DESCRIPTION

The Business Honors Thesis is the climax of student experience at the end of your undergraduate program at the College of Business in XXX field. Developing a thesis gives you the opportunity to critically think through an idea or argument that is academically rewarding and interesting. Thesis hours are intended to support extensive investigation into these ideas and concepts and develop a realistic argument or solution to the business problem. (Replace XXX with the major field of the thesis advisor)

OBJECTIVE

The goal of completing a Business Honors Thesis is to emphasize and practice critical thinking, writing and independent original research into an area of interest. Your thesis may be related to the your business major or a business related idea. The thesis should be creative as well as distinct. We strongly encourage you to select a topic which widens your curiosity, broadens your understanding of research in business and invariably is satisfying.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The thesis for the Business Honors Program builds and strengthens valuable business skills:

1. Critical thinking and in-depth study skills – selecting a research topic, identifying a business problem, developing the thesis statement and writing a proposal

2. Research and computational skills – learning methodology and perspective, gathering data, recording insights and recommending solutions.

3. Organizing, writing, and communicating skills – writing a literature review, drafting and refining, and dealing with peer review as well as faculty feedback

REQUIREMENTS

Business Honors students are expected to enroll in 6 credit hours of thesis work – 3 credit hours each semester. If your thesis will satisfy the requirements of both the Honors College and the Business Honors Program you will be required to compete a nine (9) thesis hour thesis. The hours include time to conduct your individual research towards your project, write the resulting findings and publicly present your thesis or creative report related to the business field. You will choose the topic in consultation with the Director of the Business Honors Program and work under the direction of a faculty advisor. You can choose to complete the same thesis research for the Business Honors Program and the USF Honors College. Please see http://honors.usf.edu/thesis.html for the University Honors College requirements and guidelines.
One Honors thesis may satisfy requirements for both the USF Honors College and the Business Honors Program. Please schedule an appointment with your Honors College advisor and the Director of the Business Honors Program to ensure the respective requirements for both program are completed.

PREREQUISITES

All Business Honors students are expected to be in junior standing before rigorous work on their thesis can begin.

A grade for the thesis will be assigned after each semester of thesis hours by the Thesis faculty.

DEVELOPING A THESIS

When narrowing your thesis topic, developing your thesis plan and streamlining your expectations, think broadly of your ideas. An effective thesis is not a topic; nor is it a fact or a list or an opinion. It should never be vague or confrontational. It is in fact a definable and arguable quality claim of a subject. It should reflect a significant time commitment and demonstrate personal intellectual growth as a writer and invariably a business scientist. A good thesis cannot be merely answered with a “yes” or “no” statement. A good thesis has two definitive parts:

- Tell what aspect of a business plan/subject/decision you plan to argue
- It should telegraph what particular support/proof you have for your claim

You should gather extensive evidence from various sources to help you make useful and definitive interpretations and judgments. Your chosen approach to achieving a successful thesis research should be carefully designed. Your findings/results should be clearly defined and discussed in the context of your topic. Relevant literature should be cited. You should place your analysis in a broader context, and highlight the implications (regional, global, etc.) of your work. Your thesis should present a well-reasoned line of argument, from your initial question, compilation of relevant evidence, setting data in a general/universal context, and finally making a judgment based on your analysis. Once, you have a working thesis, write it down. By writing it down, you will be forced to think clearly, logically and concisely of your study. You probably will not be able to write out a final draft of your thesis the first time but you will get yourself on the right track.

A Business Honors thesis may take many forms. You may produce a critical analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation of an existing body of knowledge in an area of academic inquiry. A Business Honors thesis might include the design of a business plan, computational analysis of a business decision among others. When the thesis is a creative work, a substantive written description of the goals and process is required, as well as
prior approval by both the Dean/Associate Dean of the Honors College (if you are enrolled with the University Honors College) and the Director of the Business Honors Program. This description must indicate how the creative work meets the goals of a thesis.

Examples of previously completed theses by University Honors College students from different departments within USF can be found here: [http://honors.usf.edu/Honors_Theses.asp](http://honors.usf.edu/Honors_Theses.asp). You can also find copies of theses at the University library.

Any regularly appointed faculty member from the College of Business at USF or with approval from the Director of the Business Honors Program other USF faculty. You will establish the specific nature of the thesis with the Thesis Advisor.

A well-structured and research thesis project should adhere consistently and correctly to Modern Language Association (MLA) or University of Chicago or the American Psychological Association (APA) writing format.

You must include a bibliography or a works cited page for any type of research project - not just for a traditional research paper, but also such projects as a unit of lesson plans, handbooks, publicity campaign, feasibility study, or any other project which incorporates material drawn from external sources.

If your thesis involves human subjects, you must contact the IRB (“Institutional Review Board”) to determine whether your research will need IRB approval. Undergraduate theses are not exempt from such review. If you are working with animals, you will need IACUC review. For further information, go to [www.research.usf.edu/cs/irb.htm](http://www.research.usf.edu/cs/irb.htm) or [www.research.usf.edu/cm/applicationsc.htm](http://www.research.usf.edu/cm/applicationsc.htm) for applications to the Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee.

You should consult with the Director of the Business Honors Program and attend the Undergraduate Research workshop before beginning thesis work to learn about general procedures and getting a potential Thesis Advisor. You will choose and contact a potential thesis advisor and probably one or two committee members.

**STEPS IN THE PROCESS**

1. Identify your thesis advisor, probably a professor who is related to your chosen research interest. Your thesis advisor helps you narrow the topic to manageable proportions and develop the prospectus. Your thesis advisor should be faculty from the College of Business or must be approved by the Director of the Business Honors Program.

2. You and your thesis advisor establish deadlines for completion of the following phases of your undergraduate thesis:
a. Completion of preliminary annotated bibliography  
b. Completion of literature review – a narrative discussion of previous work upon which the specific topic builds or adds new ideas  
c. Progress reports on research or scholarly activity, including activities to be done (e.g., research design, data collection, computational analyses, revisions)  
d. Draft to be submitted to the thesis advisor  
e. Revisions requested by the thesis advisor  
f. Final draft, including submission to the Director of the Business Honors Program  
g. Presentation of results

**THESIS PROSPECTUS**

You will establish the specific nature of the thesis with your thesis advisor. Prior to the 8th week of the first semester of your junior year or the first semester of your thesis work if earlier, please present to the Director of the Business Honors Program these three documents: the Thesis Agreement form, a three-to-four page prospectus, and the Prospectus Approval form, signed by your thesis advisor. The prospectus includes:

1. Your name and email address  
2. Thesis advisor’s name  
3. The exact title of the thesis  
4. A statement of the work to be undertaken and its importance  
5. A narrative giving the rationale for this work  
6. A brief literature review  
7. A proposed work schedule and preliminary bibliography  

You should begin the actual work immediately following prospectus approval by the Director of the Honors Program.

**THESIS PRESENTATION**

You will present your thesis before the end of the semester during which you complete it. You may be selected to present your thesis at the College of Business Research Symposium or the Undergraduate Research Colloquium. You must deliver your thesis and any supporting material in final, typewritten form to the Director of the Business Honors Program and your thesis advisor at least two weeks before the presentation to give them adequate time to review the final submission. Submit the completed Thesis Approval form signed by your thesis advisor, along with the printed copy of the final thesis report, to the Director of the Business Honors Program.
You will be given a grade of "S" for the semester in which the prospectus is approved and, for the 6(9)-credit thesis, the semester in which the progress report from the thesis advisor is submitted. When your thesis advisor approves your thesis in its final form, he or she will recommend one of the grades as indicated in Table 4, which shall be recorded for both semesters of thesis (the "S" grade will be changed at that time)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A&quot;</td>
<td>Excellent Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;B&quot;</td>
<td>Good performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;C&quot;</td>
<td>Passing (but student is ineligible to graduate with the Business Honors Program distinction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;D&quot; or &quot;F&quot;</td>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To graduate with Business Honors, you must finish all course work towards the degree in the semester the graduation ceremony occurs. The thesis must be completed, approved in the final form, and turned in to the Director of the Honors Program. If you have credits still to be taken or if your thesis is not approved, you may walk though graduation and not be honored, or wait until the next graduation ceremony to be honored.

**THESIS MILESTONE**

The thesis component of the Business Honors Program is designed to be flexible, to complement your major area of study as well as your personal interests. Many types of theses may be acceptable; the final choice is to be determined jointly by you and your thesis advisor prior to beginning the actual work. Work which merely treads old ground or involves an uncritical restatement of previous work is unacceptable.

Preparing for a six semester credit thesis will definitely expose you to a lot of research opportunities. You will need to register for thesis hours for GEB XXXX in two/three semesters prior to the completion of your undergraduate program. If you are in the University Honors College, you may need to speak with the Honors College advisor or the Director of the Business Honors Program to ensure you are registered for the appropriate number of hours. Once complete, a final presentation of your research will be done before faculty members and your colleagues. You will need to schedule a presentation day and time with the Director of the Business Honors Program and your thesis advisor/committee members. Your thesis may also be selected to present by you during USF’s Undergraduate Research Colloquium held each academic year. The following timeline is required for successful completion of your Honors thesis:

1. Four weeks before you reach junior standing (the semester at the end of which you’ll have completed 60 credits), the Thesis Request form and Thesis Agreement form must be submitted to the Director of the Business Honors Program.
2. Prior to the 8th week of the first semester of your thesis work (normally your senior year), the Prospectus Approval form, a three-to-four page prospectus, and Thesis Approval form must be submitted to the Director of the Honors Program. The prospectus requires the Director of the Business Honors Program approval.

3. End of your each semester of thesis work, the Thesis Status form must be submitted to the Director of the Honors Program.

4. Two weeks before you present your thesis in your senior year, the final Thesis Report form must be submitted to the Director of the Honors Program.

There is no strictly adhered duration for the completion of your thesis. A comprehensive thesis research requires considerable amount of time.

Course Requirements:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Forms &amp; Reports</th>
<th>Submission Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>Complete general and Business course work</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Develop research and computational skills</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Formulate your thesis topic and identify a thesis advisor</td>
<td>Thesis Agreement form</td>
<td>Four weeks before you reach junior standing (the semester at the end of which you’ll have completed 60 credits) During registration period for each semester of your thesis work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Thesis Registration form</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Develop a prospectus for your chosen topic</td>
<td>Prospectus Approval form</td>
<td>Prior to the 8th week of your first semester of thesis work (normally first semester of your senior year)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Thesis Approval form</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thesis Status form</td>
<td>End of each semester of thesis work</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Final thesis report</td>
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<td>Two weeks prior to your</td>
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SAMPLE STRUCTURE OF THESIS

Title Page
Abstract – See “General Guidelines”

Chapter 1: Introduction
A. Opening Section : The Prologue
   i. Indicates the general area of the problem
   ii. Helps the reader understand the nature of the problem topic as well as the idea that there is more to learn about it. This shows that the present study will add to knowledge in some way

B. Literature Review
   i. Gives a picture of what was done before, as well as the basis for describing what is new or important about this study
   ii. Provides an interpretation of research and critical analogy (a review is not a summary)

C. Problem Section
   i. Presents the formal problem for the research, showing how it extends what was previously done
   ii. Relates how the problem will be studied
   iii. Discusses or lists the research questions or hypotheses (if any)
   iv. Uses research questions where there is no reasonable basis for hypotheses

Chapter II: Materials and Methods
A. Design: Identifies the types of variables studied, the outcomes to be examined, and the comparisons to be made
B. Materials or Instrumentation: Describes in detail the questionnaire, interview schedule, materials used, etc.
C. Subjects: Describes the participants and how they were selected
D. Procedure: Describes in detail every step involved in carrying out the study
E. Statistical analyses: Describes the statistical methods used to provide the basis for comparisons

Chapter III: Results
A. Briefly summarizes what the study involved and possibly reviews how the results section is organized
B. Reports results, but includes no interpretation
C. Groups analyses into meaningful categories  
D. Uses tables where they can help the reader follow the description of findings  

**Chapter IV: Discussion**  
A. Discusses and interprets findings in light of a) hypotheses or research questions, b) previous studies, c) practical implications, etc.  
B. Points out, where relevant, weaknesses in procedures that may have masked a particular result or that require caution in making conclusions  
C. Makes recommendations for further studies that extend or improve the methods, if appropriate.  
D. Ends with some concrete conclusions on what was found or not found  
E. If appropriate discusses the implications for society  

**Citations**  
A. Cites specific references with page numbers as footnotes or endnotes using a bibliographic style accepted in the discipline  
B. Provides a complete list of references using an accepted bibliographic style  

**Final note:** Each researcher's needs for report formats will differ depending on the type of study conducted. The above, therefore, provides guidelines to be adapted to individual needs, not necessarily followed in their exact form, and you have the opportunity to modify your thesis to suit your needs.
Attention: THESIS ADVISORS

USF Faculty are asked to approach this task as thesis advisors assuming that the Business Honors students are mature and have acquired significant knowledge necessary to complete comprehensive independent work. On the other hand, Business Honors students are all undergraduate students who have completed major undergraduate study at the junior level and are conducting research study from a business perspective chosen by them.

Students need careful direction in choosing, planning, execution and writing of their theses. We ask Faculty to undertake the direction of a thesis only if they can devote the time necessary to ensure that a high quality thesis is produced. Thesis Advisors should consult with the Director of the Business Honors Program when questions arise concerning this work, especially if there is any possibility that the student will not complete the Thesis as scheduled. The advisor and the student will make decisions together regarding the scope of the project, meeting to discuss work in progress, format, documentation, and so on.

*Students are asked to adhere to the process outlined in the Business Honors thesis guidebook and should not ask the Faculty advisor to deviate from the schedule except approved by both the advisor and the Director of the Business Honors Program.*

*Students should plan work on the thesis for two/three full semesters prior to graduation. It is their responsibility to ensure timely completion of all Thesis requirements.*

We offer the following advice which has been compiled from the comments of recent University Honors College thesis advisors:

1) As you talk with your students regarding the scope of the thesis project, you may want to direct the study distinguishing between a conventional research paper and a Master’s thesis. Although the Business Honors thesis probably will not be as extensive a project as a Master’s level thesis, it should represent more expense of time and talent than an ordinary term paper. Students receive six credit hours of the coursework that he or she has put into the Honors Thesis.

2) Early in the process, get a clear indication from your student of just what he or she proposes and their expectations of his/her research study. Try evaluating the student’s projections with realistic expectations.

3) When meeting to discuss work in progress, make clear that you also want to see work that has been done, drafts of written texts, collected data, results of surveys, or whatever relevant material you need to examine in order to make sure the project is on track. Doing so will help to protect you and your student from the unpleasant discovery, near the end of the term, that the work which has been done is unacceptable.
4) For the final thesis research paper, specify the documentation style you require and offer examples of correct form. Remind the student that a bibliography, reference list, or works cited page must accompany the final report.

5) As you check work in progress, evaluate both content and form, and don't hesitate to ask for revisions in either area. It is a good idea to let your student know that an outstanding Business Honors thesis is expected to be free of errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

6) You may want to remind the student that he/she will be responsible for making more than one copy of the completed thesis or creative project. The copy which has your comments and the grade you have assigned will be for the student to keep. The Business Honors Program receives an unmarked copy, from which any errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation have been eliminated.

7) At the end of each semester that you are supervising the thesis work your will be asked to complete a Thesis Status Form. This form asked that you assign either an S (Satisfactory) or U (Unsatisfactory) grade for the work. These are interim grades that will be converted to an appropriate letter grade upon submission of the completed thesis.

8) As a thesis advisor, you are free to assign whatever final grade to the completed thesis you consider appropriate. However, thesis and projects are stored in both Special Collections and the Circulating areas of the USF Library and the College of Business. Understandably, you may be reluctant to sign a thesis that represents merely passing work. Please establish regular meetings during the course of thesis research to ensure a high quality final product.

9) As a thesis advisor, please ensure students provide you with the necessary thesis forms for your approval during the course of research. Students have been provided with the following forms:
   a) Thesis Registration Form
   b) Thesis Status Form (to be completed every semester of research work.)
   c) Thesis Approval Form
   d) Thesis Prospectus Approval form
   e) Thesis Agreement Form

P.S: Thesis Advisors should consult the Director of the Business Honors Program when questions arise concerning thesis work, especially if there is any possibility that the student will not complete the thesis as scheduled.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**
Joni L. Jones, PhD
Director, Business Honors Program
Associate Professor, Information Systems and Decisions Sciences
4202 East Fowler Avenue, CIS 2069
Tampa FL 33620
Phone: (813) 974-9435; Fax: (813) 974-6749; Email: jonijones@usf.edu
BUSINESS HONORS PROGRAM - THESIS AGREEMENT FORM

The Business Honors Program student:

I have carefully read the Business Honors Program thesis guidebook and understand that the thesis is worth six/nine credits, the work is expected to last two/three full semesters, and the schedule must be adhered to without exception. It is my responsibility to ensure that the appropriate paperwork is done and that all deadlines are met.

___________________________________  __________________
Signature                                         Date

___________________________________
Name (please print)

Thesis Advisor:

I certify that the above named student and I have reviewed the thesis requirements outlined in the Business Honors Program thesis guidebook and that I accept the responsibility of thesis advisor. I will attend the public presentation of this thesis.

___________________________________  __________________
Signature                                         Date

___________________________________
Name (please print)

NOTE: This is not the Prospectus Approval form. The Prospectus Approval form and Thesis Approval form are available from the Director of the Business Honors Program (CIS 2069).
BUSINESS HONORS PROGRAM - THESIS REGISTRATION FORM

Please type or print the information requested on this form.

It is agreed that ________________________________________________________________

(Name) U-Number

will take: _____ - 4970 BUSINESS HONORS THESIS HOURS

Semester:__________________ Credit Hours:__________________

Nature of Study: (Please include the Thesis Agreement form and note below what is to be
accomplished this semester)

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Method of Evaluation and Grading: (To be determined by Thesis advisor. Attach
additional sheet if necessary to elaborate on what is required and how it will be evaluated.)

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Thesis Research Hours will be completed and graded by the last day of the semester.

It is understood that:

Thesis Research Hours will be graded initially on a pass/fail (S/U) basis. When your
thesis advisor approves your thesis in its final form, he or she will recommend a
standard letter grade depending on the quality of the final thesis which shall be
recorded for all semesters of thesis work (the "S/U" grade will be changed at that
time).

The agreed upon deliverables must be turned in to your thesis advisor before
credit for the work will be awarded. This is the responsibility of the student.

It is the Director of the Business Honors Program responsibility to verify that the
student has completed all appropriate background courses before enrolling in a thesis
project.

_________________________________/____________________________

Student’s Name (Print) Signature

_________________________________/____________________________

Thesis Advisor Name (Print) Signature

_________________________________/____________________________

Director, Business Honors Program Name (Print) (Joni L. Jones) Signature
BUSINESS HONORS PROGRAM - PROSPECTUS APPROVAL

Please type or print the information requested on this form.

Student’s information
Name: ___________________________ USF ID: _______________________
E-mail address: _______________________________

Title of thesis: ________________________________________________________

Semester in which work is to be started: __________________________________
Semester in which work is to be completed: ________________________________
When do you plan to graduate? __________________________________________
         (Month & Year)

Is this thesis being submitted for satisfaction of both the Honors College and Business Honors
Program? □Yes □No

Thesis advisor’s name: ________________________________________________
Department: __________________________________________________________
Phone: ______________________________________________________________
Mail: _________________________________________________________________

“I understand that by registering for Honors Thesis that I am registering for a 3 hour course, which
is equal to 9 hours of effort each week.” ________________________________

                   Student’s signature

Proposal approved by: _____________________ / ________________________
                       Thesis advisor’s name        Date

________________________________________ / _________________________
   Director, Business Honors Program        Date

Date prospectus submitted: ________________________________

The public presentation of your thesis will occur prior to the final day of the semester in which the
thesis is completed.
BUSINESS HONORS PROGRAM - THESIS STATUS FORM

Student name: ______________________ USF ID: ______________________

Current Semester: ______________________ / ______________________

Semester    Year

Thesis details:

Title of thesis: _______________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

Thesis Start Date: ______________________ / ______________________

Month          Year

Grades: □ Satisfactory     □ Unsatisfactory

Comments: _______________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

Student has completed honors thesis research work equivalent to three (3) credit hours.

____________________________________________________ / ______________________

Thesis Advisor Name (Print)   Signature
BUSINESS HONORS PROGRAM - THESIS APPROVAL FORM

Student name: _______________________________   USF ID: ______________________

I plan to graduate: _________________________ / __________________________
(Month/Year)

All thesis presentations will take place on the last day of the semester (Friday prior to final exam week).

Thesis detail

Title of thesis: ________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Thesis approved (following presentation):

___________________________________________________________________________ / ____________
Thesis advisor - print & sign   Date

___________________________________________________________________________ / ____________
Director, Business Honors Program - print & sign   Date

Grade: ____________________________
A = Superior
B = Excellent
C = Passing but NOT Honors
D or F = Unacceptable

Acknowledgment of receipt of thesis in final form

___________________________________________________________________________ / ____________
Thesis advisor   Date

A copy of thesis submitted to Director, Business Honors Program: _____/_____/_____   Date

A copy of thesis submitted to the College of Business Library: _____/_____/_____   Date