Guidelines for Honors Contract and Thesis in Mathematics

This handout is a guide for the Honors contract and the Honors thesis in mathematics. See https://my.bridgew.edu/departments/honors/SitePages/Departmental%20Honors.aspx for more information.

In order to graduate with Departmental Honors, a student must complete nine hours consisting of either one semester of honors thesis and two Honors contracts or two semesters of Honors thesis and one Honors contract.

An Honors contract is a project associated with a 300- or 400-level mathematics course. The student submits the contract application electronically within the first month of the semester that the contract will be completed. The application should include the topics to be investigated, the mode of inquiry, and the basis of evaluation (e.g., paper of a certain length, presentation at a particular venue, etc.). The Honors Program will provide deadlines and instructions at the beginning of the semester. The student must earn a B or better in the course and complete the Honors component of the course in order to receive Honors credit.

An Honors thesis is a rigorous and rewarding culminating research project completed under the direction of a faculty mentor (or two mentors for an interdisciplinary thesis) in the student's final year. The application/registration process has three steps. (1) The student submits a one-paragraph abstract (summary) of the proposed project by the deadline the semester before beginning the thesis. (2) After the abstract is approved, the student registers for the three-credit Honors-thesis course MATH 485 (or INTD 485 for an interdisciplinary thesis) on InfoBear. (3) The student submits a full thesis proposal at the beginning of the thesis semester. The proposal includes a title, abstract, introduction, methodology, and proposed reading list (references). The introduction should include the need for the research, contextual information, and goals. The three steps are repeated for a student completing a two-semester thesis. The Honors Program will provide deadlines and instructions for application/registration/completion. The student must complete the thesis, have the mentor(s) and reading committee approve it, and earn a B or better in the thesis course in order to receive Honors credit.

Additional information:

1. Students can apply to waive three Departmental-Honors credits if they participate in the ATP Summer Research Program or another intensive research experience (REU, NASA, NSF, etc.).

2. Students who complete a two-semester thesis are required by the Mathematics Department to present their work at a campus research event, at a conference, or in the department. Students who complete a one-semester thesis are recommended (but not required) to present their work as above.

3. There are no length, format, or content requirements for the Honors thesis in mathematics. Students seeking guidance on citation styles can consult http://microsites.bridgew.edu/library/styleman.

4. Three weeks before the last day of scheduled classes, the student will share the current draft of the Honors thesis with the reading committee. The reading committee will suggest changes and make other recommendations about the Honors thesis.

5. Students can undertake Interdisciplinary Honors by completing the nine Honors credits across two departments. This version of Departmental Honors is often completed by double majors. The student will choose two thesis advisors (one from each department) and register for INTD 485. Both Honors
mentors from the two participating departments must approve the abstract and proposal for INTD 485 Honors Thesis prior to submission to the Honors Program for approval.

Checklist for the Honors thesis:

1. ___ During the semester before the thesis semester: Choose a faculty mentor, and develop a thesis topic.

2. ___ During the semester before the thesis semester, shortly after classes end (date given in advance): Submit a one-paragraph abstract (summary) of the proposed project to the Honors Program by the deadline.

3. ___ By the end of the first week of classes in the thesis semester: Add the three-credit thesis course MATH 485 or INTD 485 on InfoBear.

4. ___ Within the first few weeks of the thesis semester (date given in advance): Submit the full thesis proposal to the Honors Program.

5. ___ Before submitting the full thesis proposal: If the project involves human or animal subjects in any capacity, submit a proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). See https://my.bridgew.edu/departments/IRB/SitePages/Home.aspx.

6. ___ For a two-semester thesis: Repeat Steps 2 through 4 for the second semester. (Apply/register each semester in which you expect to work on a thesis.) The abstract (Step 2) summarizes what has been accomplished in the first semester and how the next semester's work will build on it. The proposal in Step 4 outlines the planned work and how it builds on the accomplishments of the first semester.

7. ___ By Week 6 of the semester when the thesis is expected to be completed: Together with your thesis advisor invite two other members to the reading committee.

8. ___ In the second semester of a two-semester thesis: Give a presentation about the work at a campus research event, at a conference, or as an individual presentation in the department. The presentation is a Mathematics-Department requirement for a two-semester thesis. The presentation is optional for students completing a one-semester thesis.

9. ___ Three weeks before the last day of scheduled classes: Upon approval by the faculty mentor, share a draft of the current version of the thesis with the members of the thesis reading committee. The reading committee will suggest changes and make other recommendations about the thesis.

10. ___ Last day of scheduled classes (defined as the day before Reading Day): Hand in the final copy of the thesis to the thesis reading committee.

11. ___ Last day of finals: Once the thesis has been approved and all committee signatures have been obtained, submit a hard copy of only the signature page to the Honors Center, and email the final copy of the thesis to the Honors Center.