



Student Signature Honors Project Manual



Student Signature Honors Project

Introduction

Your Signature Honors Project (SHP) has the potential to be one of the most satisfying experiences of your undergraduate career in ECU's Honors College. In partnership with a faculty mentor, the SHP presents an opportunity for concentrated scholarly study in an area of your choice. Your SHP will represent an original contribution to a discipline by completing a thesis, creative endeavor, or group project.

You will need to complete the following:

- Identify a Ph.D. faculty mentor;
- Identify an idea for your SHP;
- Complete a two-semester (6 credit hour) experience that represents your own scholarly or creative work contribution to a discipline:
 - ❖ thesis
 - ❖ creative endeavor

The skills you refine while designing and then completing your SHP will often separate you from other outstanding candidates for graduate school or future employment opportunities. Many graduate and professional schools now require evidence of proficiency in research or creative activity.

SHP Requirements and Options

The main qualification of your SHP is that it represents original scholarly or creative work. Your faculty mentor will evaluate your final project and give you a letter grade as the instructor of record for your experience. Completion of a SHP is required for graduation from the Honors College at ECU. Students must earn a final grade of "B minus" or higher to receive Honors College credit for the SHP.

Thesis

- Research/Scholarly Paper. You will need to research a topic of interest in your major(s), minor(s), or in an area outside your program of studies and develop an independent research study and paper about that topic. Your thesis could include first-hand data from experiments including laboratory data, fieldwork data, previously collected survey data, etc. This research project could be a paper that uses original and/or secondary sources to make a contribution to the field. The thesis should include a review and synthesis of the literature pertaining to the research study. Follow your discipline writing guidelines for page length and writing style.

Creative Endeavor

- You will develop a compilation of your craft that may culminate in several ways:

- Directing a play
- Writing and performing original music
- Senior Show
- Recital
- A formal compilation of a student's artistry that goes above and beyond class requirements.
- The creative endeavor includes a 3-5 page paper that includes the following:
 - Provides the artist's statement
 - Background about the work and context for the audience.
 - **Note:** Some students have showcased their creative work in special venues or juried competitions.

Group Project

Students can complete their SHP in groups. They would choose the scholarly or creative endeavor as appropriate.

SHP Components

The format for your SHP will vary by department, school, or college. However, all SHP include a formal written component and a formal public presentation. See the Templates link on the Honors College website for common components:

- Honors College Title Page
- Abstract
- Table of Contents
- Content
- Bibliography/References
- Appendices (if appropriate)
- IRB or other approvals (if appropriate)

Signature Honors Project

Student Roles and Responsibilities

You are responsible for the following:

- Complete and submit the required SHP contract and proposal (see Forms link)

When taking HNRS 4500 and HNRS 4550 (or approved course substitutions):

- Organize and schedule an initial SHP meeting with your faculty mentor before the second week of classes.
- Attend and be prepared for regular meetings with your faculty mentor.
- Secure any necessary special approvals for your project.
- Present your SHP at Research and Creative Achievement Week (RCAW) (strongly recommended), which is scheduled every spring, or at another public presentation. Public presentations may be made during conferences, symposiums, workshops, signature shows or performances, etc.
- Utilize the proper Honors College PPT and Poster templates (see [Templates](#) link on the Honors College website).
- Completion of your SHP:
 - o The thesis option requires a research paper and the creative endeavor option requires a context paper that will accompany your portfolio. Use the Honors College Title Page template as the first page of your thesis paper or portfolio context paper.
 - o Submit your completed, approved thesis paper OR portfolio context paper and any related portfolio materials (i.e., PPT, video, website link) into the Joyner Library ScholarShip online repository (see Appendix A).

Please note: The most important aspect of your SHP will be communication with your faculty mentor regarding your commitment to your project. Ultimately, you have the responsibility for researching, writing, and compiling a scholarly product.

The faculty mentor and student are responsible for the following:

- SHP independent studies should comply with the Writing Intensive (WI) Course Information Process. Details about the WI outcomes can be found at the [ECU Writing Center website](#).

Signature Honors Project Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

General

1. When do I need to start thinking about my SHP?

Classes, research, and interests that arise throughout your undergraduate career inspire SHP work. As a general rule many students begin thinking and asking questions about the SHP during their sophomore year. The earlier you begin to think about your SHP, the more time you will have to explore research topics or creative endeavor.

2. Can I use my SHP to complete requirements in my major?

Check with your faculty mentor for departmental course substitutions for HRNS 4500 and HRNS 4550 (see Appendix B).

3. Does my SHP have to be something in my major?

No. You can choose a thesis, creative endeavor, or group project in your major, minor or another area of interest.

Choosing a Mentor and Topic

1. Do I choose my faculty mentor first or my SHP topic first?

You should identify your SHP topic first, and then identify a faculty mentor in that area.

2. I know what I would love to work on for my SHP. How do I choose a mentor?

There are a few good starting points to identify a faculty mentor who will support and guide your SHP. If you have identified your area of interest (i.e. genetics) you will want to begin by looking at faculty research interests in that area. You can approach this many ways. To begin, you should examine the faculty profiles available on departmental websites at ECU.

The SHP Courses

1. How do I enroll in my SHP courses?

You will upload it into the SHP Canvas course. If you are using academic departmental course for your SHP, please work with your faculty mentor to register for the courses. Your department will create and enroll you in the course.

If the courses are HNRS 4500 and 4550, Ms. Bone will create and enroll you in the course.

2. What is the time span of the SHP?

Two semesters (6 credit hours), spanning approximately 8 months.

3. When do my SHP classes meet?

As an independent study course, you will meet with your faculty mentor at a mutually agreed upon time, which should be outlined in the SHP contract timeline.

4. How does the grading of this course work?

Your SHP faculty mentor assigns letter grades for your SHP courses. At the beginning of each semester you should meet with your faculty mentor to discuss final course grade expectations. You must earn at least a “B minus” to receive honors credit.

5. What length is required for my SHP?

Length requirements and formats vary according to discipline. Your SHP mentor will be able to guide you in selecting the proper length and format for your field of study. The most important item to remember is that your thesis, creative endeavor or group project represents a significant piece of independent research or scholarly activity.

6. Is there funding available to support my SHP?

Yes, please visit the Office of Undergraduate Research Website. Undergraduate Research and Creative Achievement (URCA) awards are available (see website for submission deadlines).

7. How much time should be allotted for the Internal Review Board (IRB) approval process?

It depends on the nature of your research project. Please visit the University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) website for more information.

8. I am ready to start my SHP. Can the subject of my SHP deviate from what I originally wrote in the proposal? If so, to what extent?

Slight variations may be made to your original SHP proposal submissions; however, your faculty mentor should remain the same because that person was credentialed specifically for your SHP. If your mentor leaves the university, you will have to find another mentor.

Public Presentation Queries

1. What is the approval process for my public presentation materials?

Once your final presentation (PowerPoint or posters) has been submitted to your faculty mentor for review and approval, they will determine whether it meets the requirements. (See the Templates link for further instructions).

2. When should I start applying to present at a conference and how much material should be prepared at the time of the conference application?

This is discipline specific information and you should discuss this with your faculty mentor.

Submitting a Completed SHP

- **What is the SHP submission deadline to the Honors College?**

You SHP should be submitted to the Joyner Library repository by Reading Day.

Appendix A

Uploading your FINAL Signature Honors Project (SHP) for the Honors College Thesis/Creative endeavor

Questions? Email: Mrs. Michelle Bone at bonee19@ecu.edu.

Upload Due Date: Reading Day

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

1. Have a copy of your thesis/creative endeavor readily available (on your desktop, Pirate Drive, or USB)
2. You will be asked for an **abstract** of the creative endeavor. This is a brief paragraph---length summary of the work. If you do not already have one you can often use a paragraph from your Introduction.
3. You will be asked for 1-3 **keywords** to describe your work. Think of one to three keywords that represent your thesis/creative endeavor. For example, if your thesis/creative endeavor title is “The Ever-changing Social Perception of Autism Spectrum Disorder in the United States” keywords might be autism spectrum disorders, social perception, and stigmatization.
4. You will be asked to choose any **embargos and paper access restrictions**. An embargo delays access to your paper in the Institutional Repository. Separately, you will be asked about campus-only access to your paper. It is important to talk with you advisor about these options.

READY TO UPLOAD?

Go to the [Honors College Vireo site](#) and log in with your Pirate ID and password. Vireo is an online paper submission process. At the end of the semester, all honors papers and projects will be added to Joyner Library ScholarShip, ECU’s Institutional Repository.

Appendix B: Course Substitutions

Departmental Courses that can replace Signature Honors Project Courses

HNRS 4500 and HNRS 4550

This is a partial list of substitute courses. Academic departments not listed below may have additional courses available for SHP use. Students must meet with their mentor to determine course options so that credit can be placed in your mentor's department for FTEs and other accounting of faculty work.

Accounting

Contact: Linda Quick

Anthropology

- Contact: Laura Mazow
- Course One: ANTH 4550 (3 s.h.)
- Course Two: ANTH 4551 (3 s.h.)
- Type of Project: Thesis

Biology

- Contact: Grace Chen
- Course One: BIOL 3504 (1-3 s.h.)
- Course Two: BIOL 3550 (1-3 s.h.)
- Course Three: BIOL 4995 (2 s.h.) (spring)
- Type of Project: Thesis

Chemistry

- Course One: CHEM 4515 (1 s.h., repeatable once)
- Course Two: CHEM 4516 (2 s.h., once)
- Course Three: CHEM 4517 (3 s.h., once)
- Type of Project: Thesis

Communication

Revised 10-28-2025

- Course One: COMM 4196 (3 s.h.)
- Course Two: COMM 4199 (3 s.h.)
- Type of Project: Thesis

Dance

Contact: John Dixon

Economics

- Course One: ECON 4550 (3 s.h.)
- Course Two: ECON 4551 (3 s.h.)
- Type of Project: Thesis

Engineering

- Course One: ENGR 3000
- Course Two: ENGR 4010
- Course Three ENGR 4020
- Type of Project: Capstone

Exercise and Sport Science

- Course One: KINE 4500 (1 s.h.)
- Course Two: KINE 4501 (2 s.h.)
- Course Three: Kine 4502 (3 s.h.)
- Type of Project: Thesis

History

- Course One: HIST 4550 (3 s.h.)
- Course Two: HIST 4551 (3 s.h.)
- Type of Project: Thesis

Neuroscience

- Contact: Dr. Tuan Tran
- Course One: NEUR 4950 (3 s.h.)
- Course Two: NEUR 4951 (3 s.h.)
- Type of Project: Thesis

Nursing

- Contact: Mitzi Pestaner
- Course One: NURS 3750 (3 s.h.)
- Course Two: NURS 4750 (3 s.h.)
- Type of Project: Capstone Project

Political Science

- Course One: POLS 4501 (1 s.h.)
- Course Two: POLS 4502 (2 s.h.)
- They are repeatable for a total of six.

Psychology

- Course One: PSYC 4601 (3 s.h.)
- Course Two: PSYC 4602 (3 s.h.)
- Type of Project: Thesis

Public Health Studies

- Course One: HLTH 4901 (3 s.h.)
- Course Two: HLTH 4902 (3 s.h.)
- Type of Project: Thesis

Theater

Contact: Bryan Conger