

Environmental Studies Honors Thesis

Introduction

The Honors Thesis of the Environmental Studies Program is awarded to ES majors who produce a written academic work that meets these three conditions: a) scholarly excellence through original research worthy of publication in a peer-reviewed journal; b) it has an environmental issue as main topic; and, c) it is based on an interdisciplinary approach to that topic. Approaches that encompass two or more disciplines across different areas of knowledge, i.e., social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, are particularly encouraged.

Students pursuing the Honors Thesis are expected to make a major commitment in terms of time and effort. This endeavor should be undertaken only by those with strong research interests and the ability to focus intellectually in scholarly production.

Requirements

Initial Consultation: A student interested in undertaking an Honors Thesis should discuss his/her ideas with the ES Chair who, in turn, will ask one or more ES Macalester faculty to share the responsibility to supervise the student's progress. Once a verbal agreement on the topic and approach has been made, the students must submit a brief but explicit written proposal in which the research program to be conducted is outlined. This proposal must include the methodology to be followed and a time schedule of objectives to be fulfilled. This step should be taken during the student's sophomore or junior year.

Minimum GPA: Cumulative (all College courses) GPA of 3.40 and a GPA of at least 3.50 in the courses required to complete the ES major.

Course Work and Schedule: Students undertaking an Honors Thesis are expected to have completed all or a significant portion of their research by the start of their Senior year. During their senior year, honors students are expected to commit the equivalent of at least one course per semester to working on the thesis. This commitment involves registering for an independent project during one semester and enrolling in only three courses during the other semester. Before their eighth semester, honors students are required to submit a first draft of their thesis for review to the ES Program for approval. Only those students whose first draft are approved by the ES Program Director will be permitted to proceed with their Honors Thesis.

Format

Written work: Given the interdisciplinary work of the proposed thesis, different formats are acceptable as long as they conform with the standards of scholarly work of any field of knowledge. Students must demonstrate mastery of the literature of the field they are working in, originality of ideas, insight, and the ability to communicate those ideas and insights effectively.

Oral Presentation

Honors Thesis students are required to give a 30-60 minute presentation before a wide audience of faculty and students during a regular EnviroThursday or in a specially called ES Program Seminar. Additional presentations before a professional meeting is also encouraged. Presentations must be given very professionally. Structure, delivery, and quality of audiovisual materials must be impeccable.

Evaluation

The Honors Thesis will be read by a committee of faculty members, usually three and often including faculty or other experts from outside Macalester. This committee then meets with the student for about an hour shortly after the oral presentation during which time they ask the student various questions about the thesis and about the student's research experience. Following the hour discussion with the student, the committee decides as a group whether the paper merits an Honors designation.

Environmental Studies

Honors Thesis Timeline and Due Dates

Junior Year

- Explore honors topics.
- Project proposals will be accepted first and second semester junior year.
- Summer prior to senior year, continue research.

Senior Year

September 10	Final deadline to submit an Honors Thesis proposal. At its second September department meeting, the Environmental Studies faculty will review submitted proposals and decide which proposals are approved to proceed. Under special circumstances, seniors may submit a proposal for an Honors Thesis at the beginning of the first semester of their senior year.
September 29	Thesis outline due to advisor.
September 30	List of students pursuing Honors Thesis submitted to Dean of Academic Programs (include project title and name of primary advisor).
October 15	Student identifies three faculty members to serve on their honors committee (at least two of these members must be Environmental Studies Department faculty).
December 1	First draft due.
Early January*	A revised list of students who have been approved to continue their work is submitted to Dean of Academic Programs (include project title and name of primary advisor).
March 1	Second draft due.
Early April*	Final abstract due.
Early April*	Outside examiner payment form due (if applicable).
Early-Mid April*	Oral defenses to be scheduled.
April 15	Final draft due.
Early May*	Final draft of Honors Thesis due.

*Note: Dates are determined by Academic Programs. Check their website for specifics:
www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/honors.html

Environmental Studies Honors Thesis Application

Student Name: _____

Department Advisor: _____

Potential three member thesis committee (one outside member):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Attach the following documents to this application:

1. One page thesis summary including a preliminary title, your guiding research question, methodology, and relevant coursework and experience.
2. A timeline indicating work done and to be done.
3. Short bibliography.
4. Official college transcript.
5. Letter from your department advisor.

Student's Signature

Date