

2023-24 Honors Guidelines

Please review our honors procedures, deadlines and content directives below:

Students interested in graduating with honors in the concentrations of Environmental Studies or Environmental Science must complete a thesis determined to be of the highest quality and must have excelled in their coursework required for the concentration.

Coursework excellence is defined here as receiving a grade of "A" in the majority of courses taken to fulfill the concentration.

Thesis Advisor & Second Reader

Typically the faculty member serving as a student's thesis advisor is a [Core Faculty member of IBES](#), however additional Brown faculty (such as [Elected Fellows & Affiliates](#) or non-affiliated Professors) can also serve in this role. Non-core faculty members must confirm with the Academic Program Manager (jeannel@brown.edu) that they have agreed to be the concentrator's thesis advisor. Students pursuing honors may be asked to secure a 'second reader' (to the discretion of the advisor) who can provide additional input on the direction of the work, and will help evaluate the quality of the final product. The second reader is often a Brown faculty member, but can also be an environmental practitioner or professor based outside of Brown, who has significant expertise in the concentrator's area of research. For students conducting an engaged project with a community partner, their supervisor from the organization can be recognized as their 'second reader'.

Honors Committee

To avoid confusion, the student's reader and thesis advisor should not be referred to as their committee. The Honors Committee is instead, a group of professors who will review every two semester project that's pursuing honors and indicate if the material meets [honors academic standards](#).

Thesis Defense

Whether or not an honors candidate is obliged to defend is at the discretion of their thesis advisor. Students who are required to defend should communicate with their thesis advisor and second reader early in their 8th semester, to determine expectations and format.

Thesis Review

The initial review of candidate materials will be by the student's thesis advisor and second reader. If they deem the material worthy of honors, the thesis advisor will then forward the work to the Honor's Committee, who will meet to pass a yes or no vote.

Criteria for Engaged Honors Theses:

Note: this is not for all engaged theses, just those submitted to the honors committee

An engaged thesis may include independent research and/or collaboration with a community-based organization, such as those sponsored by the Voss, Starr, or Royce Fellowship programs. Note that the definition of "community" is diverse, depending upon the nature of the capstone project and the community partners engaged in the work. Some students may collaborate with partners in schools, civic organizations, and environmental nonprofits in Providence; others may engage with international non-governmental organizations, state, or national level government partners, or even groups from the private sector.

The student's work must draw on critical evidence and be framed within a set of literature (does not have to be disciplinary, but must be academically rigorous).

- If the community partner wants a descriptive piece, working paper, website, case study analysis, pamphlet, GIS map, etc..... this is fine. However, the student must do research above and beyond a partner's "pet project" if that undertaking does not ask for critical evaluation or in-depth examination.
- Some projects may demonstrate academic rigor with thorough methodologies such as:
 - Original data analysis
 - In depth archival research and coding
 - Ethnography/qualitative analysis with well-thought out and vetted interview questions, transcriptions, and coding of transcriptions to measure themes.
- Student could select to work with a partner for one semester on a more descriptive/hands on project, and then follow up with an academic piece to supplement the first semester endeavor.
- Ideally the final product will include a measurement of outcome for the project (or explanation of why there is not a measurement of outcome).

Timetable

1. **First week of Classes, Fall Semester** – Deadline to turn in Independent Research Form to thesis & concentration advisors with a cc to jeannel@brown.edu
2. **Fall Shopping Period** - Register for ENVS 1970 section assigned to you thesis advisor. When in Courses@Brown you must check the box next to "Include Independent Study and Research Courses" in order to find the ENVS 1970 sections. Please note that you will need your thesis advisor to grant an override for you to complete the enrollment process.
3. **Friday, September 15th** – Deadline to meet with capstone advisor to discuss project and come up with a timeline.
4. **Friday, September 29th** - Deadline for the concentrator and their thesis advisor to agree upon what type of deliverable should be turned in at the end of the semester. Said deliverable will be used by the thesis advisor, to determine what type of grade should be submitted at the end of the fall semester (ENVS 1970). **At a bare minimum the deliverable should be a Literature Review.**
5. **Every other week** – Talk or correspond with thesis advisor to review progress. It is the responsibility of both the senior and their thesis advisor, to make sure they are in touch on a regular basis and that expectations are clearly defined and confirmed.
6. **Monday, December 4th** – Deadline for concentrator to turn in deliverable to their thesis advisor, so they can receive a grade for the first half of their thesis (ENVS 1970, fall semester).
7. **Spring Shopping Period** – Register for ENVS 1971 section assigned to you thesis advisor.
8. **Friday, March 22th** - Complete draft due to thesis advisor and second reader
9. **Friday, April 12th** - Recommended deadline by which to defend thesis (if the thesis advisor requires a defense).
10. **Friday, April 19th** - Final draft (which addresses feedback) must be turned in to thesis advisor and second reader. Format should be either a PDF or Word file.
11. **Wednesday, April 24th** - Deadline for thesis advisor to email Professor Dawn King an attachment of student's final product and a statement as to why they think the work is worthy of honors.

Make sure to cc the Academic Program Manager, Jeanne Loewenstein (jeannel@brown.edu).

***Also indicate if you want to nominate your senior for Brown University's Distinguished Senior Thesis Prize**

12. **Tuesday, April 30th** – Honors' Committee convenes to decide which theses should receive honors
13. **Thursday, May 2nd** - Honors' Committee informs Jeanne Loewenstein which theses have been approved for honors, so she can provide the Registrar with the necessary documentation.
14. **Monday, May 8th** - Email copy of final report/paper along with a [Release](#) or [Confidentiality](#) form to Jeanne Loewenstein, jeannel@brown.edu.
15. **Second Week of May** – The Registrar's Office emails the Academic Program Manager to confirm recipients of honors.

***Nominating Senior Advisee for Brown University's Distinguished Thesis Prize**

Brown University Distinguished Senior Thesis Prize recognizes exceptional research and writing produced in any concentration by graduating seniors. Brown aims to select winning theses just before Commencement so that concentrations may announce the honor at their graduation ceremonies.

If you want to nominate your advisee's thesis, you must provide a memo to Professor Dawn King by April 26th, that describes the work's merits and addresses the following:

- The scope and significance of the research question(s) and argument;
- Degree of nuance in the research design;
- The degree of originality and the scholarly contribution of the work, noting evidence of intellectual risk-taking
- The clarity, cohesion, and control demonstrated in the student's command of language. Thesis should not only illustrate rigorous evidence-based research, but should constitute a pleasurable read for specialized and non-specialized readers alike.

Deadlines for Final Presentation (required for all one and two semester capstone students)

- **Wednesday, April 17th** - Deadline to send poster design to your thesis advisor for feedback
- **Wednesday, April 24th** - Deadline to submit poster file to print
- **Wednesday, May 1st** - Attend and discuss thesis at Seniors & Voss Fellows Research Poster Presentation, 1:00-3:00PM

Suggested Elements of an Environmental Studies & Sciences Honors Thesis (this may vary by advisor/topic)

If you want to reference a previous concentrator's work that focuses on a similar topic as your research, you may ask Academic Program Manager, Jeanne Loewenstein (jeannel@brown.edu), to provide you with a digital copy for review.

1. Title page: Include title of the thesis, state you are the author, name your thesis advisor & second reader, and indicate date of completion. Also provide a short statement noting that the thesis has been submitted in partial fulfillment of Environmental Studies & Sciences A.B or Sc.B degree requirements.

2. Acknowledgments: A personal statement by the author acknowledging professors, labs, agencies and/or fellow researchers that contributed to the final product; including a brief description of their influence upon the work.
3. Table of Contents and List of Figures: It may also be appropriate to include a list of abbreviations.
4. Abstract: A single spaced page containing a summary of the thesis question, method(s) used to address that question, the results and a conclusion. The abstract is quite important, as a digital copy of it will be archived for future reference. It should present the most significant things you have learned, not merely say that you have learned them; e.g. say "I determined that humidity was unacceptably high in the houses I tested, thus justifying remedial ventilation", not "Chapter 4 of my thesis gives my findings on indoor air quality in the houses I tested". Part of its purpose is enabling others to decide whether they would like to read further by requesting a digital copy of your thesis.
5. Body of the thesis: Your thesis advisor may require the format of your final product be intended for a certain audience thus necessitating, for instance, that it take the form of a journal article or policy report.

Examples of good font styles to use are Ariel, Verdana, Cambria or Times New Roman.

The body of the thesis should not exceed 100 pages (double spaced with 12-point font)

6. Content - In your paper remember to include the motivation for your research, what your overall questions were, methods you used to obtain answers, your results plus their significance, and suggestions for moving forward.
 - a. Introduction/Summary (motivation & main questions)
 - b. Research/Project Objective (how you planned to obtain answers)
 - c. Methods (your process)
 - d. Results (what came of your efforts)
 - e. Conclusion (what you learned and where to go from here)

Overall content should convey:

- Understanding of the complexity and interdisciplinary nature of environmental issues
- Critical thinking and evidence of independent thought
- Research and relevant analytical skills
- Ability to problem solve and adapt
- Demonstration that most current methods and data were utilized
- Aptitude in writing and communication

7. Bibliography: Alphabetized list of all published information referred to in the body of the thesis (specific suggested format varies by advisor)
8. * References and Footnotes: Research skills are a particularly important aspect of the thesis writing process. Therefore, special attention should be paid to references and footnotes

** The purpose of providing references is to 1) attribute cited information, ideas and quotations properly to the original author, and 2) enable readers to easily locate the cited information. Footnotes also enable the author to expand upon ideas or data presented in the body of the thesis, which are supplemental or secondary to the text.*

Brown supports a number of citation tools, such as [EndNote](#), [EndNote Online](#), [Mendeley](#) and [Zotero](#). These programs:

- Store and organize information
- Present a database of the material you're collecting
- Can plug into your word processor and format footnotes, endnotes, and bibliographies

Each has its own benefits, so if you need help deciding which one works best for your needs, take a look at the [MIT Citation Managers comparison guide](#). **Students should consult with their advisor on which reference style to use.**