

To: Ron Pitt  
From: Anne Scott  
Date: 27 September 08  
Re: Contract Honors Proposal

### **1. What is this proposal?**

The Honors Program seeks to create a Contract Honors option whereby an Honors student would be allowed to write and fulfill a “contract” with a specific instructor to complete the work for, and thus receive credit for, an Honors course.

### **2. What is the background of current Honors course offerings?**

The Honors Program currently offers four types of courses for its students. (1) We offer a small number of HON courses by means of full-time or part-time instructors hired by the Vice Provost’s office or the Honors Program. (2) In addition to these courses, other departments on campus offer a few “dedicated” courses for our Program, i.e., courses with a dept. prefix and an “-H” suffix with only Honors students enrolled in them. (3) The Honors Program, every year, offers a number of cross-listed or co-convened courses, i.e., regular courses in which a certain number of seats have been set aside for Honors students and for which, like dedicated Honors courses, the instructor has agreed to offer an enhanced intellectual experience for those Honors students. These courses, as well, carry a dept. prefix and an “-H” suffix. (4) Finally, we provide students with opportunities for independently-arranged coursework (i.e., fieldwork, independent study, independent research, thesis, and internship) and opportunities to receive Honors credit for courses taken through international education opportunities. These independently-arranged courses carry the HON prefix.

Some Honors programs and colleges across the nation have a similar mix of courses. However, many Honors programs, including ASU’s program and programs in Idaho and Montana similar in size to our own, allow students to fulfill Honors credits by yet another means, i.e., a Contract Honors option. In fact, the majority of ASU’s Honors students seem to fulfill their credits by means of this particular option, especially those students in more rigorous majors.

### **3. What is the rationale for adding the Contract Honors option to our program offerings?**

Students in NAU’s Honors Program have repeatedly asked for Honors coursework that can apply to their major requirements and at the upper-division levels. They have repeatedly requested in surveys and conversations that the Program offer more such courses and that the course schedule every semester accommodate these needs on a regular basis. In addition, the Program loses students every year because these students cannot find more specialized Honors coursework.

Therefore, the Honors Program wants to give our students the option of creating and fulfilling a contract with an instructor, not as an independently arranged experience but rather as an Honors experience for a course that the instructor is already teaching in a given semester. By fulfilling certain requirements agreed upon by the Honors Program, student, and faculty member, the student taking the course would receive Honors credit for this course.

#### **4. What would the parameters be for the Contract Honors option?**

- a) An Honors student would be able to use the Contract Honors option to fulfill no more than 6 units of Honors credit;
- b) The Contract Honors option would be used primarily for upper division courses, most likely in a student's major or minor;
- c) The Honors student should decide which faculty member to contact, should meet with this instructor, and should help decide with the faculty member's assistance the exact nature of this Honors experience in the faculty member's particular class. After meeting with the faculty member, both student and faculty member should agree about what kind of added materials, experiences, and the like would be best to implement in the desired course so that the student would be getting appropriate credit for an Honors experience in this course;
- d) After meeting with the instructor, the Honors student would be required to fill out the appropriate paperwork before the start of the term requested for the "Contract Honors" option, and no later than 1 week before the University's deadline to add courses;
- e) The student, the faculty member, and the faculty member's department chair would all be required to sign the contract, which would then go to the Honors director for final approval.
- f) We would allow no more than 25 or 30 students to select this option in any given semester, so that the on-line course schedule for "-H" courses could grow at an acceptable pace, so that we could monitor the success of this new addition to the Program, and so that instructors across campus will not be overwhelmed with too many requests from our students.

#### **5. What paperwork would be required?**

The paperwork will consist of a form similar to our independent study/research/fieldwork forms, with blanks to be filled in on one side and guidelines on the back of the form to help student and instructor decide upon the Honors experience that the course will implement. The form will have blanks to be filled in by both student and instructor regarding contact information, course information, credit units, time line for completion of work, and signature lines for student, faculty member, dept chair, and Honors director. In addition, the student will need to supply a narrative that explains in detail what the Honors component of the class will consist of. There will also be a statement on the form that reads: "Student agrees to fulfill all of the course requirements, including the requirements that enhance the course as an Honors experience."

## **6. What guidelines can we provide for faculty teaching a Contract Honors course?**

See the last few sheets of this document for guidelines that will help faculty members decide upon an Honors experience for their Contract Honors courses. These guidelines will appear on the reverse side of requisite form that the student, instructor, and dept chair will sign.

## **7. How will the Contract Honors courses be implemented within PeopleSoft/LOUIE?**

We have communicated with Ron Pitt and the Academic Information Office regarding the way in which the “H” will be attached to these courses, so that the system can recognize the courses as Honors courses and the class can fulfill degree requirements. Currently, our cross-listed courses are built with the help of the Academic Information Office, which needs several days to enter the course appropriately into the on-line course schedule. Once a course is built in this fashion, it remains this way in the on-line course schedule and needn’t be built again. There are currently 2 to 3 dozen courses in the on-line course schedule that already have “H” designations. It is possible that an “H” course that already exists will be desired by an Honors student for a Contract Honors experience. In this case, there will not need to be any extra effort made to ensure that this course is in the schedule.

As mentioned before, we will require that students complete their Honors Contract paperwork 1 week prior to the University’s deadline to add courses, so that we can give the Academic Information Office the time needed to enter the course appropriately in the PeopleSoft catalog.

## **8. What implications are there for faculty who teach a Contract Honors course?**

Faculty will have a chance to work with bright, independently-motivated students and to enhance their teaching strategies and/or research as a result of this interaction. In addition, a faculty member who is approached by a student wanting a Contract Honors course has the right to refuse the request; therefore, there shouldn’t be any added burden to the faculty member’s semester load that wouldn’t be already agreed upon by that faculty member (and the same already holds true for faculty members who teach co-convened courses or dedicated courses). Finally, faculty who would teach a Contract Honors course, just as faculty who teach co-convened courses or dedicated courses, would want to list this task in their narratives for annual review, tenure, and promotion since the experiences do suggest that the faculty members are engaged, above and beyond the call of duty, in their teaching roles and have extended themselves beyond their usual teaching to create this valuable Honors experience for these students. Please note that there will not be any financial compensation for instructors offering a Contract Honors course to a particular student; nor has there been, nor is there, such financial

compensation for faculty teaching a co-convened course or a dedicated course, except in very rare situations, where the Program might be able to contribute a small sum as back/fill.

**9. What potential difficulties might there be with this option?**

The on-line schedule of classes might grow well beyond its current size as Honors students seek out courses through the Contract Honors option. Realistically, however, we do not envision dozens and dozens of students seeking out this option semester after semester. Moreover, the students will be limited to 6 units of Contract Honors credit for the time being, which will ensure that the Academic Information Office won't be burdened by too many requests to add "-H" courses. Finally, as mentioned before, we already have a number of co-convened and dedicated courses carrying the "H" designation. These courses do not have to be re-built again for this purpose.

## Appendix

### A. Guidelines for Faculty teaching a Contract Honors Course:

#### *Suggestions for Additional Written Work, Lab Work, or In-class Discussion Tasks:*

- Have Honors student write a longer paper, but meet with them regularly to discuss the draft and revision process.
- Have Honors students write short, weekly reaction/response papers on various topics.
- Have Honors students take the lead in running small groups during class time.
- Have Honors students take the lead during in-class peer editing sessions, during lab sessions, or during practicum sessions.
- Have Honors students attend a separate lab session wherein class concepts can be expanded upon during particular lab assignments.
- Have Honors students work create and maintain an on-line chat group or website related to the course objectives.
- Have students prepare, in writing, questions or comments relevant to course material and lead class discussion. Meet with students beforehand to discuss why they chose these particular questions and how they might organize the discussion.
- Add an additional take-home component to exams or assignments that require more in-depth research about the topic. Have students meet with the professor to go over this additional work.

#### *Suggestions for Presentations:*

- Have Honors student present information to the whole class on a topic of his/her choosing (or of the instructor's choosing). Have the class give the Honors student feedback about his/her presentations.
- Have Honors student assigned research task and have him/her present ideas to the class such that the entire class's perspective on a particular topic is enhanced.
- Debate and discussion: have instructor create a series of point/counterpoint discussions in class that model a formal debate. Honors student becomes responsible for each point, its support, and the counterpoint rebuttal. Perhaps switch positions for the debate and have Honors student argue the opposing point. Have either faculty or small group of students "judge" the debate.
- Require that Honors student teach a lesson: have Honors student take responsibility for teaching a chapter, a concept, or a method. Student should practice with professor first to ensure their understanding of the topic/lesson in question.
- Oral defense: have Honors student participate in an oral defense of a final project in front of the class.

*Suggestions for Out-of-Class Work:*

- Have instructor contact Honors student prior to the start of the semester, putting him/her in touch with on-line resources connected with course, and have Honors student read materials prior to the start of class.
- For a merged undergrad/grad class, have Honors student communicate with the graduate students on a regular basis prior to or after regular class times, making sure that grad students and Honors student are addressing assignments and projects in some fashion. Have grad students do some peer mentoring with Honors student as well.
- Have instructors help Honors student during office conferences with out-of-class projects related to course content and objectives.
- Have Honors student meet for a discussion group biweekly to address a more in-depth aspect of the course content or additional reading assignment. This might include a brief response paper to clarify thoughts and generate discussion.
- Have Honors student participate in out-of-class activities that extend class concepts. These might be lectures, arts events, guided hikes, tours, etc. Have Honors student prepare a brief oral presentation for the class about the relevance of the activity to the class.
- Have Honors student create a relevant out-of-class event (like a film series) for the entire class. Honors student would be responsible for the selection and justification of the event.
- Symposium Presentation: Honors hosts an annual Honors Symposium to showcase the work of students throughout the Program. Have Honors student prepare a project, paper, or creative work that relates to course content. Have student submit an abstract for the Symposium and present in this venue.
- Have instructor meet regularly with Honors student to discuss a particular article or chapter and a critique of that piece.
- Have Honors student participate in an oral defense of a final project out side of class time, with individual instructor or a group of instructors.
- NB: if more than one Honors student has signed up to receive Contract Honors credit for the same class with the same professor, then any of the suggestions above may be tailored to a group experience instead.

**B. Course Catalogue Description of Barrett Honors College Course Requirements**

(Note: Barrett Honors College students are not limited in terms of the number of Contract Honors courses that they may take to fulfill their Honors requirements. Students with more flexible majors end up taking a mixture of specified Honors courses, dedicated Honors courses, co-convened courses, and Contract Honors courses. Students with less flexible majors end up fulfilling most of their credits with Contract Honors courses. Mr. Will Roberts, head advisor for the Barrett Honors College, states that upwards of 70% of

Honors courses that students take to fulfill their requirements are Contract Honors courses.)

## **Barrett Honors Requirements Overview**

Barrett accepts high performing, academically engaged students and works with them in collaboration with all of the units at ASU to contribute to student success. Most students enter as Freshmen but about 90 each year enter after one or more semesters at a university or college (primarily from ASU). We admit students with up to 60 credits of college or university course work.

Below is a minimum set of guidelines for Barrett students. We do not expel students from Barrett for poor performance or falling behind on requirements, but work with them to meet the requirements. We wish to work with all of the units to help students meet their requirements, as well.

**All students:** Must complete a required number of honors courses (some specified, see below) and a thesis/creative project supervised and defended in front of a faculty committee. To graduate from Barrett, they must have a cumulative GPA of 3.25.

**All students entering with lower division status** (those who have completed fewer than 60 credits of coursework at a university or college following graduation from high school): These students must complete HON171 and HON272/273 (*The Human Event*) by the time they reach 45 credits at ASU or they will lose all honors privileges. They also must complete 36 honors credits, at least 18 of which must be upper division. Students can have as many as 30 of the 36 honors credits as upper division courses.

**Students entering with upper division status** (those who have completed 60 credits of coursework at a university or college following graduation from high school): These students must complete 21 honors credits, all of which must be upper division and one of which must be an HON 300-level seminar.

To ensure completion of requirements:

**Freshman year:** Mandatory Advising must be completed during the Fall semester or the student will lose priority at registration in March.

**Sophomore year:** Mandatory Advising must be completed during the Fall semester or the student will lose priority at registration in March.

**Junior year:** Mandatory Advising must be completed during the Spring semester or the student will lose priority at registration in October of the following year.

**All students entering Barrett after the first semester of their Freshman year:** Must meet with a Barrett Academic Advisor upon admission to the college (within a few weeks of the start of the semester) to review all degree requirements. In addition, ALL students entering Barrett must register a valid email and telephone contact information with the Barrett Advising office upon admission of the college.

**During the Senior year:** Students must submit a thesis/creative project prospectus form one full semester before the semester during which they are defending a thesis/creative project to ensure processing of their record for graduation. In addition, students must complete a graduation check sheet with our honors advisors to ensure all requirements have been fulfilled. Finally, students must defend their thesis/creative project, obtain signatures of completion from all committee members, and submit the final copy of the project to the Barrett advising office by our assigned deadline date to ensure eligibility to walk in the Barrett Convocation ceremony. These dates are posted on the web and in the honors advising office, and are given to all students during their honors advising appointments.

To graduate from Barrett, all students must complete ASU graduation requirements in an academic major.

## Honors Contracts

Honors Contracts give students and faculty the opportunity to engage in innovative and interesting course assignments for honors credit. The Honors Contract option is an opportunity to be creative about learning and teaching, and a way to tailor the curriculum to meet student interests.

This arrangement is formalized via contract in which the student and faculty renegotiate the course requirements. As with all honors courses, only courses taught by regularly appointed faculty members or by distinguished visitors are eligible to carry the Honors Contract designation. Contracts should be explicit and fully detail the expectations for both the quantity and quality of work.

The student will initiate the Honors Contract process. **The deadline for Fall Semester was Sunday, September 21, 2008.** (Late contracts are not accepted and the student does not earn honors credit for the course).

All work for Honors Contract credit must be completed during the semester in which the student has registered for the course. Fulfillment of the agreement is documented by a completion form, sent to the instructor by the honors college and returned by him/her no later than one month after the last day of class for that semester.

Student Guide for Making Honors Contracts :

1. Approach your professor during the first few weeks of class to see if he or she is willing to develop an enriched experience for the target course. It may include extra meetings with the professor, extra reading, and/or extra writing or speaking.
2. Make sure you agree with the plan before verbally agreeing. Remember, this is a collaborative effort that you approve, as well.
3. Complete a Barrett Honors Contract online.
4. Do not fill out another contract if information is incorrect. Contact the Honors Advising office to make the changes to the original contract.
5. Check with your professor to ensure that he/she received the electronic contract and felt the information represented your oral agreement.
6. Meet regularly with your professor during the semester; if he/she does not request frequent discussions, take the initiative to check with him/her for an update on your progress.
7. If you feel the need to drop the contract mid-semester, speak with your professor for advice before making a final decision. Contact the Honors Advising office so we can update your records.
8. Turn in your project by the final deadline date.

Suggested enrichment activities vary by area of discipline:

- Conduct an individual research project or assist with faculty research
- Create, test, and evaluate a software program
- Prepare and present a class lecture
- Facilitate weekly meetings with faculty outside of class
- Complete a small group project with other honors students
- Produce a research paper
- Attend breakout sessions with faculty and other honors students

\*\*\*Note that all official transcripts will be updated by the Registrar's office 2-3 months after the end of the semester you complete the footnote project.

## Honors Courses

The goal of the College's curriculum is to develop habits of mind that enable persons to be lifelong learners, creative problem solvers, and participatory citizens in a democratic society. The College emphasizes small classes, generally limited to 19 students; seminars, multi-disciplinary team taught courses and other engaged modes of learning; and the development of critical reading, discussion, and writing skills. The College appoints faculty members who are responsible for offering the core honors curriculum, but the College otherwise utilizes the instructional and research resources of the University as a whole. In essence, The Human Event represents, in microcosm, the great benefits of becoming part of the Barrett Honors College - small, student-centered, seminar-style classes in which you and your classmates explore the world's greatest literature and most profound ideas with

a faculty member chosen for his or her ability to facilitate lively, meaningful discussion. In this intellectually charged atmosphere, there is a bonding that takes place among students over the course of the year, and student-faculty interaction becomes a meaningful mentoring experience.

In essence, there are three different ways to take honors courses:

**1)** HON prefix courses are offered at the lower division (100 and 200) level and at the upper division (300 and 400) level. HON courses have a maximum enrollment of 19 students, are conducted in seminar format, are interdisciplinary in content and approach, and have a significant writing component. These courses are taught primarily by the faculty in Barrett Honors College, but each semester some HON courses are taught by disciplinary faculty.

**2)** Honors-only courses carry the prefix of the department offering the course. They are designed to challenge students in a small class format and develop in two ways:

- a) breakout sections of large lecture courses and
- b) stand alone seminars.

Both forms are limited to Honors students (although in exceptional cases outstanding non-Honors students can be added with permission of the professor). Honors-only sections and seminars must be taught by regular faculty, not by graduate students or temporary hires. In addition, they must:

- ~ have no more than 25 students
- ~ engage students in discussion
- ~ offer a challenging curriculum
- ~ include a significant writing component appropriate to the discipline.

**3)** Honors Contracts are not separate courses. They are individual contracts made between the professor teaching a course and an honors college student in the course. They are intended to build relationships between students and faculty, as well as to challenge and engage honors students beyond the requirements of the course. Honors Contracts are the most varied of the honors experiences at ASU. They should involve discussions between the faculty and student outside of the normal class period and often involve supplemental reading, writing, or speaking assignments that build communication skills and knowledge in the subject area. For more information on Honors Contracts including how to establish one, [click here](#).