**LHR Thesis Guide**

The Schreyer Honors College website has a thorough description of the honors thesis and offers very useful advice about how to choose a topic, find an advisor, and budget your time (located at <https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/thesis/>). This document is intended to give you some general information to help you get started in the thesis process and answer some common questions.

# The Thesis

## The Honors College describes the thesis as “a scholarly piece of writing in which the writer is expected to show a command of the relevant scholarship in his (or her) field and contribute to the scholarship. It should confront a question that is unresolved and push towards a resolution.”

Your thesis will probably be both one of the most challenging and most rewarding assignments of your undergraduate career. Through the process of choosing a topic; conducting independent research; and formulating, articulating and crafting a sustained argument, you will build on what you have learned in your courses, gain insights into some of the relevant scholarship and methodology relevant to your major and career, and develop your talents as a writer and thinker. Once your thesis is completed you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have produced a work of scholarship that will be permanently archived in the Penn State Library system. It is also something you will probably want to put on your résumé as it helps to identify and distinguish your expertise and research abilities in an area relevant to your career.

The School of Labor and Employment Relations expects your honors thesis to be based on thorough research and to offer an original interpretation. The nature and extent of the primary research will vary according to the question pursued and your specific field of study. You are also expected to situate your research and analysis within the scholarship of the field and to clearly articulate and support the significance of your project and its contribution. If your work involves extensive primary research it is important to be careful to not simply present a narrative or an inventory of your sources, but to center your thesis on the analysis and interpretation of your research in such a way that your thesis makes an argument. Your thesis adviser will help determine the appropriate balance between primary and secondary research and between presentation of the evidence and interpretation.

# Length

A typical LHR thesis length is **25-40 pages of double-spaced text** (300 words/page), plus the bibliography and notes.

# References and Bibliography

You must identify the source of every quotation and every idea, conclusion, or inference you have drawn from the work of another author or source. You are free to choose the form of the footnotes or endnotes, but you must be consistent. Consult a guide such as the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations; The Chicago Manual of Style; Kate Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. **The Schreyer Honors College provides a template to use in writing the thesis to help ensure that your thesis meets the formatting requirements [link:** [**https://www.shc.psu.edu/academics/thesis/index.cfm**](https://www.shc.psu.edu/academics/thesis/index.cfm)**]. Be sure to use this template when starting to write your thesis—it will save you a lot of time later.**

The thesis must include a complete bibliography citing all the materials used for the thesis. See the above source for formatting information.

# Style and Usage

Because your thesis is a formal piece of scholarly writing, avoid colloquial expressions and contractions. Remember that your thesis is important. It is a source of pride and will be archived by the PSU Library System. Review the final draft and correct awkward phrasing. Also be sure to eliminate all typing, spelling, and grammatical errors.

# Schedule of Key Dates for the LHR Honors Thesis

**Three Semesters before Graduation (SPRING SEMESTER OF YOUR JUNIOR YEAR)**

## A Thesis Proposal Report is due to the Schreyer Honors College in the spring semester of your Junior year ‐‐ typically April 15th if you are planning to graduate in the spring of your senior year (so, if you are planning to graduate in Spring 2022, the proposal is filed in Spring 2021). The Thesis Proposal Report outlines the scope of the proposed research and any special needs you might have to pursue this topic, such as the need to travel to archival collections, order microfilm, etc.

## Your proposal will be approved by (1) your thesis advisor (the LHR faculty member who will be your primary advisor on the thesis), (2) the LHR honors advisor (who can also serve as your thesis advisor, but then an additional reader will need to approve your thesis), and (3) the Schreyer Honors College. This means that you must have a fairly well-defined topic and thesis advisor one full year before your thesis is due.

It is incumbent on you in the months preceding the time of submission of Thesis Proposal Report to identify and approach a faculty member of your department as a potential thesis advisor, someone whose field is relevant. Ideally, this is someone you already know. You should explain your research interests and ask the faculty member to serve as your thesis advisor.

**Narrowing down your list of potential thesis advisors should be done, at the latest, during the second semester of your junior year** to give you plenty of time to have investigatory conversations.

**As required, your thesis must be read and reviewed by your thesis advisor and the LHR honors advisor. A secondary reader is required if your thesis supervisor is also your department’s honors advisor.**

# One Year before Graduation

You will be enrolled in the equivalent of two semesters of study in the final year of enrollment. It is not mandatory, but you have the option of taking LER 496 during the two semesters of your final undergraduate year to give you time to work on your thesis. Once LER 496 is listed on your schedule, just complete an online request to “honors option” it; Schreyer Honors College then accepts it as 496H. Please note that you cannot register for LER 496 via LionPATH. There is a form you must complete that you can get from Sierra Page at our reception desk on the fifth floor of the Keller building or from our Academic Adviser Katelyn Perry. You may take LER 496H twice, but not during the same semester. Your thesis advisor will be the faculty listed as the LER 496H instructor, and you should arrange regular meetings with them to meet the requirements for LER 496H. Your thesis advisor will assign you a grade for LER 496H based on your thesis progress and the quality of your thesis.

***General Advice****:* The more time you can give your thesis and honors advisors to read your thesis drafts the better they can comment, and the more you can benefit from their expertise. Your first draft will not be your last -- expect the need for multiple significant revisions. Be considerate of your advisors’ busy schedules and recognize the constraints of your own schedule. Try to complete thesis sections ahead of the suggested schedule of deadlines agreed upon with your thesis advisor. The sooner you have a complete draft, the better. Deadlines are firm and missing one can prevent you from graduating on time.

## As a guide for your final semester before graduating, the first third of your thesis should be finished one to two (1‐2) weeks into the semester; the second third should be finished three to five (3‐5) weeks into the semester; the final third should be finished six to seven (6‐7) weeks into the semester, which is before spring break. This gives you weeks seven to ten (7‐10) of the semester to revise the introduction and conclusion and to revise the material read and commented on by your thesis supervisor and second reader (if relevant).

**REGARDING THE SECOND READER**: A **second reader** is another Penn State Faculty member, who has specialized knowledge in the thesis topic, and agrees by your request to read your thesis draft and offer constructive advice. The second reader is the LHR honors advisor who provides a helpful supplementary role. **A secondary reader is required if your thesis supervisor is also your department’s honors advisor. Unless the thesis supervisor and departmental honors advisor are the same person, a second reader is not required for thesis approval**. It is recommended that you contact your intended second reader no later than the second month of your final semester to secure their participation.

# Submitting the Thesis

**A complete draft of your Honors Thesis must be filed with the Schreyer Honors College in early March as part of a format review. Around this time you must also submit your first draft for review to your thesis supervisor, second reader, and honors adviser for critical feedback.** More specifically, this first draft is to be submitted to all these parties no later than the Monday before spring break. Only those students whose thesis is successfully reviewed in March will be allowed to file a thesis. If your thesis is deemed insufficiently developed, you may be asked to defer graduation or to forego graduating with honors.

**Your thesis must meet the approval of the thesis advisor, the honors advisor, and second reader, if relevant,** before final submission to Schreyer Honors College. **LHR upholds rigorous standards for the honors thesis and a thesis may not be approved if it is not deemed up to those standards.**

***Assuming you are graduating in May, in early April the final version of your thesis must be filed with the Schreyer Honors College.* The next day a signatory page with the signatures of the thesis supervisor and the honors advisor (and the second reader, if relevant) must be filed with the Schreyer Honors College.**

***If you have questions about your thesis at any time, please feel free to contact the LHR honors advisor.***