This Honors in Practice (HIP) Contract Handbook offers students, faculty, Departmental Honors Advisors, and other advisors clear guidelines about the types and requirements of Honors in Practice work, including Honors Excel graduate work, Honors Book Labs, the Honors Alumni Mentoring Program, Honors leadership experiences, and faculty-student contracts for research and creative work, community engagement, internships, and study abroad. Students can begin working toward HIP milestones any time; most students complete this work during their sophomore and junior years.

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Honors in Practice: What, When, and Why?

WHAT?
“Honors in Practice” (HIP) allows students to make academic knowledge real and tangible by applying that knowledge outside the classroom. HIP work therefore cannot be required for a course, with some guided exceptions (see Honors Excel, internships, and study abroad). Honors offers various paths toward earning the recommended NINE HIP points, including:

- Honors Book Labs (1 point each)
- Honors Leadership Academy (3 points)
- Honors Student Leadership (4.5 points total; maximum of 3 points/year)
- Honors Integrated Experiences (8 points total)
- Honors Alumni Mentoring Program (3 points total)
- Honors contracts (3 points per contract)

WHEN?
Students can begin HIP work as early as their first year; most students meet these milestones during their second and third years. Current/transfer students admitted after their first year may earn some HIP points upon admission, based on past experiences.

WHY?
The value of HIP work is both professional and personal. Honors dares students to think critically and practically about how research, creative work, community engagement, and interdisciplinary learning shape their academic and professional careers. Each HIP project requires students to produce two documents that showcase the value of their practical experience: a final product and a written reflection. The product becomes part of each student’s professional portfolio; the reflection contributes to the narrative about the value of that student’s undergraduate experience.

While many undergraduates at USU gain some practical experience in their disciplines, all Honors students build a set of professional skills in addition to their academic knowledge, skills that they can articulate clearly and convincingly because of their practice with reflection. HIP work often lays the foundation for both capstone projects and future professional paths, and Honors trains students to take responsibility for their own learning and to communicate its value to others. Their practical work portfolios and ability to talk about their skills make them top recruits for jobs, graduate and professional programs, and nationally competitive scholarships and fellowships.
Requirements for All HIP Work

This work allows students to put academic knowledge into practice in tangible ways. All HIP work must: 1) put academic knowledge into practice, 2) involve independent and/or collaborative projects completed outside the classroom, 3) be supervised by a faculty or professional mentor, and 4) result in a tangible end product (poster, report, presentation, paper, work log, photo documentation, etc.) and a 500-600-word reflection. The rationale for each of these requirements follows:

Academic Knowledge in Practice

HIP work allows students to put their academic knowledge into practice in tangible ways:

- In Honors Excel courses, students gain experience in pursuing an academic career at the graduate level.
- In Honors Book Labs, students read and converse across disciplines about topics of general concern.
- In the Honors Alumni Mentoring Program, students learn from Honors alumni how to make the most of their time in college and set themselves up for professional success.
- As representatives on the Honors Student Advisory Board, students act as ambassadors for Honors and collaborate on specific projects with Honors students, staff, and faculty.
- In faculty-student contracts and Honors Integrated Experiences, students apply their own academic expertise to situations outside the classroom.

Students can shape these practical experiences as they choose, so long as they demonstrate both the academic value and the time commitment (≥ 20 hours) of that work. Students may find particularly useful projects that set them up for success in their capstone projects (i.e., preliminary research or apprenticeship, laboratory or field work, creative practice or experimentation, related service or travel) or professional lives (internships, study abroad, national scholarship applications, graduate coursework). Students should remember that while preliminary capstone work is acceptable, capstone work itself cannot be completed as an HIP milestone because that work is part of the final capstone milestone and earns points that way. The University Honors Program prepares students for achieving HIP milestones with a self-paced Canvas course and also archives outstanding proposals and completion reports for student, mentor, and Departmental Honors Advisor reference.

Completion of Projects Outside the Classroom

Every HIP milestone puts academic knowledge into practice with an independent or collaborative project completed outside the classroom. Students work with a faculty mentor, either in teams or individually, to propose and complete projects that address specific problems, complete certain tasks, reflect upon particular experiences, and hone critical-thinking skills. In graduate Honors Excel courses, Honors Book Labs, the Honors Alumni Mentoring Program, the Honors Student Advisory Board, and Honors Integrated Experiences, projects emerge from course, program, or committee content and requirements. For faculty-student contracts, students work with their mentors to define the parameters and value of their projects, provided this work goes beyond the content of any class in which the student has enrolled. The focus of each project varies, but all should develop the student’s academic experience in clear and practical ways.

Mentoring

Honors students choose faculty or professional mentors to oversee their HIP work and to guide them in the production of final products and reflections. The nature of the practical experience shapes the choice of mentor. In Honors Excel graduate courses, Book Labs, the Honors Student Advisory Board, and Honors Integrated Experiences, the mentor is the professor(s) in charge. For academic contracts, the mentor is typically (although not always) a USU professor in the student’s field. For experiential contracts (service, internship, study abroad, the Alumni Mentoring Program), the mentor is often a community leader, professional, or program leader.
Mentors are crucial in helping students shape the practical value and outcomes of these Honors milestones. For Honors Excel graduate courses, syllabi clearly define requirements, and course professors act as mentors.

In most cases, faculty mentors and Departmental Honors Advisors will approve the student’s final product and reflection. However, when necessary (particularly in Book Labs, the Alumni Mentoring Program, the Honors Student Advisory Board, and when contract mentors are not USU faculty members or when work occurs during the summer), the Departmental Honors Advisor in the student’s home department and/or the University Honors Program will provide formal approval of the final product. Students must indicate both the mentor and the final approver on their contract forms, as appropriate.

**Final Product and Reflection**

Students earn HIP points only once they 1) present agreed-upon final products and reflections (with completion forms) to mentors and DHAs for approval signatures, and 2) upload all these documents under the appropriate assignment in the Honors Canvas course for approval. The final product and reflection differ, depending on the kind of HIP experience; students may refer to the appropriate section of the handbook for more specific details. The final products and reflections are what make these experiences part of an Honors education: the building of a professional portfolio and the ability to articulate clearly one’s own experience are central to this process and define a USU Honors student.
Structured HIP Experiences

Honors has created structured pathways as one way to earn HIP points. Each of the pathways described below meets basic HIP requirements and trains students to showcase their practical skills through both projects and reflections on their experiences. Please note that Departmental Honors Advisors play no supervisory role in these Honors-structured HIP experiences.

**Honors Book Labs**

Honors Book Labs create an engaging, short-term, interdisciplinary structure for earning HIP points, and this experience is often a student’s introduction to HIP work. Each Book Lab consists of four meetings, beginning in the second week of classes each semester (May, September, and January). Faculty propose books, students sign up for labs, and Honors creates a schedule, organizes registration and waitlists (limit of five students per lab), and buys all books for students and faculty. Students may repeat the Honors Book Lab milestone each term and continue earning one point per Book Lab completed, provided they meet all completion requirements.

Students are responsible for reading the books by the agreed-upon deadlines (set by faculty), attending all four scheduled Book Lab meetings, contributing to the discussions at those meetings, and submitting the required reflection (directions below). Demand is high, and Honors wants to accommodate as many students as possible. Enrolled students must attend or return the book to remain in good standing with Honors, and students who fail to meet these basic requirements will be ineligible for Book Labs in the following term and may jeopardize their Honors privileges.

**Reflections on Book Labs** should describe the particular kind of HIP milestone experience offered in the lab, rather than just summarizing the book’s plot or content. Within two weeks of the final meeting, students must submit in the Honors Canvas course a 600-word reflection that articulates the following:

1. **One new idea or set of ideas** that the student discovered through reading and discussion
2. **An example of how the reading and discussion led the student to think critically** about a particular issue or problem
3. **The value of discussing this issue or problem across disciplines** with fellow students and professor(s)
4. **How the Book Lab experience might lead the student to engage with the community or world** in a new way

**Honors Leadership Academy**

Honors offers a year-long curriculum that trains interested first- and second-year Honors students to take on future leadership roles, both within and beyond the University Honors Program. Students must apply for admission; admitted students complete an online Canvas course, with scheduled assignments and meetings with Honors staff and student leaders. Students who successfully complete the curriculum earn three HIP points and qualify for the Honors Student Leadership roles described below.

**Honors Student Leadership**

Honors students can take on a variety of leadership roles, including Honors Ambassador, Honors Peer Educator, Honors Community Builder, and Honors Publicist. For the 2019-20 AY, these roles are all part of service on the Honors Student Advisory Board, which offers outstanding students the opportunity both to give back to the Honors Program and to earn HIP points.

The board consists of one student representative from each college, and the group meets monthly. Members also agree to act as an Honors Fellow in one of the four leadership areas described above. Based on their interests
and talents, they agree to represent Honors at recruiting events and answer student questions, to plan and participate in Honors-specific programming for students, and to take part in the review of incoming student applications to Honors. Students apply for these appointed positions and serve for a minimum term of one academic year. Meeting this milestone results in three HIP points, and the milestone is repeatable for 1.5 points in an additional year. We hope that students who enjoy helping to shape the University Honors Program while on campus will consider volunteering for our external advisory board of alumni and stakeholders after they graduate and begin their professional lives.

Students submit in the Honors Canvas course a final portfolio, including an activity log documenting the name, date, and hours of each activity, plus a brief summary of tasks completed on behalf of the University Honors Program (excluding required board meetings and admissions work) AND a 500-600-word reflection. Reflections and portfolios must be uploaded by the end of the summer term following board membership to earn points (by the last day of finals for students graduating in their year of service). Students must complete their year-long commitment to the advisory board or communicate early and clearly with Honors staff about extenuating circumstances in order to remain in good standing with the University Honors Program.

Reflections on the HSAB experience describe in 500-600 words how this form of engagement gave the student an HIP milestone experience by putting academic knowledge into practice (the goal of all HIP work) and creating meaningful relationships with the student’s peers on the board, the Honors director, and Honors staff. The reflection must specifically address how the HSAB experience met Honors learning outcomes by:

1. Adding to the student’s overall education and/or future goals by developing leadership and ambassadorial, teaching, community building, or marketing skills;
2. Demanding critical thinking about the relationship between the student’s major, college, and other colleges and programs on campus;
3. Broadening the student’s experience across disciplines by building relationships among students on the board and between the student and the Honors Program director and other staff members; and
4. Engaging the student in the campus and broader communities through the ambassadorial, teaching, community building, or marketing roles.

Honors Integrated Experiences

Honors currently offers one year-long integrated research experience and is in the process of developing parallel experiences in community and global engagement. Honors students must apply to these programs, and accepted applicants earn 8 HIP points through a structured curriculum. Please contact the University Honors Program for more details.

The Honors Alumni Mentoring Program

This structured HIP pathway offers Honors students a unique professionalizing way to earn HIP points. The program fosters meaningful relationships between current Honors students and alumni with similar professional and/or academic interests. Honors has created a curriculum covering four basic areas—Professionalism; Applications; Professional Networking, Development, and Organizations; and Gratitude and Appreciation—to help focus monthly student-mentor interactions via email, phone, video conference, or even in person, as circumstances allow. Students apply for the program and select mentors from a web listing of bios in the fall, and the program requires participation throughout the entire academic year. Completing this curriculum results in three HIP points, and students may only meet this particular milestone once during their time in Honors. We hope that students who enjoy the help of an alumni mentor will consider mentoring a student themselves after they graduate and begin their professional lives.
Students are responsible for contacting their assigned mentor each month and completing the monthly curricular assignment by suggested deadlines, thanking their mentor at the end of the program (May), attending a final mentor-student event in spring term, and submitting (in the University Honors Program Canvas course) a final portfolio, including select email correspondence and documentation of each of the program’s four stages AND a 500-600-word reflection on the mentoring experience. Reflections and portfolios must be uploaded within two weeks of program completion (end of academic year) to earn points. **Students who fail to thank their mentors will not earn points, even if they submit a portfolio and reflection. Students must complete the entire program or communicate early and clearly with Honors staff about extenuating circumstances in order to remain in good standing with the University Honors Program.**

**Reflections for the AMP** should describe in 500-600-words how the program gave the student an HIP milestone experience by putting academic **knowledge into practice** (the goal of all HIP work) and creating a meaningful **relationship with the mentor**. Students are welcome and encouraged to share reflections with mentors, as appropriate. The reflection must specifically address how the AMP met Honors learning outcomes in the following ways:

1. Adding to the student’s **overall education** and/or **future goals**;
2. Demanding **critical thinking** about professional topics connected with the major(s)/minor(s);
3. Broadening the student’s **experience across disciplines**; and
4. Engaging the student in the **local or global communities**.
Choose Your Own Adventure: Honors Contracts and Future Goals

An Honors contract is called a “contract” because it is a formal agreement between a student, a mentor, the Departmental Honors Advisor, and the Honors Program to complete an HIP experience. Each contract proposes—and then documents the student’s completion of—an academic or professional project that extends learning beyond regular coursework. This work can take many different forms: it may involve a research or creative project, an extension of ideas from an upper-division course (3000-level or above), an undergraduate experience in an approved graduate course, a paid or unpaid internship, a major grant/fellowship application, a community-service project, a study-abroad experience, or other approved work. The student’s mentor and the Departmental Honors Advisor in the student’s and/or mentor’s home department evaluate the student’s proposed contract and sign, if approved. The flexibility of this part of the Honors curriculum allows students to gain real-world experience and to articulate its value, both for themselves and others.

The best Honors contracts prepare students for the future and allow them to articulate what they know in concrete ways. Whether these contracts focus on the near future (capstone preparation, exploration of academic interests, study abroad) or a long-term plan (national fellowship applications, Honors Excel graduate courses, internships, professional research), they allow students to follow their intellectual passions and to make the most of USU’s many outstanding academic resources.

Types of Honors Contracts

A brief overview of the kinds of Honors contracts students complete might help to put this work in context:

- **Research, Scholarship, Creative, Service, and Other Projects:** Students may design contracts that explore their academic and professional interests. They choose their own mentors for these projects and thus develop meaningful professional relationships. Such contracts can prepare students for capstone work by allowing them to complete preliminary research or reading, work as a research apprentice on a faculty project, experiment creatively in a field of interest, or engage in academically relevant local or global service. They may also fill gaps in knowledge not covered by coursework, investigate areas of academic interest outside their majors, or open up future possibilities with a major grant or scholarship application. Students may apply for up to $500 from the Honors Research Fund per term to support travel and other costs related to research and creative This HIP work can create a pathway to two optional transcript designations: research or creative work meets some requirements for USU’s Undergraduate Research transcript designation; community-engaged projects meet some requirements for USU’s Community Engaged Scholar transcript designation.

- **Course Contracts:** Contracts may be completed as extensions of or deeper explorations within upper-division (3000-level or above) coursework. Such contracts are never part of regular coursework; instead, they offer students and professors together the option of looking beyond the course itself. Such contracts require additional work on behalf of both parties, but that work can be structured to enrich the course experience by involving an extra project in an area of mutual interest, specific agreed-upon research or reading/discussion between student and mentor, pedagogical work on the part of the Honors student that benefits both the professor and other students in the class, student leadership on a project that helps others to explore beyond the limits of the class, or any other enrichment activity related to the course and designed collaboratively by the professor and student. The professor serves as project mentor, and students and mentors must meet at least six times outside of class, according to the guidelines on the Honors Contract Proposal and Honors Contract Completion forms. Students may not submit required coursework for the contract, which is not graded and does not affect the course grade. Students must earn at least a “B-” in contracted courses to earn Honors points for the proposed contract.
• **Honors Excel Graduate Courses:** Over half of graduating Honors students enroll in graduate or professional programs each year; this HIP pathway places Honors students in approved graduate courses and thus allows them to see what it might be like to collaborate on cutting-edge research and/or learn about advanced topics in their disciplines with USU’s top faculty and graduate students. In addition to developing mentoring relationships that will continue through the Honors student’s undergraduate career, the Honors Excel structure allows students to explore a future professional path as they earn HIP points. Professors evaluate all Honors student work, coordinate collaboration, and set project requirements. Students must complete all assignments on time and pass the class with at least a “B-” to earn HIP points. **Students registered for Honors Excel classes must complete Contract Proposal and Contract Completion forms to earn points (see “Honors Contracts” below).** Faculty and/or departments are under no obligation to admit Honors students to graduate courses; the Honors Excel structure creates opportunities only when there is an agreed-upon fit between course and student. The final product for Honors Excel can be a required course project; students must also submit a reflection on the experience with their Honors Contract Completion forms.

• **Internships:** Internships or field-related work experiences may be completed under contract as HIP milestones if they expand the student’s academic work with a unique professional apprenticeship. The mentor of an internship will typically be an on-site professional who supervises and guides the student’s work experience. In such cases, the Departmental Honors Advisor in the student’s home department and/or the Honors Program perform the on-campus mentoring, evaluating the student’s reflection and final product to ensure that the experience meets criteria for contracts. Daily contact with the on-site internship mentor meets the requirement for mentor-student meetings and can be noted on the contract completion form.

• **Study Abroad:** Study abroad may be completed under contract if the study expands the student’s academic experience internationally and reflectively. Mentors will typically be on-site faculty or trip leaders who supervise and guide the student’s international experience. As in internships, daily contact with on-site mentors meets the requirement for mentor-student meetings and can be noted on the completion form. When mentors are not USU faculty or when the experience occurs in summer, the Departmental Honors Advisor in the student’s home department and/or Honors perform the on-campus mentoring, evaluating the student’s reflection and final product to ensure that the experience meets Honors criteria. Study abroad partially fulfills the requirements for the optional [Global Engagement Scholar Transcript designation](#). Students may apply for up to $1000 from the [Honors Study Abroad Fund](#).
Requirements for Honors Contracts

All Honors contracts must include the following:

- A completed Honors Contract Proposal, including a detailed rationale as specified on the Honors Contract Proposal form and a clear description of the final product(s), along with the required form signed (indicating approval) by the mentor and the Departmental Honors Advisor in the student’s and/or mentor’s home department, and then uploaded in the Honors Canvas course.

- Completion of work during the contract period or follow-up by student with faculty and Honors to renegotiate the terms or timeline of the contract.

- At least 20 hours of work that enriches the student’s academic experience beyond normal coursework (NOTE: Students may complete more than one contract for an extensive project, but each part of that longer project must be proposed, approved, and completed as its own contract).

- At least two meetings per month (or a minimum of six meetings) between the student and mentor (outside of class, if the contract is connected to a course) to discuss the project. Students keep a record of mentor meetings and report on those meetings at the end of the contract (for study abroad or internship projects that require regular daily interaction between student and mentor, no additional documentation is necessary).

- A concrete final product that demonstrates the work done in the contract, such as a poster, report, literature review, essay, syllabus or set of lesson plans, presentation, event or performance with process analysis, work logs, photo documentation, or a major grant or fellowship application.

- A detailed 500-600-word reflection on the contract experience that clearly explains how the contract has met the following learning outcomes:
  1. Required student to apply academic knowledge in practical ways outside of the classroom.
  2. Added to the student’s overall education and/or future goals.
  3. Created a positive, meaningful mentor relationship.
  4. Deepened the student’s research experience within his or her major.
  5. Demanded critical thinking about topics in that major.
  6. Broadened the student’s experience across disciplines (sometimes in more obvious ways than others, but students should always think broadly and across disciplines about the impact of their work).
  7. Engaged the student in his or her local or global community (again, this engagement might be very obvious (in a study abroad) or less so (in a lab); in either case, students should reflect upon the broader impact of their work).

- A signed (by mentor and DHA) Honors Completion Form, uploaded with the final product and reflection in the University Honors Program Canvas course. *Please merge all documents as one pdf when uploading work.*
The Definition of a Great Contract

Remembering that contracts are pathways toward future goals, students should carefully consider what each contract adds to an Honors education. Our students find the following types of contracts to be particularly useful, and we have seen outstanding work in each of these areas:

- **Capstone Preparation**: Although contracts cannot be part of the capstone itself, students often design contracts that prepare them for their capstones and set them up for success. Such contracts can involve literature reviews or library research, creative experimentation, laboratory or fieldwork, courses or academic programs not offered by USU, or other forms of preparation. Reflections on these contracts prepare students to articulate their skills and development in their fields, and their final products often become starting points for more intensive capstone work. By building understanding that will support capstone work, students prepare themselves to think critically about their own and others’ work in their fields. Such reflective critical thinking is one of the four key skills that all Honors students master at USU.

- **Research/Creative Apprenticeship**: Students can design contracts focusing on research or creative work, whether or not that work is directly connected to a future capstone project. Independent research (defined, in a broad sense, as gathering and communicating knowledge) is another of the four key skills that all Honors students master at USU. Acting as a research or creative apprentice to a professor’s lab, studio, or research work trains students in important research/creative methods. Reflecting on that experience then deepens understanding of one’s place within a chosen research or creative field.

- **Academic Exploration**: Some students may want to deepen and contextualize their academic knowledge by applying what they learn in class to an extracurricular project or by engaging in academic work outside their areas of expertise. Interdisciplinary learning is another of the four key skills that all Honors students master at USU. Students interested in placing their academic knowledge in a broader context can design course contracts with faculty in or outside of their majors (provided the course is at the 3000-level or above); they may also choose to work outside the curriculum with faculty whose expertise might help to fill a gap in their knowledge. Reflecting on this experience puts one’s major interests in context.

- **Local/Global Engagement**: Students can focus their contracts on local, national, or international service/humanitarian projects, research, or internships. Community engagement is one of the four key skills that all Honors students master at USU, and contracts may therefore put academic knowledge into practice in the local, national, or global communities. Students who pursue these kinds of HIP milestones will necessarily reflect on the broader relevance of their academic work, and they may also decide to pursue USU’s Global Engagement Scholar or Community Engaged Scholar transcript designations.

- **Professional Development**: Contracts may also foster professional development by engaging students in graduate coursework, (inter)national fellowship applications, internships, or other professional exploration. Like capstone preparation contracts, professional development contracts teach students to think critically and practically about future plans and to reflect on their professional goals.

Please contact the Honors office (honors@usu.edu) for access to examples of outstanding Honors in Practice contracts.
What Does Not Count as an Honors Contract?

Honors contracts are designed to be flexible, but they must add clear, distinct, and documented value to an Honors education. Honors requires approval of proposals and completed contracts by mentors, Departmental Honors Advisors, and the Honors Director because these faculty experts can assess that added value within a specific area of study, the discipline as a whole, and across disciplinary boundaries. When in doubt about a specific kind of experience, students should seek the input of the University Honors Program Advisor or their Departmental Honors Advisors.

- **Work Required for a Course**: Students may not earn Honors points for regular coursework, just as they may not, according to USU’s academic honesty/integrity code, submit the same work for credit in different courses. Honors contracts ask students to apply their knowledge beyond the classroom, and using coursework for that milestone experience defeats the purpose. One exception to this rule is for experiential credits, such as those earned for internships, study abroad programs, and graduate work in Honors Excel. Because of the experiential growth-oriented nature of the work done for these experiences, students may propose contracts that include substantial final products and reflections on the experiences, even when students take them for credit.

- **Capstone Project Work**: Although contracts may prepare students for capstone projects, they cannot be a direct part of the final capstone project. Students earn distinct Honors points for HIP work and for the capstone project, and completing the same work for these two distinct parts of the Honors curriculum does not meet the goals of the program. The rationale in these circumstances is therefore the same as in any course: students may not submit the same work for credit in two different courses.

- **USU Scholarship or Grant Applications**: Honors recognizes the importance of student applications for department, college, Honors, or university scholarships or grants (including URCO, Honors Research and Study Abroad Fund, USUSA funding, etc.). Only major national or international grant and scholarship/fellowship applications can be proposed as contracts, however, because they require much more extensive self-assessment, mentoring, revision, and research to complete. Any national fellowship application submitted as a contract must be proposed and completed in the same way as other contracts.

- **Conferences, Trainings, or Other Brief, Unmentored Professional Experiences**: Honors also recognizes the importance of student professionalization activities, such as conference presentations or attendance, or professional training events in their fields, and supports these experiences through Honors Research Funding opportunities. However, only those experiences that include a sustained mentoring relationship, a clear, concrete final product, and at least 20 hours of experiential work outside the classroom qualify as HIP contracts.
Honors Contract Processes and Forms: Earning Honors Points

Students earn Honors points by completing and submitting in Canvas 1) the Honors Contract Proposal and signed form before the project, and 2) the Honors Contract Completion documentation and signed form upon completion of the work.

Honors Contract Proposals

Prior to completing a contract, Honors students must write and submit an Honors contract proposal, along with a signed Honors Contract Proposal form. The form requires students to indicate the project title or course department/number/title, estimate the total number of work hours required for the contract (minimum 20), verify their understanding of contract requirements, and write a proposal that includes two parts:

1. Brief Contract Overview: includes key goals of the contract, proposed work and timeline, and description of final product (beyond required reflection)
2. Detailed Rationale: describes how the contract meets Honors learning outcomes by:
   - Adding to the student’s overall education or future goals;
   - Deepening research experience in the major or demanding critical thinking about major topics;
   - Broadening experience across disciplines; and
   - Engaging the student in the local or global community.

The proposal must label clearly each of these sections and address each point fully. Students should work closely with mentors in creating the proposal so that both parties agree upon both the terms of the contract and the learning outcomes that it meets.

Once students have completed the form and attached the written proposal, mentors review and sign, if approved. Students should then submit an electronic version of the proposal to the Departmental Honors Advisor in the student’s and/or mentor’s home department for review. For course contracts, students must submit a mentor-signed/approved form to the Departmental Honors Advisor by the end of the second week of classes in the contract term or, more generally, before the start date of any other contract. They then upload their mentor- and DHA-signed proposals to the University Honors Program Canvas course by the end of the third week of classes (course contracts) or before the start date (other contracts) for final Honors Program approval. All other contract proposals may be uploaded (with signed form) in the University Honors Canvas course under the contract assignments at any time before the project or contract work begins, provided they include a detailed rationale, a reasonable timeline to completion, a clear description of the final product(s), and all necessary signatures on the Honors Contract Proposal form.

Honors Contract Completion

Upon completing a contract, Honors students submit documentation, including a signed (by student, mentor, and DHA) Honors Contract Completion form, which indicates approval of the work, reflection, and final product for the project. The form asks students to list the dates of meetings between mentor and student (minimum of six meetings) or to verify daily contact with an internship or study-abroad mentor, to indicate the hours of work completed, and to attach the project reflection (see pg. 10 for details) and final product(s).

Students earn three HIP points upon successful completion of each contract, provided they 1) finish and document the agreed-upon work to the satisfaction of the mentor and DHA, 2) get signatures indicating this approval on the form, and 3) submit in Canvas and secure Honors Program approval of the signed, completed form, reflection, and final product upon fulfillment of the contract. Contracts do not earn Honors points until the Honors Program approves all completion documentation uploaded in Canvas.
Honors Contract Responsibilities

Contracts are built upon mentoring relationships between Honors students and faculty, since each contract involves not only a primary faculty mentor, but also the Departmental Honors Advisor and the Honors Program Director. Mentoring an Honors contract takes time, and students should therefore make every effort to develop contracts that will interest and engage their faculty mentors. The best way to find mentors is to work on building positive working relationships with faculty and other professionals: students can begin to shape those relationships in classes, through research or service projects, and within clubs and other academic or professional organizations. Mentors are much more likely to help students whom they know to be bright, organized, dependable, curious, and engaged with their fields.

Because these relationships are so crucial to the Honors curriculum, the program has carefully defined responsibilities for the Honors contract process. Please carefully review in the following pages (15-18) the responsibilities of the student, mentor, Departmental Honors Advisor, and Honors Program.

In general, students are responsible for selecting and working with a mentor to write a contract proposal, securing all required signatures and promptly submitting the proposal in the University Honors Program’s Canvas course, conferring regularly with the mentor, meeting all deadlines, and completing a high quality final product (along with a reflection) that fulfills the contract. In turn, the mentor is responsible for helping the student to define and focus the project, mentoring the contract work and the construction of a meaningful final product and reflection, and ensuring high quality work within the discipline. The Departmental Honors Advisor acts as a liaison between the mentor and the Honors Program, ensuring that proposed contracts meet both Honors requirements and disciplinary standards; students may therefore submit contracts to DHAs in their own and/or their mentor’s home department, if that department differs from their own. The University Honors Program supports students and faculty and ensures that all contracts meet Honors standards and deadlines for this milestone and thus merit the award of HIP points documenting that milestone.
### Student Responsibilities

**PROPOSAL:**
- Work with mentor to complete a contract proposal (form available at [http://honors.usu.edu](http://honors.usu.edu)) following the required format, including a clear description of project goal, proposed work, rationale, reasonable timeline, and final product;
- Send an electronic copy of the proposal to the appropriate Departmental Honors Advisor as early as possible;
- For course-related contracts, submit a mentor-signed/approved proposal to Departmental Honors Advisor by end of second week of classes in contract term and upload a mentor- and DHA-signed/approved form and proposal to the UHP Canvas course by end of third week of classes;
- For all other contracts, upload form and proposal (merged into a single PDF) to UHP Canvas course once proposal is approved and signed by both faculty mentor and appropriate DHA; contracts are typically completed within 10-15 weeks.

**CONTRACT WORK:**
- Schedule, hold, and document regular (minimum six) mentor meetings (for study abroad and internships, such meetings may occur daily and may be noted as such on the completion form);
- Work with the mentor to decide how the meeting time will be used effectively, and complete any agreed-upon work prior to meetings;
- Finish all agreed-upon work in a professional and timely manner, according to proposed timeline;
- Discuss immediately with your mentor, DHA, and/or Honors staff any changes to or questions about your responsibilities and/or work.

**FINAL PRODUCT and CONTRACT COMPLETION:**
- Present a draft of the required final product and reflection to mentor at least one week before the final day of the contract (one week before last day of classes for course-related contracts);
- Carefully craft and/or edit final product, responding to mentor feedback as necessary;
- Send completed final product and reflection to mentor and DHA, giving them time to review, and then get their approval signatures on a completed Honors Contract Completion form (faculty must see all information completed on this form, as they are verifying its accuracy with their signatures);
- Upload approved final product and reflection, along with a signed Honors Contract Completion form (available at [http://honors.usu.edu](http://honors.usu.edu)) indicating faculty approval to the UHP Canvas course by the last day of classes in the contract term (course contracts) or by the contract completion date (all other contracts). Please merge all documents as one PDF (see directions in Canvas).
**Mentor Responsibilities**

**PROPOSAL:**
- Work with student to draft a contract proposal (form at [http://honors.usu.edu](http://honors.usu.edu)) following the required format, including a clear description of project goal, proposed work and timeline, rationale, and an appropriate final product that demonstrates work completed;
- Sign proposal when approved;
- Please note that students should send the appropriate Departmental Honors Advisor an electronic draft of the proposal prior to your approval and then a final copy for signature once you have approved the proposal;
- Course-related contracts must be signed and submitted to DHAs by the end of the second week of classes in the contract term and uploaded (by students) to the UHP Canvas course by the end of the third week of classes. All other contracts are accepted on a rolling basis; contracts are typically completed within 10-15 weeks. You may remind students of these deadlines, but it is their responsibility to secure all signatures and to upload the form and proposal on time.
- By signing a student’s contract proposal, the faculty mentor indicates approval of the project plan, timeline, and proposed final product. Please keep in mind that all contracts require students to complete a 500-600-word experiential reflection (See Requirements on pg. 10).

**CONTRACT WORK:**
- Hold regular meetings with the student (minimum six meetings outside of the classroom—study abroad faculty or internship supervisors who meet with students daily need not schedule additional meetings) and ensure that the meetings are pedagogically useful (the student’s responsibilities include meeting scheduling, working with you to define meeting structure, and completing any agreed-upon work prior to the meetings);
- Guide the student in completing the agreed-upon work in a professional and timely manner, according to the proposed timeline;
- Discuss immediately with the student, the DHA, and/or Honors staff any questions about your responsibilities and/or the student’s progress on contract work.

**REFLECTION, FINAL PRODUCT, and CONTRACT COMPLETION:**
- Require a draft of the final product and reflection at least one week before the final day of the contract (one week before the last day of classes for course-related contracts);
- Offer timely feedback and ensure that final product and reflection meet the terms of the contract and represent useful and competent work in the student’s discipline;
- Sign and return the student’s completed (student must complete form fully before asking for signature) Honors Contract Completion form indicating approval of both project and reflection. If the student has not completed the contract to your satisfaction, please communicate with Honors promptly.
- Please note that students must also submit the final product and reflection to the Departmental Honors Advisor, once you as the mentor have approved, and then upload the signed Honors Contract Completion form (indicating faculty approval of contract), final product, and reflection to the UHP Canvas course by the last day of classes in the contract term (course-related contracts) or by the contract completion date (all other contracts).
**Departmental Honors Advisor Responsibilities**

The Departmental Honors Advisor oversees not the individual contract work itself, but the process within the department. For this reason, faculty DHAs may be responsible for contracts of students and/or faculty mentors in their home departments; please remember that students may choose to complete contracts outside of their home departments. Acting as a liaison between the student/mentor team and the University Honors Program, the DHA ensures that projects meet minimum requirements both within the discipline and for Honors.

**PROPOSAL:**
- Help Honors students find appropriate mentors in your department for their proposed contract work and share sample contract ideas with students, as appropriate (please contact honors@usu.edu for samples, as necessary). DHAs should become increasingly well educated in what makes a strong contract as they become more experienced; if you need examples, please contact the University Honors Program at any time.
- **PLEASE NOTE:** Electronic drafts of course-related contract proposals are still due to DHAs during the first or second week of classes (for review) and for signature by the end of the second week of classes in each contract term. All other (non-course) contracts accepted by Honors on a rolling basis and should be reviewed, signed, and returned to the student promptly. Your responsibility is to review these contracts to ensure that their timelines are reasonable (contracts are typically completed within 10-15 weeks) and that they meet Honors requirements (at least 20 hours of work that expands a student’s academic experience in practical ways with the expectation of regular mentor meetings and a final product) and standards in your discipline.
- For contracts that meet these requirements and that address each part of the proposal form (goals and work, timeline, rationale, and final product articulation), please sign each approved Honors Contract Proposal form and return it to the student promptly. Please remember that students must upload signed forms and proposals to the UHP Canvas course promptly (for course-related contracts, by the end of the third week of classes).
- For contracts that do not meet these requirements, communicate promptly and clearly with students and mentors about why you cannot approve the contract; the electronic submission of the proposal to you before the student secures final approval of the mentor is designed to facilitate this process. Work with students and mentors, if possible, to revise and resubmit contracts in a timely fashion (course-related contracts are due for student upload with all signatures in the Honors Canvas course by the end of the third week of classes).

**CONTRACT WORK:**
- DHAs are not responsible for overseeing contract work, although they do review outcomes and approve if the work has been completed as proposed (see below). Please make time to answer any questions about Honors requirements.

**REFLECTION, FINAL PRODUCT, and CONTRACT COMPLETION:**
- DHAs are responsible for reviewing final products and reflections and signing Honors Contract Completion forms to ensure that projects meet Honors requirements (see **Requirements** on pg. 10) and that mentors and students understand those requirements. In some instances, DHAs act as the final approver of an internship, work experience, or study abroad experience (if there is no faculty mentor); they may also, in some cases, serve as both DHA and mentor, in which case they can indicate that fact on the form.
- Contracts must be completed by the last day of classes in each contract term (course contracts) or by the contract completion date (all other contracts).
University Honors Program Responsibilities

In order to ensure that proposed projects meet all requirements for this Honors milestone, the University Honors Program reviews and approves/denies each contract proposal and then approves/denies the contract for Honors points upon submission in Canvas of the student’s final product, reflection, and Honors Contract Completion form. Honors Program responsibilities include:

PROPOSAL:
- Regularly and consistently remind students and DHAs of contract proposal deadlines and requirements;
- Promptly review all contract proposals once students upload them in the UHP Canvas course, ensuring that all proposal forms are signed by both mentor and DHA and that they include clear descriptions of project goals, proposed work and timelines, and final product(s), in addition to the required reflection;
- Communicate immediately with any students, mentors, and DHAs whose contract proposals do not meet minimum requirements, and work with them as necessary to revise and resubmit the proposals.

CONTRACT WORK:
- Meet annually with DHAs and hold annual contract showcases for faculty and students;
- Build and maintain a self-paced Honors in Practice Canvas course that teaches students, faculty, and other interested parties about HIP milestones and offers examples of outstanding student work;
- Ensure that students complete this self-paced HIP Canvas course by the beginning of sophomore year, if possible;
- Make the “Honors in Practice” Contract Handbook available on the Honors website and distribute, upon request, to all mentors and students who have entered into (or are considering) contracts;
- Answer any questions about contract goals, requirements, and responsibilities;
- Support faculty, DHAs, and students in the contract process.

REFLECTION, FINAL PRODUCT and CONTRACT COMPLETION:
- Advise students about the contract process and ensure that they receive information about contracts and HIP milestones annually;
- Remind mentors and students of contract requirements and deadlines as necessary: the reflection and final product of the contract should be carefully crafted and/or edited, and they must be uploaded to the UHP Canvas course, along with a completed and signed Contract Completion form (available at http://honors.usu.edu), by the contract completion date (last day of classes for course-related contracts);
- Promptly review and approve/deny all contract completion uploads (including final products, reflections, and Honors Contract Completion forms), ensuring that all work meets Honors requirements for HIP milestones;
- Award students in the UHP Canvas course the HIP points marking the completion of each contract milestone;
- Archive all completed contracts and make them available to DHAs, upon request, so they can see outcomes and use them for future advising;
- Create an archive of outstanding contracts for student and faculty reference and as part of the HIP Canvas course.
Honors Contract Deadlines

- **CONTACT MENTOR** – The earlier students contact mentors, the more time they have to craft outstanding contracts together. Ideally, students talk to potential contract mentors in the term before the desired contract is set to begin.
  - Course-related contracts require mentor contact no later than the first week of the contract term.

- **SUBMIT MENTOR-APPROVED CONTRACT PROPOSAL TO DEPARTMENTAL HONORS ADVISOR** – Mentor and student complete proposal, DHA reviews simultaneously, mentor signs, and DHA has one week to give final approval (with signature) before students must upload proposals in the UHP Canvas course. Proposals must be uploaded and approved by all parties (student, mentor, DHA, Honors) before the official start date of contract work; contracts are typically completed within 10-15 weeks.
  - Course-related contracts require students to submit the mentor-approved contract proposal to DHA by the end of the second week of classes in the contract term.

- **UPLOAD MENTOR AND DHA-APPROVED HONORS CONTRACT PROPOSAL TO UHP CANVAS COURSE** – Student, mentor, and DHA must have signed the form; Honors verifies that contract proposes to meet the HIP milestone requirements and approves/denies proposal in Canvas.
  - Course-related contracts require students to upload the mentor- and DHA-approved contract proposal to the UHP Canvas course by the end of third week of classes in the contract term.

- **DRAFT OF REFLECTION AND FINAL PRODUCT TO MENTOR AND DHA** – one week before the final day of contract: Mentor has time to offer feedback before final deadline to Honors, and DHA has time to identify any problems with meeting Honors requirements.
  - Course-related contracts require students to submit this draft of the reflection and any other final product to the mentor one week before the last day of classes in the contract term.

- **REFLECTION, FINAL PRODUCT, AND SIGNED CONTRACT COMPLETION FORM UPLOADED TO HONORS CONTRACT COURSE** – by 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the contract.
  - Course-related contracts require students to upload reflection, final product, and completion form to UHP Canvas course by 5:00 p.m. on the last day of classes in the contract term.
Resources and Assistance

Funding: Please see http://honors.usu.edu/scholarships for application materials.

- Many Honors students meeting Honors in Practice milestones are eligible for Honors Research and Study Abroad Funds (HRSAF). These awards range from $50-$1000 and support student research, study abroad, unpaid internships, conference participation, and other scholarly or creative activity. Honors accepts applications on a rolling basis.
- Students may also apply for Undergraduate Research and Creative Opportunities (URCO) grants to support research-focused contracts. URCO deadlines are June 15, October 15, and February 15; more information is available at https://urco.usu.edu/about-the-urco/. The HRSAF (above) can act as an URCO match for Honors students.
- Students should check with their departments, colleges, and USUSA about funding resources for undergraduate work.

Facilities and Computing: Honors students are welcome to make use of the student lounge in the Honors office (LLC Building A, Room 112), where we have a laptop available for checkout during business hours. All Honors students also have access to the Joyce Kinkead Honors Study Room in 334H of the Merrill-Cazier library. The computer facilities in the study room are available during regular library hours. We encourage all Honors students to use this resource. Current Honors students can contact honors@usu.edu for the access code to the study room.

Writing, Editing, and Math: Honors hires our own writing tutor from the USU Writing Center, as well as a math tutor. Honors tutors hold regular office hours (listed in each weekly email from Honors) in LLC A 112. They can help students improve and edit writing at any level or complete calculations or statistical analysis in a project. Honors tutors can help you learn to proofread, edit, and analyze data effectively. Please make use of this resource.

Honors in Practice Canvas Training: Honors maintains a self-paced, hands-on HIP Canvas course for all students working toward graduation with Honors. Students learn about HIP milestones, examine outstanding examples of the work submitted to meet them, and complete short assignments verifying their understanding of the process. Students typically take this self-paced, non-credit course at their own pace in the summer between their first and second years. They may also use this course to chat with peers, meet with a librarian about areas of interest, ask Honors staff or peer advisors specific questions, and find information about upcoming deadlines and opportunities.
Frequently Asked Questions

_Can students get paid for the work they do for Honors in Practice milestones?_

Yes. There are many opportunities for paid internships, laboratory jobs, or fieldwork. Additionally, students may apply for Undergraduate Research or Creative Opportunity (URCO) grants that allow for student stipends. Honors awards points signaling milestone completion as long as students submit documentation of outstanding work with appropriate approval in the UHP Canvas course. Please note that Honors Research Fund awards cannot cover student wages or compensation.

_Can students count required class work as an Honors in Practice milestone?_

No, with the exception of approved Honors Excel courses. Contract work must be distinct from required regular coursework (see _What Does Not Count as an Honors Contract_ on pg. 12). While contract work often advances or extends the themes in courses, the work and final product for a contract must not overlap with regular, required coursework. Contract work is not graded and does not affect a student’s GPA or any course grade. Honors Excel courses are always counted as HIP milestones if they are contracted with the professor and submitted to the Honors Canvas course.

_Can students complete Honors in Practice milestones outside of their main fields of study?_

Yes. Contract work can deepen and contextualize Honors students’ academic knowledge by allowing them to engage in significant and practical academic work outside their majors. This kind of work is particularly useful for students whose capstone projects or professional interests might involve interdisciplinary work.

_Can an Honors contract be connected to a student’s Honors capstone project?_

Yes, with restrictions. Contract work can absolutely feed into a student’s Honors capstone project, but completing part of the capstone as a contract is not allowed (see _What Does Not Count as an Honors Contract_ on pg. 12). Honors encourages students to perform literature reviews or research, engage in field or lab work, and apprentice themselves on faculty projects in preparation for their own capstone projects. This work can lay a foundation for the capstone, with the faculty mentor’s approval.

_What happens if I cannot complete an Honors in Practice milestone that I proposed?_

If for whatever reason a student is unable to complete a contract or other Honors in Practice milestone, he or she must communicate in writing (and preferably also in person) with the mentor/professor, DHA, and Honors Program as soon as possible. Students must explain why they did not finish the project, summarize the work that they did complete, and articulate specifically what they will do differently in meeting future HIP milestones. Honors students with two consecutive incomplete contracts or HIP milestones must meet with the Honors Program Director to remain in good standing with Honors.
Advice from Past Honors Students:

1. **Develop relationships with your professors.**

   - **Samantha Beirne – Wildlife Science**
     “After several attempts to get started on other projects, I realized I was not excited about any of the topics, and decided to find a professor who would fit my research interests. I contacted Dr. Karen Beard after learning about her interest in amphibians and conservation biology. She suggested a [contract] project I would be interested in and I was excited to get started. Once I had found a research project I was passionate about, it became a lot easier to write my thesis.”

   - **Nickelle Hunsaker – Human Movement Science**
     “Schedule meetings regularly and a few days in advance. Be prepared for your meetings – have something to present. Don’t be afraid to ask questions when you have them. You’ll learn more.”

   - **Katherine Shakespeare – English**
     “An Honors contract is a valuable and unique opportunity to have insightful one-on-one conversations with a professor. It is the perfect setting for the type of mentoring conversations that let you pick an expert’s brain, seek advice for your own academic goals, and form the relationships that result in excellent letters of recommendation.”

2. **Get practical experience with field research.**

   - **Morgan Hughes – Wildlife Science**
     “When in a classroom or a hypothetical situation, it is easy to design studies with perfect sample set up. In the field, however, I have come to realize that plans never go as expected. As a result, I have learned to collect all possible data. This method of planning big would have allowed more conclusions to be drawn and assured that at least one project would go as planned.”

   - **Austin Spence – Biology**
     “Because I persisted in working and volunteering in [the] lab, I got a field technician job … to catch lizards throughout Arizona, Utah, and western Oregon. This job is what started my first independent research project.”

   - **Marilize Van der Walt – Biology**
     “I know that when things get rough in the field, it is best to remain positive because the truth is that you really couldn’t do much better than field work. There is always something beautiful, or something to be proud of. I learned that even if I am sure I will remember something, I should write it down. Any future research projects I conduct will be meticulously recorded in a lab journal or diary.”

3. **Explore and refine possible capstone topics.**

   - **Brandi Allred – Anthropology**
     “Starting early on finding a project was key; by the time I realized that I had to realign my [capstone] research, I was already so deep into the literature on the topic that it really was no problem. Had I waited until my last semester at school to even start thinking about what I would do for my Honors thesis, I would [have been] in a world of trouble…. I would suggest starting to mull over your ideas long before you actually start the thesis. With a well-formulated topic and question, the rest will come easily.”
• **J. Daniel Obray – Psychology**
  “One of the most important things I learned is the value of starting to read early and continuing to read. I don’t think that it is possible to have read too much or to be too prepared to write a [capstone] paper. Additionally, reviews are useful tools. Reviews are a great way to get an idea of what has already been researched within a given field, and [they] also give an idea of what the most important research topics are moving forward. They will help to focus future reading and to give structure.”

• **David Youd – Religious Studies**
  “Footnotes and bibliographies are the principal and invaluable guide in research…. Many of the ideas you may spend much time developing from older works may have already been pointed out by more recent scholarship …. Start at the very end of the discussion: find the most recent works … [that] contain a bibliography, and trace the development of issues back from the footnotes of the latest publications. This is the sort of thing which students would do well to understand before starting [a capstone project], and I would advise any student to take up issues of approach and the research process with their advisor and experienced faculty members before beginning [your capstone].”

4. **Seek out an internship or study abroad.**

• **Andrew Izatt – Economics**
  “My internship at Orrin Hatch’s office was a life-changing experience. More than anything else in my undergraduate career, it helped me to realize what I do and do not want to do. I enjoyed the time I spent there. I met amazing, hard-working, driven people with a real passion for politics. I saw the inner workings of a high-profile Senate office and what work on the Hill entails. I have been interested in healthcare policy for a while and the debate surrounding it. Thanks to my internship and my project, I was able to dive headfirst into the material and begin to get my head around the complex and bewildering world of healthcare in America.”

• **Jacob Blotter – Biology**
  *Humanitarian Medical Trip to Guatemala:* “The … trip was amazing. I was able to learn a lot about the people of Guatemala and to connect with them as patients and human beings. I had the opportunity of shadowing medical professionals the entire trip and learning about diseases and treatments. The relationships I built with the people on the trip will have an effect on my career as a doctor, as I received advice and words of wisdom for most of them. … My experience brought my premedical education to life, and it has fueled my desire to help those in need once I have completed my goal to become a doctor.”

• **Darianne Willey – Watershed and Earth Systems**
  *Engineers Without Borders trip to Mexico:* “These experiences are truly unique and memorable. I bore people all the time with “In Mexico…” stories, but I can’t stop thinking about it. The work was hard. We had to wash more than 100 gallons of river sand just for [water] filter filling. We hiked to families that lived outside of the community up in the hills; we packed sand in ripping burlap bags all over the valley. But it was worth it. Community members getting the filters would join us in building and washing, and during that time we got to know them. They really appreciated our interest in their way of life, and especially loved all of the bad Spanish.”

5. **Present your work if possible.**

• **Gracie Arnold – Marketing**
  “I was fortunate to have found the SRS [Student Research Symposium] … conference on USU campus that occurs each spring. Being involved with this conference was a huge success, and I won an award for my abilities as an oral presenter. I highly suggest taking this opportunity to any student. This conference refined my skills and gave me an excellent forum to present my findings and research design.”

• **Trinity Smith – Wildlife Science**
  “Overall the most valuable part of this project was articulating my research to peers. I was able to attend the Utah Chapter of the Wildlife Society Annual meeting (UTTWS), as well as the USU Student Research Symposium and
National Conference for Undergraduate Research (NCUR).… I gained valuable insight from peers about the implications of my research and was able to use this feedback for my [capstone] manuscript.”

- Laura Taylor – Interior Design
  “The Student Research Symposium was my favorite part of the capstone process. It was so fantastic to stand alongside other researchers and talk with them about their research journeys. … I would recommend it to anyone, and I wish I had participated in it earlier as a contract researcher.”