

# SENIOR HONORS RESEARCH PROGRAM

## OVERVIEW

The Senior Honors Research program was established in 1930 and was the first such program in a Virginia college or university. The program is intended to encourage students to conduct independent research at a level well beyond the ordinary demands of a classroom course. The results of a student's successful completion of the program are increased learning in a subject area of special interest, improvements in the student's abilities to conduct academic research and to write about the work, the presentation of a substantial paper on that research, the addition of that paper to the Library's permanent collection, and an enhancement of his or her application to graduate school or for immediate post-graduation employment. Students who successfully complete the program are publicly recognized at graduation for their exceptional academic achievement.

Senior Honors Research is formally a two semester, six-credit-hour, student-initiated, non-classroom research project. Senior Honors Research is usually done during the student's senior year.

**To be eligible to register for Senior Honors Research**, a student must have:

- a strong interest in doing independent research,
- a 3.0 overall grade point average on work taken at Longwood,
- a 3.0 average in courses taken at Longwood for the major,
- agreement of a faculty member to serve as sponsor,
- permission of the Chair of the sponsoring department, and
- permission of the SHR Committee.

A student may NOT be registered for Senior Honors Research during the same semester in which he or she is registered for student teaching or for more than nine credit hours in an internship program. However, at the discretion of the Senior Honors Research (SHR) Committee, a student's two Senior Honors Research semesters may surround a semester of student teaching or such internship.

A student who wishes to undertake a Senior Honors Research project must begin planning and working early. In fact, a Senior Honors Research student is expected to do substantial preliminary work prior to the first semester of formal registration. The first phase of this preliminary work is the development of a proposal for SHR. The proposal is a research design developed by the student with the guidance of the faculty sponsor, and is a written description of what the research project is to be about, why the research would be significant, and how it is to be conducted.

When the proposal is finished to the satisfaction of the faculty sponsor, the student contacts the chair of the SHR Committee to declare his or her intentions to participate in the program. If appropriate, the chair then schedules a meeting of the full Committee. A copy of the proposal is provided to each member of the SHR Committee not less than three days prior to the meeting.

During this meeting, the student orally presents the proposal and discusses the project with the Committee. The Committee then decides whether to approve the student's participation

in the program. If approval is given, the student registers for 3 semester hours SHR credit for the initial semester.

If the student's work during the initial semester is satisfactory in the judgment of the faculty sponsor, the student may continue in the program for the second semester.

The student should complete the research and the written thesis which describes the work by approximately mid-term of the second semester. If the faculty sponsor judges the student's work to that point to be of at least "A-" quality, arrangements are made for the student to orally defend the work before a special examining committee, the membership of which is suggested by the student and sponsor and approved by the SHR Committee.

The examination committee's judgment is communicated to the full SHR Committee. The SHR Committee receives the report of the defense and formally decides whether the student is to be graduated "with Senior Honors Research recognition."

If the student's work is thus approved by the full SHR Committee, copies of the final paper are sent to the Longwood Library for inclusion in its permanent collection.

The following summaries indicate the responsibilities of various Senior Honors Research program participants.

### Responsibilities of the Student

1. Select a faculty sponsor.
2. Choose ~~\_(with the approval of the sponsor)\_~~ a research topic.
3. Prepare a written research proposal for submission to the SHR Committee.

The proposal should include identification of the student, of the faculty sponsor, and of the academic discipline(s) involved; a statement of the guiding hypothesis; a summary of the reasons for and the significance of the hypothesis, including a short literature review to indicate that the project contributes new knowledge to the field; a brief description of the research method or approach to be followed; a summary of the more prominent resources (or at least the types of resources) to be used and where they are located; and the names of at least three credentialed scholars in the field who are reasonably expected to be voting members of the examining committee. ~~(At least two of the members shall be from the Longwood faculty, and usually the third member is not on the Longwood faculty.)~~ Proposals usually need not exceed five pages.

Comment [LU1]: Inserted by Chris McGee

A suggested outline for SHR proposals can be found at the end of this file.

4. Contact the chair of the SHR Committee and request the scheduling of a meeting of the Committee.

~~5. The Submit the proposal may be submitted~~ 5. The Submit the proposal electronically to the chair of the SHR Committee, who will then distributes the file to each of the other members. Such electronic submission shall be made no later than five days prior to the presentation meeting. Alternatively, one paper copy of the proposal shall be provided to each member of the SHR

Comment [LU2]: I revised the wording here to be more consistent with the wording for this list of responsibilities.

Committee no later than three days prior to the presentation meeting.

6. Meet with the full SHR Committee, orally present the proposal, and participate in the Committee's discussion of it. (The faculty sponsor is expected to be present at this meeting. The chair of the sponsoring Department may also attend.)

7. If the proposal is approved by the Committee, register for SHR credit ("498" in the relevant discipline).

8. Conduct research according to the approved proposal, perhaps as amended. (In the case of initial registration during the fall semester, research should be begun during the preceding summer. In the case of initial registration during the spring semester, research should be begun during the preceding fall.) Make progress reports to the sponsor on a regular basis. Prepare for an evaluation by the faculty sponsor at the end of the first semester of enrollment as to whether the project should continue into the second semester. (A grade of at least "A-" for the first semester's work is required for continuation of the SHR project into the second semester.)

9. Complete the project. Prepare drafts of the thesis and, with the sponsor's approval, prepare to orally defend the work and the thesis reporting it before a special examining committee.

10. If the examining committee and the full SHR Committee approve the work and the thesis for Senior Honors Research recognition at graduation, make any required corrections or additions to the written thesis and provide two copies to the ~~Director~~ [Archives and Records Manager](#) of the Library for inclusion in the Library's permanent collection.

The following timetable specifies the deadlines by which the student should complete certain tasks:

a) Application and Registration:

Ordinarily, application (to include the presentation at a SHR Committee meeting) to the SHR Committee for permission to participate in the program should be made not later than Monday of the last full week of classes of the semester prior to that in which initial formal registration is anticipated. (Lead time is needed in which to schedule the meeting and to circulate the proposal to all members of the SHR Committee members. Therefore, contact with the chair of the Committee needs to be made by Monday of the next-to-the-last week of the semester's classes.)

Most SHR students register for the program during the Fall and Spring semesters of their Senior years. Therefore, to facilitate their beginning serious research during their pre-Senior summers, this application process ordinarily occurs during the Junior spring.

However, a student's application to participate in the SHR program may, at the Committee's discretion, be considered as late as the "Course Add" deadline of the student's penultimate semester on campus (i.e., ordinarily the first semester of formal SHR registration). A student whose application is, for whatever reason, delayed is cautioned that the "Course Add" deadline is the deadline for actual registration. Therefore, the student must provide adequate lead time for the SHR Committee members to review the proposal, to arrange to meet with the student, to so meet and to consider, and to communicate (if appropriate)

with the Registrar. In addition, a student whose project has not been approved by the SHR Committee prior to the start of the first semester of intended SHR registration is further cautioned that he or she will be expected by the Committee to demonstrate that substantial preliminary work on the project - beyond that implicit in merely developing the proposal - has already been carried out.

Students who anticipate making such a relatively late application for acceptance into the SHR program may wish to make a timely registration for Independent Study credit. If the application for SHR is accepted by the SHR Committee, the Independent Study registration can be converted to SHR registration any time before the "Course Add" deadline of the penultimate semester on campus.

Students whose applications are accepted by the SHR Committee shall register for "[Discipline] 498" (3 semester hours credit).

b) Continuation after the first semester:

No earlier than the last week of classes and no later than the Reading Day of the first semester of enrollment in SHR, the faculty sponsor and the student shall decide whether the project is to be continued as a Senior Honors Research project in a subsequent semester. If both the student and the sponsor agree that the project may be so continued, the student must register for "[Discipline] 499" (3 semester hours) by the "Course Add" deadline for the final semester of SHR participation. A student must complete both 498 and 499 to be eligible for SHR recognition.

**Comment [LU3]:** We ran into this issue this year so I thought it would be good to put this in writing.

c) Completion of the project:

i) Suggested: No later than the end of the first month of the second semester of participation, complete all research.

ii) Suggested: No later than the middle of the second month of the final semester of participation, complete a rough draft of the thesis.

iii) Suggested: No later than the mid-term of the final semester of participation, complete the final draft of the thesis.

iv) If the faculty sponsor concludes that the grade for "499" would be at least "A-," no later than Friday of the sixth week preceding graduation, copies of the thesis should be distributed to members of the examining committee.

v) No later than Friday of the fifth week prior to graduation, the student will orally defend the work and the thesis reporting it before the examining committee.

vi) No later than the last weekday prior to graduation, if the student's work has been approved for SHR recognition by the SHR Committee, the student will provide two ~~final~~ paper copies and one electronic copy of the thesis to the ~~Director Archives and Records~~ Manager of the Library.

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d) Withdrawal from the Senior Honors Research Program:

Students who are enrolled in either "498" or "499" may formally cancel their registration

and participation in the same manner as they would cancel registration in any other course. Students who complete the first semester of SHR with a passing grade but who do not complete the second semester will still receive three semester hours credit for "498." Students who complete the second, or "499," semester with a passing grade but who do not receive "Senior Honors Research recognition" would still receive the additional three semester hours credit for "499."

Students who leave the SHR program prior to completion of "499" must notify (whether directly or through the faculty sponsor) the chair of the SHR Committee of that fact.

### Responsibilities of the Faculty Sponsor

1. Be familiar with the responsibilities of the student and with the times by which those responsibilities must be fulfilled.
2. Assist the student in the selection and refinement of the hypothesis and research design.
3. ~~3~~ Guide the student, as appropriate, in the research activity.
4. Evaluate the student's work by the end of the first semester. If the work during the first semester is of at least "A-" quality, advise the chair of the SHR Committee of that fact during the last week of that semester's classes.
5. If the project is not to be continued as SHR, notify the chair of the SHR Committee and report a final 3-semester-hour grade [for 498](#) to the Registrar.
- ~~5-6.~~ [If the project continues as SHR research into the second semester, evaluate the student's work by midterm and report a midterm grade estimate for 499 to the Registrar. A midterm grade less than an A- will indicate that the student is not making sufficient progress.](#)
- ~~6-7.~~ By mid-term of the second semester, assist the student in ~~the~~ identifying and nominating the voting members of the examining committee; communicate the names and qualifications of such nominees to the chair of the SHR Committee for approval.
- ~~7-8.~~ [If the project continues as SHR research into the second semester,](#) evaluate the eventual pre-defense product and determine the appropriate letter grade of the student's work by Wednesday of the sixth week prior to graduation (by which time the student should have completed a pre-defense thesis). If the product is to be graded as "A-" or higher, notify the chair of the SHR Committee of that fact not later than Friday of the sixth week prior to graduation. Subsequently, assist the chair of the examining committee (who is appointed by the chair of the full SHR Committee) in the scheduling of the defense meeting. The defense meeting shall occur not later than Friday of the fifth week prior to graduation.
- ~~8-9.~~ If the student's final (pre-defense) product is to be graded as less than "A-," notify both the student and the chair of the SHR Committee of that fact. In this event, there will be no oral defense before an examination committee and the student will not be accorded Senior Honors Research recognition. If the final grade is at least a passing one, however, the student will still have transcript credit for six semester hours of "498/499" enrollment.
- ~~9-10.~~ If the student makes an oral defense of the product and the thesis before an examining committee, attend that defense meeting as an observer. Orally participate at the defense only upon the invitation of the chair or the voting members with regard to specific inquiries, but not during the examination committee's evaluative

deliberation and voting.

### **Responsibilities of the SHR Committee**

1. Meets on a timely basis to consider SHR proposals and other administrative matters.
2. Determines the acceptability of students' proposals for participation in the SHR program.
3. Notifies the Registrar of the fact of approval of any proposal and consents to the registration of the student involved for SHR credit. (Duty of the chair.)
4. Selects from within its own membership the persons who chair the examination committees (duty of the chair), and formally approves the membership of voting members of the examination committee. (Duty of the chair.)
5. Upon receiving the report of the chair of the examination committee regarding the defense of a SHR project determines whether the student involved shall be accorded Senior Honors Research recognition at graduation and thesis.
6. Notifies the student, the faculty sponsor, and the chair of the sponsoring department of the SHR Committee's decision. (Duty of the chair.) If the decision is affirmative, notify the Registrar and the Dean of the college of the sponsoring department. (Duty of the chair.)
- 6.7. [Provides a list of students enrolled in SHR to the Archives and Records Manager of the Library](#)

### **Responsibilities of Examination Committee Chair**

1. With the assistance of the faculty sponsor, arranges for the convening of the examination committee not later than Friday of the sixth week prior to graduation.
2. Presides over the examination meeting as a non-voting member, and has the privilege of deciding who if anyone other than the student, the faculty sponsor, and the members of the committee may attend the examination committee meeting or any portion of it.
3. Upon the completion of the defense, obtains ~~—in the absence of the student, the faculty sponsor, and any other non-members of the committee—~~the majority vote of the committee as to whether it will recommend to the SHR Committee that the student be accorded Senior Honors Research recognition. [The vote should take place in the absence of the student, the faculty sponsor, and any other non-members of the committee.](#)
4. Notifies the student and the sponsor of the examination committee's vote and recommendation.
5. Notifies the chair of the SHR Committee of the fact of the completion of the defense meeting and of the examination committee's recommendation.
6. Reports to the full SHR Committee, in a summary form, on the substance of the defense meeting and of the examination committee's recommendation.

### **Suggested Content of Proposals for Senior Honors Research**

Proposals for participation in the Senior Honors Research Program should include all of the

following:

I. Name of student, of academic discipline involved, and of faculty sponsor

II. Date of submission

III. Semesters anticipated for enrollment in SHR

IV. Title of proposed project

V. Overview of project: Provide background information and a general description of the project Statement of hypotheses. Explain specifically what idea is to be investigated and what is expected to be found. There may be more than one intended research hypothesis. If so, each should be stated separately and precisely.

VI. Method of data collection or other research: Explain how the research is to be conducted. What sources of data will be used? If the use of any type of research equipment is expected, specify the type of equipment and how it will be used to test the hypothesis. If the sources include published or unpublished texts, attach a tentative working bibliography. If the use of a survey or similar data collection instrument is anticipated, explain specifically how the results will be used to test the hypothesis/es, and include a tentative copy of that instrument.

VII. Tentative timeline for the completion of major milestones: This may include deadlines for the data collection and analysis phases of the research and for the completion of drafts of thesis components, etc.

VIII. Names of likely members of the eventual examining committee.

IX. Approval of the chair of the academic department housing the discipline in which the research is to be conducted.

#### **Senior Honors Research Committee Members, 2010 – 2011**

Frank Bacon, Finance

Audrey Church, Education and Special Education

Scott Cole, Political Science

Mary Lehman, Biology

Leigh Lunsford, Mathematics, Chair

Chris McGee, English

Susan McGowan, Education and Special Education

Sarah Porter, Chemistry

Geoff Orth, Honors Program/German, ex officio

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Roman Cech, Economics

Ed Hooks, Biology

Chris McGee, English

Cathy Roy, Exercise Science

Chris Swanson, Music

Glenda Taylor, Therapeutic Recreation

Robert Webber, Mathematics and Computer Science, Chair

| [Geoff Orth, Honors Program/German, ex-officio](#)

