



# Honors Contracts FAQs for Mentor Professors

## What are Honors Contracts?

Honors Contracts are projects Honors Students can undertake in any LMC college level course. If the student completes the Honors Contract, the accomplishment is noted on her/his transcript and counts towards Honors Program requirements. Under your supervision and guidance, the student conceives of a project which goes *above and beyond the regular coursework*. This project should relate to the skills and knowledge being taught in the class but take it to a more advanced level. The Honors Contract project should take about *25 extra hours*. This includes all the time researching, writing and meeting with you.

## What kinds of projects can be done?

Any project that relates to the subject area can be approved – creativity is encouraged! The kinds of projects that have been approved in the past include:

- Research Project/Paper
- Demonstration of an advanced skill
- Creative Work (painting, film etc.)
- Class Presentations
- Service/Community Based Learning Project

The main question the Honors Board asks when evaluating Honors Contract Proposals is *how does this project supplement and advance the skills and knowledge of the course?*

Go to [www.losmedanos.edu/honors/cur.aspx](http://www.losmedanos.edu/honors/cur.aspx) for sample Honors Contract forms.

## How does a student initiate an Honors Contract?

An Honors Student who wants to do a Contract in your course needs to first get the Honors Director's approval and then initiate the discussion with you. You and the student will collaborate to come up with the basic idea for the project, and then it is the student's responsibility to develop an Honors Contract Proposal. *It is your prerogative to assess the student's ability to succeed in the Contract when deciding whether you want to commit to the extra time it will take on your part.*

About four weeks into the semester the student submits the 1-2-page Honors Contract Proposal to the Honors Director. *Your signature is required and indicates that you are approving this project and deem it up to your academic standards.* The Honors Advisory Board then closely reviews the Proposal and ranks it either "Approved", "Approved with Minor Revision", "Needs Revision" or "Not Approved". The main criteria the Board uses to judge proposals by are:

- **Clarity:** Is it clear exactly WHAT the student proposes to do, HOW s/he is going to do it, what the OUTCOMES of the project will be, and what the TIMELINE for the project is?
- **Academic Relevance and Quality:** Does the project clearly relate to and supplement the content/skills of the course? Are the intellectual and academic demands of the project of sufficient caliber to merit Honors Credit?
- **Feasibility:** Is this project really do-able in the 25-hour time frame?

## **What are my responsibilities?**

Your role is to mentor and guide the student as s/he conceives of the project, develops the proposal and then implements the Contract. You will meet at least once every two weeks with the student to go over her/his progress, review drafts and suggest avenues to pursue. At the end of the semester, you will assess whether the student has fulfilled the terms of the Honors Contract to your professional standards.

## **How should I grade the Honors Contract?**

The Honors Contract is graded on a "Pass/No Pass" basis and will in no way affect the student's grade in the course. (The grade in the course is based on the same assignments and criteria as all the other students.) Successful completion of the Honors Contract will result in the student's receiving honors credit for the course on her/his transcript and a certificate noting the accomplishment. *Note that the student must receive a "C" or better in the course for Honors credit.*

## **Can the student drop out of the Honors Contract?**

Honors students may drop out of the Honors Contract obligation at any time during the semester, however if this occurs twice, the student's membership in the Honors Transfer Program will be reviewed by the Honors Board.

**Can the student get an Incomplete in the Honors Contracts?** The Honors Contract MUST be completed before the end of the semester; there are no "incompletes" allowed for honors contracts. However, in the case that the student receives an "incomplete" in the overall course in accordance with college guidelines, the student shall be permitted time to complete the Honors Contract along with the course.

## **What are the most common pitfalls for students?**

- **Students often choose a project that is way too BROAD in its ambitions.** Often they want to answer a question or complete a task that is far too big for a 25-hour project.
- **Students often procrastinate and then get in over their heads towards the end of the semester.** LMC Professors who've experienced a lot of success with Honors Contracts report that by setting deadlines and requiring tangible outcomes along the way helps keep students on track.
- **Honors Contract Proposals are often too vague or are poorly written.** Intellectual superficiality, grammar/spelling mistakes or weak prose make a huge impression on the Honors Board reviewers. They take seriously their role as quality control for the Program and only approve Honors Contracts which meet high academic standards. *Please make it clear to the student that you will not sign their proposal until it is quality work they are proud to show to a panel of LMC professors, staff, Honors Students and managers.*

## **Are there any resources to help me mentor the student in this project?**

Yes! An important part of Honors Director Jennifer Saito's job is to help you work with your Honors students. She's overseen hundreds of Honors Contract proposal reviews and can help you and your student navigate the process successfully. She's happy to meet with you and/or the student as you conceptualize the project, and she can also review drafts of the Honors Contract proposal. Just contact her at [jsaito@losmedanos.edu](mailto:jsaito@losmedanos.edu) for help!