

# **Department of Accounting**

## **Honors Thesis Requirements**

### **Overview**

A senior honors thesis for accounting majors is an opportunity to engage in a substantial research project which must make an original contribution or expand on an existing research topic in the field of accounting (broadly defined and include the areas of financial and/or managerial accounting, auditing, taxation, accounting information systems, accounting history, forensic accounting and contemplates that students will embrace legal research as well other established research methodologies suitable for academic investigation). The details of this project must be established in consultation with a faculty mentor. Because the B.S. in Accounting degree contains a full complement of required content courses and because most majors pursue completing 150 semester hours to satisfy CPA exam eligibility, eight hours of HNR 498 academic credit will count as elective credit towards the 150 hour requirement.

### **Mentor**

The mentor for an honors student thesis in the Department of Accounting must be a faculty member in the Department of Accounting and must be selected in consultation with the department chair. The mentor must have research, applied and/or creative expertise, and interests that are consistent with the proposed thesis project. A faculty member may accept one new thesis each year and may supervise up to two thesis projects at the same time, one in progress and one new thesis. The mentor is responsible for coordinating with the committee members to oversee the project. Committee members will assist the mentor in reviewing intermediate and final work products, as necessary.

Students should be fully aware of which faculty members in the department are available to serve as mentors, and what kinds of theses those faculty members feel competent to direct. Faculty members, in turn, should know something about the students interested in working with them on the thesis and why they are drawn to their topics.

While we do not feel it necessary to institute any formal departmental procedure in the process of matching students with mentors, we do agree that, as faculty members, we each have a responsibility to engage in careful, serious conversation with potential honors thesis advisees before agreeing to direct a thesis. There are two principal goals of those initial conversations: 1) to ensure that the student has an appropriate level of background and interest in his/her topic, and 2) to make the student aware of other faculty members who might also be qualified to direct the thesis. Because the department does not anticipate a large number of candidates, we would expect the student to be in contact with the department chair to initiate the process of selecting an appropriate mentor for the student.

## **Thesis Committee**

In accordance with Honors Program guidelines, the thesis committee will be made up of three Elon faculty on long-term contracts who have a background or expertise that allow them to contribute to the project and evaluate the work.

## **Description**

The honors thesis must make a significant research or applied contribution to the study or practice of accounting. As such, the thesis must extend beyond normal course, independent study, or ACC 499 research projects.

There is flexibility in the choice of topic and nature of the thesis. However, we anticipate that the thesis will take one of four forms. The thesis may involve a substantial research project or a developmental project (applied thesis) with a business client. As such, the thesis must make a significant applied contribution to the practice of accounting. Alternatively, the thesis may involve an original empirical study, including the application of accounting theory to appropriate data. A study of the latter type should be structured as a publishable research paper in accounting, in anticipation of the paper being presented at a regional or national accounting conference. A third choice for the thesis may take the form of an extensive case study. The case study should take the general form of a Harvard business case, with extensive citing of appropriate accounting articles and texts, as well as discussing important questions and issues raised by the case. Finally, in the area of taxation, the thesis may take the form of standard legal research study in which the topic involves tax policy or combinations of tax policy and tax applications. A study utilizing this methodology should be structured as a publishable research paper in an appropriate tax or accounting outlet. In any of its forms, the thesis must extend beyond normal course, independent study, or ACC 499 research projects.

Traditional qualitative and quantitative research projects as well as any legal research must follow established conventions, be consistent with the development of such projects, and conform to format guidelines established by the Honors Program. The project report may be structured as an academic article suitable for submission to an academic journal in the field (guidelines for such works, including page lengths and formats, will be discussed with the faculty mentor).

Thesis projects must manifest appropriate theoretical concepts, follow content and production conventions for such works, and incorporate appropriate research methodologies. Such thesis must include sections of the research explaining the significance of the work, reviewing pertinent literature, and providing historical, theoretical, methodological, contextual and/or other appropriate justification of the project, plus bibliography and appendices.

## Academic Credit/Timeline

The distribution of credit hours will be determined in consultation with the mentor. However, thesis credit may not be granted in Winter Term and a student may not normally take more than four hours of thesis credit in a semester. Ordinarily, a student will register for academic credit as suggested below. The timeline for completion of the thesis has been established by the Honors Program.

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>HNR Credit Hrs. (Recommended)</b>
<b>Fall, Junior Year</b>	<b>0</b>
Choose appropriate thesis topic, identify a mentor (in consultation with the Chair of Accounting), apply for research funding, and IRB approval,	
<b>Spring, Junior Year</b>	<b>2</b>
Write thesis proposal Submit proposal to Mentor and Chair before April 15 Submit proposal to Honors Program by end of the semester	
<b>Fall, Senior Year</b>	<b>4</b>
Establish specific timeline for tasks, responsibilities and frequency of meetings Conduct research Submit rough draft by end of semester Submit progress report to committee by end of semester	
<b>Spring, Senior Year</b>	<b>2</b>
Complete research, writing and editing in consultation with mentor and committee Submit final draft to committee one week before defense Schedule thesis defense before April 15 (formal presentation*) Submit final copy to Honors Office by date set by Honor's Program	

\* The thesis defense must comply with the format and policies of the Honors Program. All Accounting majors must also make a formal presentation of their results directed to the faculty and allow audience questions.

Revised 4/15/2012