors course proposals may come from any area of the IUP curriculum except for the EN 101, EN 121, HI 195, PH 120, RS 100, or FA 100 which are already offered in interdisciplinary form as the Honors "Core Courses" (HC 101, 102, and HC 201) and honors ES499 for which the Honors College Committee has responsibility to develop honors sections.

Honors students will come from all majors. Liberal studies courses and upper-level courses which are requirements of several majors (for example, Management 310 which all majors in the College of Business are required to take) are especially good choices for this population. Honors sections of multi-sectioned courses will often be easier for your department to schedule.

What if I have a great synthesis course proposal? May I not offer it to honors students?

You may choose to offer it as a synthesis course. But also consider that all Honors College courses should share many of the qualities of synthesis courses and could be offered under another heading. Honors students will also be required and will want to take upper-level courses in or related to their majors. Applicants are encouraged to conceive these as interdisciplinary courses or courses with few prerequisites to facilitate enrollment by students of various majors. Remember, too, that the option exists to enroll qualified non-Honors College students in the class with approval of the Honors College Committee.

This would be the perfect situation to take a "synthesis" proposal and turn it into an interdisciplinary 300- or 400-level honors course.

How many honors courses will be offered? Will my/our honors course actually be scheduled?

Decisions about which honors courses will be scheduled in a given academic year will largely depend upon the number of Honors College students enrolled and their scheduling needs at that time. These decisions will be made by the Honors College Director in

consultation with the Honors College Committee, the Provost, Academic Deans, and Department Chairpersons. This is similar to the procedure for scheduling synthesis courses.

Obviously, the Honors College Committee must assure that an adequate number of honors courses exist to meet the minimum requirements of enrolled students. It is our hope, however, that we can exceed these minimum requirements and allow Honors College students the option of taking more than 23 hours of honors work.

While there is a mechanism to replace faculty where necessary to offer honors courses, this budget is limited. Thus, you have a greater chance of offering your honors course frequently if:

1. it is likely to enroll 20 qualified students
2. it does not require replacement FTE

Can we expect replacement faculty when we offer an honors course?

Departments requiring replacement faculty because of staffing needs of the Honors College will receive replacement FTE where necessary and as the budget allows. The Provost will oversee this process in consultation with Academic Deans and Department Chairpersons. The Honors College Committee will NOT be involved in this process.

What is the approval process for Honors College courses?

Determine if the course will be:

_____ an honors section of an existing course

A proposal for an H-designation for an existing course involves primarily a change in how the instructor will teach the course; it does not involve a change of the goals, objectives, or content of the course. This procedure is similar to proposing a writing intensive section of an existing course. It is assumed that the course title and objectives remain the same as the syllabus of record which originally went through the IUP approval process. All that is required is an application to the Honors College Committee after you have secured the approval of your department and college dean.

This procedure is designed to insure that H courses meet the definition and criteria for Honors College courses passed by the Senate in both December 1992 and December 1994.

_____ a new honors course

A proposal for a new honors course must go through the normal IUP approval process for new courses with the additional step of approval by the Honors College Committee.

What if I need help in completing the application?

The Honors College periodically offers workshops for faculty who want to propose honors courses. These are usually held just before and just after the spring semester. Contact the Honors College at x4971 for more information.

The Honors College Committee is also happy to offer you individual consultation and feedback.

Are there any requirements for who may teach an honors course?

No. The approval process is for the course, not the instructor. Staffing decisions are made by department chairs and deans who may consult with the Honors College Committee as they feel it is necessary.

How long will the approval process take?

If the proposal is for an honors section of an existing course, the process can be completed very quickly. The Honors College Committee meets 2-4 times per month during the normal academic year and will review proposals as they are received.

If the proposal is for a new honors course, the timetable is roughly the same as the approval process for any new course.

In both cases, the approval process is facilitated when the application is carefully and thoroughly written.

Form to Request Approval of an Honors College Course

HCC# _____
Action/Date _____

COVER SHEET: Proposal for Honors College Course

Course Title: _____ Course Number _____

Department(s): _____

Professor(s): _____ Phone and e-mail _____

Prerequisites: _____

Please check all that apply:

- _____ This is a proposal for an Honors section of an existing course
- _____ This is a proposal for a new Honors course.
- _____ This course is designed to meet a Liberal Studies requirement
- _____ This course is open to non-majors
- _____ If offered, this course would NOT require replacement FTE for my department
- _____ If offered, this course would SOMETIMES require replacement FTE for my dept..
- _____ If offered, this course would ALWAYS require replacment FTE for my department.
- _____ My department/college is willing to offer this course in summer as needed.
- _____ I understand that I may not propose an honors synthesis course. **DELETE**
- _____ When is the earliest semester/summer session that you will be ready to teach this course?

Signatures: Dept. Curriculum Committee _____

Department Chairperson _____

College Dean _____

Director, Honors College _____

Please attach the following components to this cover sheet:

- _____ 1. a UWUCC course proposal cover sheet (for new courses only!)
- _____ 2. the syllabus of record approved by the UWUCC for this course (for existing courses only!)
- _____ 3. the syllabus for your proposed Honors version of this course in which course objectives are phrased as course questions, *ie. "The course will attempt to enable students to answer the questions: What is a 'good' film? What is a mathematical model? How is mathematics connected to life? What does it mean to think like a biologist?"*
- _____ 4. answers to the 10 questions of the Honors College Committee

Please number all pages. Provide 14 copies to the Honors College Committee

Honors College Course Proposal Questions:

To help us understand the pedagogy for your syllabus, please submit your thoughtful and concrete answers to the ten questions below:

1. Upon what definition of an honors student is this course description built?
2. Describe how this course is different from a regular (non-honors) section of this or a similar course? Explain how the differences meet the criteria of being qualitatively different from a normal undergraduate course rather than just covering quantitatively more material?
3. How does this course demonstrate a commitment to the development of critical thinking skills as a primary objective? Give specific examples. Are there ways in which there could be more emphasis in critical thinking? If so, what are the impediments to a greater emphasis on critical thinking in the proposed course?
4. Demonstrate how the pedagogy of this course is interactive and student-centered. Explain the ways in which your method of instruction creates a classroom environment which is truly open to discovery by students. (As opposed to being one in which the professor plans to lead the students--however interactively--to predefined conclusions.)
5. Explain how this course reflects high expectations for self-initiated student learning? In what ways does this course provide a foundation which teaches students HOW TO be self-initiated learners rather than just assuming they will be?
6. Describe how this course meets the criteria of providing an integrative or synthetic approach to knowledge? How could this feature be enhanced? Describe the impediments to a more enhanced synthetic approach.
7. Give evidence that this course moves at a pace appropriate for honors students while recognizing that, though honors students may be very bright, they do not necessarily come with pre-existing academic SKILLS.
8. How does this course demonstrate concern for students' affective and moral/ethical as well as cognitive growth? Do you have suggestions for strengthening the affective and/or moral/ethical focus? Describe the impediments to strengthening this aspect of the course.
9. How does this course provide opportunities for students to enhance written and oral communication skills? Is there evidence that the methods of evaluation demonstrate a commitment to interactive pedagogy with at least 33% of the final grade based on projects, presentations, writing and/or performance?
10. Describe your likely response to a group of students from the proposed honors class coming to you and indicating that this class is not being taught in an appropriate manner for an honors course.

Procedures for Approval of a New Honors Course

Department Approval
(Curriculum Committee
and Department Chair)

College Curriculum
Committee Approval

College Dean Approval
(in Consultation with Provost)

Honors College Committee
Approval

Liberal Studies Committee
Approval (if Liberal Studies)

UWUCC Approval

Senate Approval

President
and Council of Trustees
Approval

Catalog Change Forwarded
by UWUCC
to Catalog Editor

Procedures for Approval of an Honors Section of an Existing Course*

Department Approval
(Curriculum Committee
and Department Chair)

College Dean Approval

Honors College Committee
Approval

Liberal Studies Committee
Informed of HCC Action
(if Liberal Studies)

UWUCC Informed
of HCC Action

Senate Informed
of HCC Action

President and
Council of Trustees
informed of HCC Action

Within each college, the approval for honors designation of existing synthesis courses will follow the same approval mechanism used to approve synthesis courses. Proposals are then forwarded to the Honors College Committee for approval. Following Honors College Committee approval, the proposal is submitted to the UWUCC for information.

Similarly, a department proposal for an honors section of ___ 281 or 481 should follow the same procedures as normally required for approval of special topics courses in that college. Proposals are then forwarded to the Honors College Committee for approval. Following Honors College Committee approval, the proposal is submitted to the UWUCC for information