

Hardin Simmons University Honors Program

Student Handbook

Last Revised - Fall 2025

MISSION STATEMENT

UNIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT: The mission of Hardin-Simmons University is to be a community dedicated to providing excellence in education enlightened by Christian faith and values.

In affirmation of the University Mission Statement, the mission of the Honors Program is to offer highly motivated, exceptional students the opportunity to work within the Honors community to pursue scholarly, research, and service interests in an environment enlightened by Christian faith and values.

Based on Luke 12:48, “To Whom Much is Given, Much is Required,” the program objectives are as follows:

- 1. To encourage and provide unique, varied and interdisciplinary opportunities for students to actively engage in the pursuit of knowledge.**
- 2. To encourage and provide unique, varied and interdisciplinary opportunities for free discussion and exchange of ideas.**
- 3. To encourage and provide unique and varied opportunities for self-discovery and personal growth.**
- 4. To encourage and provide opportunities for spiritual growth and the integration of faith and intellect.**

HONORS COUNCIL

The Honors Program is administered by the Program Director in consultation with the Honors Council. The Honors Council is a standing university committee comprised of faculty members representing the major academic areas of the university. The council holds regular meetings, conducts admission interviews, makes admissions decisions, and is charged with approval of Honors course proposals and faculty selection.

STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Each Honors class will elect four representatives to serve on the Honors Student Advisory Council. This council will assist the program director in planning and administering

student activities and community-building and will offer advice and counsel on Honors courses, curriculum issues and promotion of student research opportunities.

ADMISSIONS QUALIFICATIONS

Admission to the Honors Program requires approval by the Honors Council. Formal application to the Program requires a written essay. Students who meet all three of the minimal criteria will be eligible to apply for admission to the Honors Program.

1. Class rank in high school, top 20% and a minimum GPA of 3.0 (4 point scale).
2. ACT score of 25, or SAT score of 1200
3. Extracurricular activities

These criteria are minimal, and meeting them does not guarantee an interview. Interviews are by invitation only. Current application is attached at the end of this document. *Admission requirements and procedures may be revised at any time. Check current publications and Honors web page for current admission requirements.*

ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES

Admission to the Honors Program is by invitation only. An official application form is available online at the HSU Honors Program web page. Students applying to the Program must file complete application materials by the stated deadlines. These items include the application form, appropriate transcripts, a brief résumé, and a short essay administered under the auspices of the Honors Council.

Résumé

Include a 1-2 page summary of the significant accomplishments that identify you as a creative, goal-oriented, responsible, talented individual who will be able to contribute to the Honors Program. Evidence of your qualifications might include honors, awards, recognitions you have earned; books you have read that have had an impact on your thinking; honors and advanced classes or tests that demonstrate accomplishments; memberships, volunteer work, travel, participation in programs, leadership experiences, singular accomplishments in any arena.

Short essay

The Honors Council places great emphasis on this essay. The essay should be approximately 500 words in length, on a topic as described within the application form. The audience for your essay is a representative of the Honors Program; your aim is to convey your ability to think deeply and broadly about a subject, communicate clearly and effectively in writing, and to convince the Honors Council that you will be an invaluable asset to the program and to the university.

Interview

In order to ensure mutual understanding of Honors Program expectations, an entrance interview is required. The director of the Honors program will schedule interview times. Candidates seeking admission to the program will be asked to reflect on their preparation, goals, motivation and their commitment to learning and living responsibly.

Recommendation Letters

Two letters of recommendation are required, with at least one from a current or former teacher.

CRITERIA FOR CONTINUATION IN THE PROGRAM

In order to remain in good standing within the program Honors students will be subject to the following guidelines.

- Maintain an overall GPA of 3.5
- Maintain a major GPA of 3.5, assessed after 12 major hours are completed
- Maintain a GPA in Honors courses of 3.5
- This program is completed with the fulfillment of a senior Honors capstone seminar project/thesis supervised by an appropriate professor.

The student who fails to meet any one of these qualifications will be:

1. Placed on program probation if his/her GPA is deficient in any category following any fall or spring (long) semester.
2. Dismissed from the program if his/her GPA is deficient in any category in two successive long semesters.
3. For students who are in within the final 45 hours of their degree and fail to maintain the required GPA, the Honors Council will determine appropriate actions or requirements for continuation in the program. The Program Director will notify the council in these circumstances and bring the issue to the council for deliberation.
4. The Honors Council also has the authority to make exceptions to dismissal for students with special circumstances or hardships that may have influenced their ability to maintain the GPA requirement.
5. In the case of #3 or 4 above, the student may make a written appeal to the Honors Program Director, and the Director will bring the appeal to the council for consideration. The council may enforce the dismissal, a probationary period, or may determine specific requirements for continuation in the program. These might include reduction of scholarship funding, delay in enrolling in Honors courses, or any other requirements the council chooses.

The student who has voluntarily dropped out of the program, been placed on probation or dismissed from the program for cause, may petition the Director of the Honors Program for readmission. Readmission normally requires that the student who has been deficient

in any grade category regain the necessary GPA and maintain the average for one long semester or one full summer before submitting his/her petition. However, if the student is in the final 45 hours of the degree, this requirement may be modified by the Council as stated above.

Other considerations:

Because honors students at HSU are expected to be exemplary not only in academic performance, but in behavior both in and out of the classroom, students in violation of any of the university's student conduct policies may be subject to dismissal from the program. In addition, any student who exhibits behavior in or out of the classroom that is not in harmony with the values and ideals of the Honors Program may be dismissed from the program by the Honors Council. In such a case, the Program Director will send a written statement delineating the issues of concern to both the student and the Honors Council. The student will have an opportunity to meet with the council and offer any information that may be pertinent to the issue. The Council will make a decision as to what, if any, action should be taken. The Council will make a recommendation to the Program Director and the Program Director will inform the student of the decision.

Appeal

A student who has been dismissed from the program may appeal such a decision to the University Provost. The decision of the provost or his/her designee is final.

SCHOLARSHIPS

All students who are accepted to the Honors program are awarded an Honors scholarship in addition to the scholarships awarded by enrollment services or academic departments. The amount of the Honors scholarship may vary slightly from student to student and year to year; however, the scholarship is substantial and will contribute significantly to the student's financial aid package. The Honors scholarship is applied above the other academic scholarships, and is given for four years during long semesters only, as long as the student is in good standing in the program. Honors scholarships are not transferable to study abroad.

LELAND SCHOLARS

Once the Honors class is selected for a fall semester, the top students within that class will be named Leland Scholars. This determination will be made by the Honors Council. Being named a Leland Scholar is the highest honor available to an incoming freshman student, and is a very competitive process. A maximum of four to five students in each incoming class may be named as Leland Scholars. The Leland Scholarship is a financial

award that amounts to a full-tuition scholarship for four years, as long as the student maintains good standing in the program.

ACADEMIC STRUCTURE, COURSES AND REQUIREMENTS

Students chosen to participate in the Honors Program will be given the opportunity to graduate with an **Honors Minor in Interdisciplinary Studies**. All students, regardless of major area, may participate. The Honors minor may function as a first minor or a second minor, depending on the student's degree plan. If the Honors minor is a second minor, some courses may be "double-counted" as General Education requirements.

The **Honors Minor in Interdisciplinary Studies** consists of the following courses: HONR 1301, BIBL 1301H or BIBL 1302H, HONR 3301, 3302, 3303, 4101 and 4102, plus 2 upper-level *elective* courses (6 hours total). *These last 6 hours will be contracted by the student with the individual professor and approved by the Honors Director. These may be currently offered courses or, in special circumstances, these may be special topics courses offered at the discretion of the professor.*

Evaluation of Student Achievement in the HSU Honors Program

Honors students are evaluated annually on the following learning outcomes: 1.

- The ability to integrate learning across disciplines
2. The ability to integrate faith and intellect.
3. The ability to think, read, and evaluate information critically.
4. The ability to formulate, conduct and present the results of a formal research project.
5. The ability to communicate effectively in an academic setting, both orally and in writing.

Honors courses:

Each Honors course must be approved by the Honors Council, acting as an Honors curriculum committee. All Honors discourses will address and include measures of at least two Honors learning objectives. These two objectives and the method of assessment will be delineated clearly in the syllabus.

HONR 1301/ Honors Colloquium / A 3-hour course designed to 1) acquaint students with academic opportunities and responsibilities for Honors students on campus and in Abilene, 2) promote a sense of individual and communal purpose, 3) encourage self-examination and self-discovery through discussion, prompted responses and autobiographical writing.

HONR 3301 Discourse in Aesthetics (3-3-0)

A course designed to introduce seminal concepts and texts within the field of aesthetics.

HONR 3302 Discourse in Cultural Theory (3-3-0)

A course designed to introduce seminal concepts and texts in the disciplines of the social sciences.

HONR 3303 Discourse in Applied Sciences and Mathematics (3-3-0)

A course designed to introduce seminal concepts and texts in the fields of science and mathematics.

HONR 3389 and HONR 4389 Independent Studies (3-3-0)

Courses created to accommodate individual arrangements between a student and a professor for specialized study of subjects not otherwise listed in the catalog. Courses bearing the Independent Studies designation may be repeated when topic varies.

HONR 3399 and HONR 4399 Special Topics (3-3-0)

Courses created to allow group study of a subject not otherwise listed in the catalog. Courses bearing the Special Topics designation may be repeated when topic varies. Permission of instructor may be required.

HONR 4101, 4102 / Honors Capstone / Two 1-hour directed study courses designed to culminate a significant portion of a student's academic career by concentration on an extended field or research project. This project will be designed and begun within the first semester and written and publicly presented as an Honors Thesis in the second semester. Consent of instructor required.

Contracted Courses

Some Honors courses will be courses that are contracted with faculty members in order for the student to get Honors credit for a regularly scheduled course or to do an independent study or special topics course. The contract form is attached to the end of this document. In such situations, the student is responsible for initiating and completing the contract with the instructor. The contract will then be submitted to the Program Director for approval. Honors contracts will be completed within the first two weeks of a semester. Contracts will not be accepted after this deadline. Any exceptions will be made at the discretion of the Program Director.

Course Substitution

There are 23 required hours, as described above, for completion of the Honors Minor in Interdisciplinary Studies. Any course substitutions for required Honors courses will be made at the discretion of the Program Director in consultation with the registrar, the student's academic advisor and the Honors Council, if needed.

Guidelines for Honors Discourses

Honors Discourses should reflect the following emphases, in accordance with the Honors mission statement and program objectives.

1. Unique, varied and novel learning opportunities.
2. Opportunities for open discussion, student creativity and free exchange of ideas.
3. An interdisciplinary approach, reaching beyond the traditional borders of the course, department, and college or school.
4. A team-teaching approach, availing students of instructors' particular pedagogical gifts, talents and areas of expertise.
5. Intentional opportunities for students to explore and articulate the integration of faith and academic pursuit.
6. All Honors discourses will address and include measures of at least two Honors learning objectives. These objectives and method of measurement will be delineated clearly in the syllabus.

Proposals for Discourses will be submitted by faculty members, or in some cases, by department or college committees to the Honors Council for approval.

Course Rotation

The standard course rotation for an incoming Honors class will be as follows, although this rotation may change to accommodate particular student needs, faculty availability, university course schedules or curriculum changes.

First Year: Fall - HONR 1301, Honors BIBL 1301 or 1302
 Spring – Honors BIBL 1301 or 1302 (if not taken in fall)

Second Year: Fall – HONR 3301 Discourse in Aesthetics
 Spring – HONR 3303 Discourse in Applied Sciences and Mathematics

Third Year: Fall –HONR 3302 Discourse in Cultural Theory
 Spring – Contracted course to support major

Fourth Year: Fall – Contracted course to support major, HONR 4101 Capstone
 Spring – HONR 4101 Capstone

Honors Capstone Guidelines and Requirements

General

The Honors capstone is designed to be a culmination of the Honors experience and provide Honors students with an opportunity to engage in research and presentation related to their particular areas of study and interest. The quality of work should exceed normal undergraduate expectations (often already required by departmental capstone projects, etc.), but should not be expected to be master's thesis or dissertation-level work.

All capstone projects, regardless of field of study, should result in a high-quality written document, conforming to the writing style of the field of study. Length of the document will vary depending on the subject matter and discipline. The document should be approved by the supervisor, and a copy presented to the program director prior to the public presentation. Public presentation for most students will be in the form of an academic paper presentation with some type of supportive audio-visual presentation, but may vary from this format depending on the field of study. Presentations may be as creative, interactive or unconventional as the student and the supervisor wish, as long as the presentation is of superior quality. Presentations should fit within one hour, and allow time for audience response and questions. Presentations will be scheduled by the program director in consultation with the student and supervisor, and may be scheduled any time within or after the 4102 semester.

The capstone courses (4101 and 4102) will typically be taken over two semesters, allowing for research and writing to begin in the first semester and writing and presentation to be done in the second semester. Other sequencing alternatives may be appropriate in some situations. Both capstone courses are offered each semester, listed as section A, with the program director as instructor.

Supervision and Evaluation

Supervising a capstone requires that the faculty supervisor meet with a student, advise and guide them through the research, writing, and presentation process. Frequency of meetings is left to the discretion of the supervisor. Some supervisors meet weekly, some every other week, some as needed.

The program director will report all grades for 4101 as IP, and at the end of 4102, the supervisor will submit the grade to the program director and the director will report the grades for both semesters. The supervisor will be paid a stipend after the student has completed 4102 by the Honors program, not the supervisor's academic department. In addition to being graded by the supervisor, for program assessment purposes, the capstone project in its entirety will be evaluated by at least one other faculty member from the Honors Council. The faculty rater will rate the capstone on the following components and the scale below:

Quality of Academic Content
 Quality of Written Communication
 Quality of Oral or Visual Presentation/Communication
 Overall Rating

Rating Scale

3-Exceeds expectations 2- Meets expectations 1-Does not meet expectations

Other Faculty Raters

In addition, all HSU faculty attending the capstone presentation will be asked to rate the presentation. These faculty evaluations will utilize the scale above.

HONORS COURSE CONTRACT
Hardin Simmons University Honors Program

Student _____ Faculty _____
Semester _____

Course Dept/Number _____ Course Title _____

Check those that apply: Directed Study _____ Regularly scheduled course _____
Capstone Sem 1 _____ Capstone Sem 2 _____ Other _____

Describe how this course fits your Honors degree plan.

If this is a regularly scheduled course that you are taking for Honors credit, confer with your instructor and then describe how your course experience will differ from that of other students in the class. Remember, the goal of Honors is not just more work, but qualitatively different work.

If this is your Capstone project, Semester 1, attach the proposal for your Capstone project to this form. The Capstone project should be an appropriate representation of exemplary undergraduate accomplishment in your major field. The content and process will be determined by the academic standards of the major field.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

Instructor Signature _____ Date _____

Approved _____ Not approved, revisions needed _____

Honors Director Signature _____



Date _____
HONORS PROGRAM APPLICATION
Completed application must be received by December 14, 2007

Name (Last): _____ (First): _____ (M.I.): _____

High School: _____
 (High school transcript should be on file in HSU Registrar's office.)

Home, street address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Home Phone: (____) _____ Email: _____

Major (or educational interest): _____

Acknowledgement: *I have applied for admission (or have been admitted) to Hardin-Simmons University. I understand that all application and registration materials **for admission to the university** are separate from this application.*

Hardin-Simmons reserves the right to deny admission to any student who does not fully comply with admission procedures established by the university. These admission decisions will be determined in a manner consistent with state and Federal nondiscrimination laws. HSU does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, or military service in its administration of education policies, programs or activities, admissions policies, or employment.

Applicant Signature _____ Date _____

Other Materials: Please include with this form

- ☐ A résumé or vita detailing your education, any employment, volunteer work, and extracurricular activities that may help us evaluate your potential as a member of the Honors Program at HSU.
- ☐ An essay (approximately 500 words) on one of the following topics: war and peace, global poverty, religious conflict, or human rights. The writing of this essay must be monitored by an official (usually a counselor or teacher) from your high school. Please include with the

essay a signed statement from the monitoring official authenticating the essay as your personal work. This statement should include: name of school official, official title, office phone number, email address.

Applications will not be considered until all application components are received.

Please mail all application materials to: Hardin-Simmons University
 Dr. Shane Davidson
 HSU 16050
 Abilene, Texas 79698

Do not write in this section

Office use only

Post mark date

Class rank # _____ out of _____
 composite _____

SAT composite: _____ or ACT