

HONORS PROGRAM POLICIES

Updated August 14th, 2020

Motion to the assembly: The Honors Program Task Force hereby moves that Faculty Assembly ratify the following policies and procedures to establish a new university-wide Honors Program.

- Honors Program Course Requirements
- Admission to Honors Program
- Probation and Dismissal from Honors Program
- Appeals to Honors Component Grades
- Appeals to Honors Program Dismissal
- Honors Program Faculty Qualifications
- Honors Program Organizational Structure

Should the Faculty Assembly and Board of Trustees ratify these policies and procedures, they shall be in effect beginning with the 2020-2021 academic year.

Justification and Benefits of an Honors Program to Avila Community

- We aim to create robust academic experiences to better recruit and retain high achieving students.
- We aim to enhance the intellectual community at Avila as well as the visibility of research and scholarship.
- We aim to recognize the value of research among students and faculty, in keeping with the Avila Promise.
- We aim to raise the profile of alumni by preparing them for future academic and professional pursuits, hopefully raising alumni donations.
- We aim to create a bridge between undergraduate and graduate programs at Avila through rigorous research and classroom opportunities.
- We aim to be more competitive in the marketplace of college admissions, including international students.
- We aim to enhance the classroom experience for all students at Avila through the participation of high-achieving honors students in non-honors courses.
- We aim to enhance the academic experience for all students at Avila by providing opportunities for high-achieving honors students to serve as mentors, tutors, etc. for all students.
- We aim to raise the reputation of Avila University, both locally and nationally. Not only will this benefit Avila in the recruitment and retention of students, but also in the recruitment and retention of top-notch faculty.
- We aim to center the intellectual experience of a liberal arts university by providing students with greater exposure to the breadth and depth of academic and/or professional learning.
- We aim to support the mission of Avila University to serve the dear neighbor and help to create engaged future leaders and community members through a variety of civic engagement opportunities.
- We aim to foster life-long learning and engagement by working with Avila Advancement and by developing community partnerships.

HONORS PROGRAM COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Criterion: All undergraduate students admitted and intending to graduate from the Honors Program.

Policy Statement(s):

1. While the Honors Program Director is to be of help to all students admitted to the Honors Program, it is ultimately the student's responsibility to be familiar with the requirements for completion of the program and to be aware of their progress.
2. The following are the general requirements for completion of the Honors Program that apply to all students enrolled in the program, regardless of their classification upon being admitted:
 - a. Enrollment and completion of **two of the following**:
 - i. First-year seminar: This is an honors section of the traditional first-year seminar available only to honors students and is taken in addition to the traditional first-year seminar. It takes place during the same semester and meets for approximately one-hour a week. Honors first-year seminar is strongly encouraged for first year students but is not mandatory.
 - ii. Junior seminar: Targeted for students with a third-year classification.
 - iii. Senior seminar: Targeted for students in the final year of their traditional degree program.
 - b. Completion of **two** cultural and community experiences: Students will attend a pre-determined number of approved on- and off- campus events. Examples include academic talks, gallery events, artistic performances, and community events.
 - i. Students must enroll in the cultural and community experience prior to the semester in which they plan to attend the events.
 - ii. Students must register for and attend designated events for two different semesters during their time in the program.
 - c. Completion of **five** honors enhancements:
 - i. Enhancements may be paired with any course for which the student is interested, and the instructor is willing. These may take place in the CORE, the student's major or minor, or in general electives.
 - ii. Honors enhancements involve a written agreement between the student and the instructor of the course. The enhancement consists of an additional learning component that is not currently part of the class syllabus. Examples include, but are not limited to, additional reading/reviews, literature reviews, research proposals, completed research projects, conference presentations, community-based projects, and performance or creative projects.
 - iii. Students must complete at least one honors enhancement per year to demonstrate progression through the program.
 - iv. There is no maximum number of enhancements a student may take in a given semester. The Honors Program Director reserves the right to

- approve only specific agreements for students who submit multiple agreements in one semester.
- v. Based on program growth, designated honors sections of existing courses may be created under the guidance of the Honors Program Director and Steering Committee.
3. All Honors Program Requirements will be graded as Pass/Not pass.
 - a. P/F grades for honors agreements will be determined by the faculty facilitator of the agreement and should be submitted by the final grade deadline.
 - b. Allowing “incomplete” agreements is at the discretion of the faculty facilitator for the enhancement.
 - c. Students must pass the parent course with a “C” or higher and receive a “P” on their enhancement to receive credit.
 - d. It is possible for a student to not pass their honors enhancement, but pass the course associated with the enhancement.
 4. Upon completion of the Honors Program curriculum, students will be retroactively awarded **nine credit hours** towards their overall hours required for graduation.
 - a. Students who do not fully complete the program will not receive any credit hours.
 5. The intended learning outcomes for Honors Program seminars, experiences, and enhancements are listed below. Students completing the honors program curriculum will have:
 - a. Completed a rigorous research experience.
 - b. Worked one-on-one with faculty on a research-based experience.
 - c. Engaged with the community through activities that focus on local and/or global concerns.
 - d. Participated in and/or led campus intellectual events and/or pursuits.
 - e. Demonstrated higher level critical thinking experiences including global and ethical issues.

Procedure(s):

1. Honors program students will be advised by the Honors Program Director.
 - a. The Honors Program Director only advises regarding the Honors Curriculum. Students will maintain their traditional academic advisor for general advising.
2. Seminars will be scheduled by the Honors Program Director.
3. Seminars will be taught by the Honors Program Director and Steering Committee members.
4. Cultural and community experiences will be offered every semester and will be curated by the Honors Program Director and Steering Committee. An approved list of events will be distributed by the Director no later than one week prior to the start of traditional classes for the semester.
5. Honors enhancement approval:
 - a. Standard guidelines and agreement forms will be created by the Honors Program Director and Steering Committee and available through the Honors Program Canvas Course.
 - b. Students will submit honors enhancement agreements within the first three weeks of classes starting for the semester.

- c. Agreements must be approved by the Honors Program Director prior to the agreement starting.
6. Students will submit an Enhancement Completion Form, signed by the faculty facilitator, to the Honors Program Director within one (1) week of the completion of the course.
7. Students taking an “Incomplete” for any honors enhancement or component, must fill out the standard “incomplete agreement” form, as found under the P drive.
8. The Honors Program Director will submit a completion form to the Registrar for retroactive credit hours to be applied.

Office – Person(s) Responsible for Implementation/Enforcement: Honors Program Director and Steering Committee – Student Records – Faculty facilitators for honors enhancements

ADMISSION TO HONORS PROGRAM

Criterion: Students interested in admission to the Honors Program.

Policy Statement(s):

1. The maximum students that may be admitted to the Honors Program are 15 per academic year.
2. Upon admission to Avila University, eligible students will be notified of their qualification for the Honors Program.
 - a. **Pre-approved:** Enter Avila with a high school GPA of 3.75 or above **and** an ACT score of 25+ or SAT score of 1200+.
 - i. Pre-approved students need to formally accept their admission to the Honors Program.
 - ii. Students who accept admission will be automatically enrolled in the honors first-year seminar.
 - b. **Conditional acceptance:** Enter Avila with a high school GPA of 3.75+ **or** an ACT score of 25+ **or** an SAT score of 1200+.
 - i. These students will be required to submit an admissions essay for consideration.
 - ii. These students may register in the honors first-year seminar prior to being formally admitted to the Honors Program. If they are not immediately admitted to the program, they may apply in later semesters, and count their experience towards completion requirements.
 - c. **Transfer/Late-join:** Current Avila students or those transferring from another institution are also eligible for admissions to the program.
 - i. Two of the following are required for consideration:
 1. College GPA of 3.5+
 2. Letter of recommendation from an academic source
 3. Admissions essay
 - ii. Students must plan to be at Avila for four semesters to complete the program.
 - iii. Due to the varying nature of honors programs, honors components and courses from other institutions will not transfer into the Avila University Honors Program.
3. Students admitted to the Honors Program will be given priority for on-campus performance and engagement grants or on-campus hourly positions.
 - a. Students admitted to the honors programs who receive Presidential Scholarships will be allowed to add a performance/engagement grant to their admissions package.

Procedure(s):

1. Admissions will notify traditional first-year students and transfer students of their qualification and eligibility to the Honors Program in the initial student admission packet.

2. Avila advisors may inform current Avila students about their eligibility for the Honors Program.
3. The Honors Director and Steering Committee will create an acceptance form for pre-approved students.
4. The Honors Director and Steering Committee will curate the writing prompts for conditional and late-join student applicants.
5. The Honors Director will blindly review essays for applicants and rank applicants for admission based on criteria established with the Steering Committee and contingent upon the number of spots available in the Program.
6. The Honors Director and Steering Committee will suggest where qualifying students should be placed to fulfill performance/engagement grants.
7. Admissions caps and guidelines will be reviewed by the Honors Director, Steering Committee, and Advisory Council every two years.

Office – Person(s) Responsible for Implementation/Enforcement: Honors Program Director and Steering Committee – Admissions and Recruitment

PROBATION AND DISMISSAL FROM HONORS PROGRAM

Criterion: Students enrolled in the Honors Program.

Policy Statement(s):

1. A student may be placed on **probationary status** with the Honors Program as a result of any of the following:
 - a. Going a full academic year without being enrolled in at least one honors enhancement, cultural and community experience, or seminar.
 - b. Falling below an overall GPA of 3.5.
 - c. Not passing any Honors Program component.
 - d. Student was considered for dismissal from the Honors Program, but evidence was not submitted by HP Director regarding a student's dismissal, per policy below.
2. A student may be **dismissed** from the Honors Program as a result of any of the following:
 - a. Not enrolling in a least one honors program component after (1a) above.
 - b. Remaining below a 3.5 overall GPA for two consecutive semesters.
 - c. Receiving a 2nd Warning for Academic Dishonesty from the office of the Provost, as detailed in the Student Code of Conduct.
 - d. Receiving a Level 3 conduct sanction, as detailed in the Student Code of Conduct.

Procedure(s):

1. The Honors Program Director will monitor student progress through the program and GPA.
2. Faculty enhancement facilitators will alert the Honors Program Director of students who do not pass enhancements.
3. Academic affairs will alert the Honors Program Director of students who receive a 2nd Warning for Academic Dishonesty or a Level 3 conduct sanction.
4. The Honors Program Director is responsible for notifying students of dismissal decisions in writing within fourteen (14) days of the end of the semester in which the dismissal decision occurred.

Office – Person(s) Responsible for Implementation/Enforcement: Honors Program Director – Academic Affairs

APPEALS TO HONORS COMPONENT GRADES

Criterion: Students receiving an “F” on any Honors Program Component.

Policy Statement(s):

1. A student may appeal a final grade received in an honors component when the student decides that the grade does not accurately reflect their performance in the component.
2. The appeals are limited to the following: (1) evidence that determination of the grade or dismissal was in variance with requirements stated in the individual component or overall program guidelines; (2) documentation that an inaccurate evaluation was used in determining the grade/dismissal.

Procedure(s):

1. Copies of forms will be available on the Honors Program Canvas course page.
2. Grades must be submitted one (1) week after the last class or at the end of term. Within (14) Avila University business days after grades are due for that class, the student intending to appeal a **grade** must first contact the faculty facilitator and discuss the grade received. If, after discussing the grade, the issue is not resolved, the faculty facilitator will contact the Honors Program Director to inform them of the student meeting.
3. If the student wishes to pursue a grade appeal, a formal request must be submitted to the Honors Program Director, along with all evidence, within (7) calendar days after their meeting with the faculty facilitator.
4. The Honors Program Director will notify the Steering Committee and faculty facilitator who assigned the grade being appealed. The Honors Program Director and Steering Committee shall compose the appeal committee. A member of the Honors Program Advisory Council will be randomly selected if the component in question is under the direct supervision of the Director or a member of the Steering Committee.
5. The faculty member must submit to the Honors Program Director all materials, evidence, and documentation to be considered relevant material in response to the student appeal within fourteen (14) days from the date of the student request for an appeal. No materials may be added by the faculty or student after this date.
6. If the faculty member does not submit materials, evidence, and/or documentation in response to the student appeal within fourteen (14) calendar days from the date of the student request for a formal grade appeal, the grade will be changed to a “P.”
7. There will be no formal hearing. An informal conference of the three Honors Program representatives will take place no more than seven (7) days after all documentation is received.
8. A decision will be issued in writing to all involved parties.
9. The decision of the representatives is final.

Office – Person(s) Responsible for Implementation/Enforcement: Honors Program Director and Steering Committee – Faculty facilitators

APPEALS TO HONORS PROGRAM DISMISSAL

Criterion: Students dismissed from the program.

Policy Statement(s):

1. A student may appeal their dismissal from the Honors Program if the student feels that their dismissal does not reflect their performance in the program.
2. The appeals are limited to the following: (1) evidence that determination of the grade or dismissal was in variance with requirements stated in the individual component or overall program guidelines; (2) documentation that an inaccurate evaluation was used in determining the grade/dismissal.

Procedure(s):

1. Copies of forms will be available on the Honors Program Canvas course page.
2. Within fourteen (14) Avila University business days from which the student receives notification of a dismissal, the student intending to appeal the dismissal must first contact the Honors Program Director and discuss the dismissal reasoning. If, after discussing the dismissal, the issue is not resolved, the Director will contact the Honors Program Steering Committee to inform them of the student meeting.
3. If the student wishes to pursue a dismissal appeal, a formal request must be submitted to the Honors Program Steering Committee, along with all evidence, within seven (7) calendar days after their meeting with the Program Director.
4. The Honors Program Steering Committee will notify the Director of the dismissal appeal. A member of the Honors Program Advisory Council will be randomly selected to serve as an appeal panel with the Steering Committee.
5. The Honors Program Director must submit to the Honors Program Steering Committee all materials, evidence, and documentation to be considered relevant material in response to the student appeal within fourteen (14) days from the date of the student request for an appeal. No materials may be added by the faculty or student after this date.
6. If the Director does not submit materials, evidence, and/or documentation in response to the student appeal within fourteen (14) calendar days from the date of the student request for a formal dismissal appeal, the student will automatically be re-entered to the program, under probationary status.
7. There will be no formal hearing. An informal conference of the three Honors Program representatives will take place no more than seven (7) days after all documentation is received.
8. A decision will be issued in writing to all involved parties.
9. The decision of the representatives is final.

Office – Person(s) Responsible for Implementation/Enforcement: Honors Steering Committee

HONORS PROGRAM FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS

Criterion: Faculty members teaching and/or supervising Honors Program components.

Policy Statement(s):

1. Faculty teaching Honors Program first-year, junior, and senior seminars will be selected from the Honors Program Director and Steering Committee.
2. Faculty facilitators for honors enhancements should be full-time faculty members at Avila University.
3. Part-time faculty, including adjuncts and instructors, may be considered to facilitate honors enhancements at the discretion of the Honors Program Director.

Procedure(s):

1. The Honors Program Director is responsible for scheduling and assigning faculty to teach seminars.
2. Students are responsible for submitting honors enhancement agreements for approval using the form located on the Honors Program Canvas page.
3. For enhancements facilitated by part-time faculty, the Director will contact the instructor to discuss expectations.
4. It is at the discretion of the Director to allow part-time faculty to facilitate honors enhancements.

Office – Person(s) Responsible for Implementation/Enforcement: Honors Program Director

HONORS PROGRAM ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Criterion: Faculty and staff interested in having an advisory role in the Honors Program.

Policy Statement(s):

1. The Honors Program will be under the purview of the **Honors Program Director**.
 - a. The Program Director will be elected by the Advisory Council for a 3-year term.
 - i. The first Program Director will be elected by Faculty Assembly in February 2020, with duties expected to begin in May 2020. Nominations must be submitted by January 1st, 2020 and will be announced in January 2020.
 - b. Director Compensation:
 - i. One three-credit course release in each of the Fall and Spring semesters
 - ii. At least one student (graduate or undergraduate) assistant
 - iii. 7.5 weeks of half-time pay in the summer
 - c. Responsibilities of the Program Director
 - i. Oversee the Honors admissions process
 - ii. Teach at least one Honors Seminar course per year
 - iii. Supervise and facilitate the Community and Cultural Experience component each semester
 - iv. Program assessment and evaluation
 - v. Work with Marketing, Admissions, and Advancement to promote and fundraise for the Program
 - vi. Oversee the scheduling of Honors courses
 - vii. Advise all Honors Program students
 - viii. Work with faculty and students to develop Honors advancements and courses
 - ix. Oversee all Honors component grade appeals, unless the director is the supervisor of the component in question
 - x. Other administrative duties as required
 - xi. The Honors Program Director may facilitate Honors enhancements
 - xii. Work with faculty across campus in support of the Program
 - xiii. Lead at least one meeting per semester with the Honors Program Steering Committee
 - xiv. Lead at least one meeting per semester with the combined group of the Honors Program Advisory Council and the Honors Program Steering Committee
 - xv. Supervise student engagement grants
 - xvi. Maintain the Program budget
 - d. The following responsibilities will be under the guidance of the director, with assistance from the steering Committee:
 - i. Set standards for admission to the Program
 - ii. Review and approve student applications for the Program
 - iii. Set general guidelines for Honors enhancements
 - iv. Approve the proposed Honors enhancements each semester

- v. Enhance the visibility of the Honors program on- and off-campus
 - vi. Create and regularly review all forms needed for Program operation.
2. The **Steering Committee** will be composed of at least two (but no more than three) full-time Avila faculty members who will serve as the “core” group for the Council each year.
- a. Members of the Steering Committee will be elected for three-year terms by the Honors Program Advisory Council.
 - i. Elections will be staggered so that only one member will be elected (or re-elected) in a given academic year
 - ii. The first Steering Committee members (2) will be elected by Faculty Assembly in February 2020. Nominations must be submitted by January 1st, 2020 and will be announced in February 2020.
 - b. Compensation for Members of the Steering Committee
 - i. Overload pay for those members who are teaching one of the required seminar courses
 - ii. At least one shared student assistant (undergraduate or graduate) per academic year
 - c. Responsibilities of Members of the Steering Committee
 - i. Attend all meetings of the Steering Committee and the Advisory Council
 - ii. Teach actively in the program
 - iii. Teach one Honors seminar per year (typically)
 - iv. Oversee all program dismissal appeals
 - v. Members of the Steering Committee may facilitate Honors enhancements
 - d. The following responsibilities will be under the guidance of the Director with assistance from the Steering Committee:
 - i. Set standards for admission to the Program
 - ii. Review and approve student applications for the Program
 - iii. Set general guidelines for Honors enhancements
 - iv. Approve the proposed Honors enhancements each semester
 - v. Enhance the visibility of the Honors program on- and off-campus
 - vi. Create and regularly review all forms needed for Program operation.
3. The **Advisory Council** is the bottom-tier of the organizational structure. It is composed of faculty and/or staff who are interested in engaging with the Honors Program and its students.
- a. Faculty are not required to be members of the Advisory Council in order to facilitate Honors enhancements or courses, but they are expected to adhere to the regulations of the Program.
 - b. In order to maintain voting membership on the council, faculty are expected to do at least one of the following:
 - i. Attend at least one Honors Program meeting in a given academic year
 - ii. Facilitate at least one Honors enhancement
 - iii. Teach at least one Honors seminar
 - iv. Work closely with honors students in a capacity that represents the Honors Program or its students (admissions, engagement grant, research projects, etc.)
 - c. The responsibilities of the Advisory Council include:
 - i. Electing the Program Director for a three-year term.

- ii. Electing the members of the Steering Committee (staggered terms of 3 years).
- iii. Serving as panel members for grade and dismissal appeals applicable to the honors program.
- iv. Providing input and feedback on curricular and extra-curricular needs of the program.
- v. Vote on proposals brought forward by the Director and the Steering Committee.

Procedure(s):

1. The current Honors Program Director will solicit nominations for a new/return Director every third year. The elected Director will begin their duties in the respective May following elections.
 - a. The first election will occur in February 2020, with the second election in February 2025. Three-year terms will be standard following May 2025.
 - b. Individuals interested in being the Honors Program Director will submit their names for consideration to the Chair of Faculty Assembly by January 1st of the respective year.
2. The current Honors Program Director will solicit nominations for new/return Steering Committee members every third year. The elected members will begin their duties in the respective August following elections.
 - a. The first vote will take place in 2020. One member will serve three years in their first term (May 2020-2023); the other member will serve four years (May 2020-2024). Three-year terms will be standard following May 2024.
 - b. Individuals interested in being the first Steering Committee members will submit their names for consideration to the Chair of Faculty Assembly by January 1st of the respective year.
3. The Honors Program Director will schedule and announce regular meetings to discuss the program. Any interested faculty may attend to gain status as a voting member of the Advisory Council.

Office – Person(s) Responsible for Implementation/Enforcement: Honors Program Director, Steering Committee, and Advisory Council.