



## Honors Program Student Guide – Prof-Tech Track

Welcome to the Honors Program! The goal of this program is to enhance your academic experience at Highline, while also preparing you for transfer or career opportunities. This guide is intended to facilitate your involvement by providing an overview of program requirements and benefits. If you have any questions about the program after reading this guide, please contact the Honors Program Manager at [honors@highline.edu](mailto:honors@highline.edu).

### Who should participate?

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High-achieving prof-tech students who are seeking a competitive edge in the job application process. Advanced projects, internships, or service learning opportunities pursued with honors can be documented on a resume to distinguish you from other job candidates.

### Program Benefits

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- **Enhance Your Opportunities** – Both colleges and employers see the word “honors” and associate this with advanced performance. It means that you not only earned a degree, but that you went above and beyond the standard requirements. Each time you complete an honors option, the word honors will be reflected on your transcript.
- **Additional Advising** – The Honors Program Manager is available to discuss your academic/career goals and help you achieve them.
- **Honors Network** – You are joining a network of Honors students and alumni who are achieving big things. Many former honors students have established careers in the Seattle area, while others have travelled across the country to study at institutions such as MIT or to intern at the White House. Across the country and around the world, former Highline Honors Students are doing great things! Many are happy to connect with current students in person or via email.
- **Scholarships** – Students who fulfill ALL of the honors program requirements and maintain a minimum 3.5 GPA, will receive a merit scholarship in their final quarter at Highline (will cover up to 15 credits at the in-state tuition rate). Note for financial aid recipients: check with the financial aid office to see if you will benefit from this scholarship.

### Honors Program Structure

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There is not a formal sign-up process for the Honors Program. A student who completes an honors option is automatically considered part of the program. However, for an Honors Program participant to graduate as an Honors Scholar, he or she must complete all of the following requirements and maintain a GPA of at least 3.5.

## **Honors Options**

- **25 credits required** – Honors Options must be completed in college-level classes
- **Poster Session participation** – At least one honors option must be turned into a visual display to present at one of the honors poster sessions (see page 5 for more details)

## **Honors Core Classes (optional)**

- **Honors Seminar (Honors 100)** – 2 credit class on personal marketing and college transfer; minimum 3.2 college-level GPA required (offered fall/winter/spring)
- **Honors Colloquy (Honors 101)** – 1 credit, pass/fail speaker series featuring alumni, faculty, and staff on topics such as growth mindset and unique career paths (offered winter/spring)
- **Honors Interdisciplinary (Honors 299)** – 2 credit, group research seminar culminating in poster presentation; minimum 3.5 college-level GPA required (offered winter/spring)

## **Honors Options – Overview and Objectives**

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Honors Options are advanced projects intended to prepare students to excel at the next level—whether in upper division university classes or future employment. The project should complement standard coursework and fit with the learning objectives of a particular class, but be more rigorous in standards. For instance, a research paper must involve more than compiling information from sources, and instead demonstrated critical thinking through means such as evaluation and analysis.

With instructor permission, Honors Options can be completed in any 5-credit college-level course. Instructors and students are encouraged to devise projects that best fit their course and challenge the student to work at a higher level. Here are a few examples of Honors Options completed in different departments:

1. A CIS student created a web interface for a class project database and created handouts to assist other students in their learning.
2. A VICOM student furthered her knowledge of composition, continuity, and flow by creating a series of panels to reflect the seasons.
3. A respiratory care student challenged herself to pass a mock credentialing exam at a high level
4. A human services student interviewed a variety of service providers to learn more about cultural competence and shared the results with her class.

Honors Options can take a wide variety of forms to best fit course objectives and student interests. While creativity is encouraged, projects should aim to meet at least three of the following goals:

- Provide opportunities for learning theory, as well as research and application
- Facilitate self-directed learning and independent thinking
- Provide opportunities for students to share their learning with their peers and contribute to the success of the class
- Enable students to develop skills relevant to their academic and/or career goals

- Enhance leadership skills and the ability to interact with a diverse group

## Procedure for Honors Options

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The following guidelines outline the general procedure for pursuing honors in a class; however, individual instructors may amend these guidelines to fit the specific needs of their class. Any changes should be documented in the Honors Option contract. Make sure that you are communicating with your instructor throughout the quarter to ensure that you are on the same page. The onus is on you as a student to take charge of the project and meet the established criteria.

You **must earn a GPA of 3.5 or above** in the class in which the Honors Option is completed in order to earn honors credit. If you realize part way through the quarter that your performance is below this standard, you can choose to discontinue the project.

### Originating an Honors Option project

1. The student is expected to approach the instructor by the end of the third week of the quarter to request permission to complete an Honors Option and to discuss possible projects. Some instructors have a go-to project established for Honors Options, while other instructors may ask you to propose a project idea. It is recommended that you carefully review the course syllabus and consider your project interests before approaching your instructor.
2. If the instructor agrees to supervise an Honors Option, the project should be outlined in the Honors Option contract by the end of week five. The instructor will initiate the contract using the [online tool](https://utilities.highline.edu/honorscontract) (full URL <https://utilities.highline.edu/honorscontract>). Once the contract is initiated, you will receive an automated email at your student account prompting you to view and approve the contract.

### Completing an Honors Option project

3. The student is expected to check in with the instructor at least every other week to report progress, unless otherwise specified by the instructor.
4. If deadlines are outlined in the Honors Option contract, and if those deadlines are not met, the instructor has the right to terminate the Honors Option.
5. Since the student must earn a minimum GPA of 3.5 in the class in order to earn Honors credit, it is suggested that the student and instructor meet during week 7 to discuss whether the student is on track to earn the necessary grade.

### Evaluating and Reporting an Honors Option project (completed by instructor)

6. The Honors Option project does not need to receive a numeric grade. However, the project must satisfy all of the requirements laid out in the honors option contract in order for the student to earn honors credit. The evaluation of the project must be completed in the online honors option tool. (Evaluations are typically 1-2 paragraphs in length and indicate the strengths of the project, areas for improvement, and whether or not the project met the established objectives.)
7. Once the evaluation is submitted, this will notify the honors program manager and registration that the project is complete

- Once the registrar's office receives the email indicating that Honors credit has been earned, and after verifying that the student earned a minimum 3.5 in the course, they will manually change the name of the course so that Honors appears in the title. (Please note that it sometimes takes a few weeks for the Honors distinction to appear.)

Example of Honors notation:

CMST& 220	Public Speaking-HONORS	5	3.6	Winter 2014
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## Sample Honors Option Contract

### FACULTY – STUDENT CONTRACT FOR HONORS OPTION CREDIT

<b>Name</b>		<b>SID #</b>		<b>Phone #</b>	
<b>Student Email</b>				<b>Faculty Sponsor</b>	Erik Scott
<b>Course title &amp; number</b>	Math 220	<b>Item #</b>		<b>Quarter /Year</b>	Spring 2014

#### 1. List of activities and/or objectives for which Honors credit will be given.

The student will:

- Choose a topic related to her/his field of interest that involves significant mathematics, and generate questions for inquiry. [Topic: Algorithm Analysis]
- With assistance from Erik, reference librarians, or others, find materials that include a technical discussion of the topic.  
[Cormen, Thomas H. (2009) *Introduction to Algorithms*; Soltys, Michael (2012) *An Introduction to the Analysis of Algorithms*; Wikipedia Analysis of Algorithms entry]
- Read the materials and present findings to Erik (and possibly classmates in a seminar setting). This includes:
  - Describing the meaning of complex or technical terminology used in the article.
  - Describing the reason for or purpose of the mathematical ideas being used.
  - Summarizing a bit of the mathematics used in the article. [Invariants, "Big-O," Induction]
- Respond to questions raised by others, identify/articulate additional questions about the topic, and investigate further.

#### 2. Purposes, Goals, Results:

- Gain experience independently researching an unfamiliar technical topic.
- Gain experience making sense of articles written by practitioners rather than educators.
  - Increase his/her understanding of technical language and notation.
- Practice summarizing and presenting complex material to an audience.
- Become aware of connections between advanced mathematics and his/her topic.

- See how specific mathematical concepts or techniques are used in real-world settings.

### 3. Method of Evaluation:

- Regular meetings with Erik to discuss discoveries and identify the next stage of inquiry.
- Written summary of research. This will follow the structure of most scientific papers, including project background, results, and references. The summary should be written at level understandable by a classmate who is interested in the same topic.

### Instructor's end-of-quarter evaluation and comments:

For her project, [the student] read portions of *Introduction to Algorithms* by Cormen, *et. al.* and met with me weekly to discuss her discoveries and questions. She also completed a number of tasks from the book, including constructing pseudocode for both linear search and merge sort algorithms, identifying loop invariants, and determining worst-case running times. Over the course of the project, [the student] worked with proof by mathematical induction, piecewise-defined recursive functions, and probability.

I was particularly impressed with her ability to teach herself complex topics. [The student] frequently did additional research online and successfully integrated the ideas into a coherent narrative. She responded well to critiques of her work, using them as an opportunity to deepen her understanding. In the end, she produced an excellent, detailed paper describing the arc of ideas, and our work helped me learn how runtime analysis (and big-O notation) is actually done.

Overall, [the student] demonstrated the behaviors I expect of an honors student – resourcefulness, diligence, the ability to process unfamiliar or complex concepts, and the ability to synthesize ideas – throughout the quarter, so I award honors credit for her work.

## Poster Presentations

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The poster session is your chance to share your honors coursework with the campus community, while practicing your public communication skills. People create visual displays of their work and answer questions from session attendees (similar to a school science fair). **In order to graduate as an Honors Scholar you must present at least one honors option in a poster session.** (Even if you do not plan on completing the full honors program, participation in a poster session is great way to talk about your work, and your involvement can be included on your academic resume.

### Key requirements for presenting an Honors Option

- Plan ahead. Note that poster sessions are only held at the end of winter and spring quarters; however, you can present an honors option that you completed in a previous quarter
- Poster sessions are typically scheduled during week 10 of the quarter
- To participate in the session, you will be required to create a poster that explains your honors option project (i.e. what was the purpose of the project? How did you conduct your research? What did you learn?)

- If you completed a project for an art class, the display could be the art project itself along with a description of the technique you used to complete it
- Attend the poster session and be available to answer questions about your project

## Honors Leadership Team

Honors students are encouraged to become involved in their campus and community, in addition to their academic pursuits. If you are looking for more opportunities to become involved on campus, explore opportunities advertised on the [Center for Leadership and Service website](http://cls.highline.edu) (full URL <http://cls.highline.edu>).

Also consider joining the Honors Leadership Team. The HLT seeks to spread awareness about the Honors Program on campus and to give back to the community through peer mentoring events. For instance, members of the HLT may make classroom announcements about the Honors Program, represent the program at involvement fairs, and mentor students on campus. For more information, email [honors@highline.edu](mailto:honors@highline.edu).

## FAQs

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**Question:** What happens if a student completes an Honors Project that does not meet the criteria?

**Answer:** You must meet the criteria established in the contract in order to earn honors credit. This is why it is essential to establish very clear guidelines in the contract at the beginning of the quarter and to communicate with your instructor on a regular basis to make sure you are on track.

**Question:** Is graduating with honors the same thing as graduating as an Honors Scholar?

**Answer:** No. Anyone with a GPA of 3.5 or above graduates with honors. In order to graduate as a BAS Honors Scholar, a student must maintain a GPA of 3.5 or above AND complete 25 credits of honors coursework. (At Commencement, Honors Scholars can be recognized by their green gowns.)

**Question:** What is the difference between PTK and the Honors Program?

**Answer:** Phi Theta Kappa is a national honors society. Students with a minimum 3.5 GPA are invited to join PTK, which has a local chapter at Highline. PTK offers scholarship opportunities as well as leadership training to high-performing students to enhance their resumes and their education experience. In contrast, the Honors Program is an academic program that requires completing honors coursework. However, many Honors Program participants are also members in PTK.

**Question:** Do other community colleges have Honors Programs? Are Honors Options unique to Highline?

**Answer:** While Highline was one of the first two-year colleges in the state to offer an Honors Program, the number of community college honors programs has expanded over the past ten years. Several community colleges in Washington State and across the county now offer honors programs. Honors Options are a common component of many community college honors programs.