



Las Positas College Honors Transfer Program Honors Handbook (Fall 2019)

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1 - Introduction and Mission

What is the Honors Transfer Program?

The fundamental mission of the Honors Transfer Program is to **open academic pathways** to our diverse student body. We welcome students who have an interest and motivation to take on a deeper, more self-directed approach to their college coursework and their learning in general. We provide them with the means to grow intellectually, and to make intellectual connections across a range of disciplines.

Our primary goals are to:

- Support the intellectual interests, creativity and passions of individual students.
- Help students grow into intellectual risk-takers and creative, self-assured thinkers.
- Cultivate students' ability to collaborate with each other as fellow citizens of the world.

Participation in the Honors Transfer Program offers students the opportunity to attain:

- Skills in the areas of critical thinking, research and written and oral expression needed for success in upper-division coursework and graduate study.
- Improved chances of transferring to their desired academic destination.
- A deepened passion for ideas and inquiry that will serve them well wherever their lives lead them.

We view the Honors Transfer Program as one that should benefit the Las Positas College community as a whole. This includes both students and faculty, whom we support and encourage in creating innovative curricula and cultivating rich intellectual activities for students. The Honors Program takes seriously its mission of both recruiting and cultivating honors students, nurturing and encouraging those from diverse backgrounds and interests as they progress on their intellectual journey.

How Challenging is the Honors Program?

Because of the structure of our program, becoming an HTP Member or achieving Honors Scholar status will, by definition, require additional work. But our faculty and staff in the Honors Program are dedicated to helping you develop the skills you need. Honors work is not just about working harder; it is also about learning to think differently and engage more deeply in your coursework. For instance, in an Honors project, students should expect more reliance on primary sources. They might engage in an empirical research endeavor designed by the student themselves rather than one in the lab manual. An Honors contract or seminar will mean a different level of engagement and interaction than a typical course through activities such as, discussions, writing, experimentation, presentations, and in-class workshop. Emphasis is placed on skills needed at the university level, such as written analysis, critical thinking, research, and collaborative learning.

What Makes an Honors Student?

The Honors Transfer Program is specifically designed for the wide diversity of LPC students. The Honors Transfer Program welcomes students of all backgrounds. Some of our brightest students have struggled in high school, others have just returned to college after taking a long break from school. Students from all backgrounds who are willing to engage in their work at a deeper level and who make a commitment to developing their skills can benefit from our program.

2 - Program Requirements and Components

Admission Requirements

A student who is new to Las Positas College can enter the Honors Program if they meet one of the following requirements:

1. A GPA from high school of 3.75 or above, or
2. The recommendation of an instructor or counselor

A continuing student who has at least 12 college units qualifies for the Honors Program if they meet one of the following requirements:

1. An LPC GPA of 3.75 or above, or
2. The recommendation of an instructor or counselor

If you do not meet the requirements above, but you feel that the honors program may be a good fit for you, please contact the Honors Director. The Director would be happy to discuss options with you.

Levels of Participation

There are two different levels of participation in our Honors Transfer Program. Any student who joins the program and the ongoing program requirements from that point forward, is a **Member** of the program. Students who are already Members may also pursue a larger set of criteria necessary to complete the program and attain **Honors Scholar** status.

(Note: Even though we refer to attaining Honors Scholar status as “completing” the program, not all students participate at that level. Students participating at either level will receive Honors designation on any course in which they complete a Contract and attain a grade of at least B in the course.)

Membership Requirements

Ongoing Membership Requirements

To remain an active Member of the Honors program, a student must complete at least one Honors Contract during the academic year with a grade of B or better in the related course.

Inactive Members

At the end of every Spring semester, any students who have not completed a contract in that academic year will be removed from the program and the related mailing lists. A student who wishes to become active in the program again should contact the Honors Advisor to discuss his or her position and request re-admittance to the program.

Membership Renewal

It is expected that any Honors student with continuing membership have a cumulative GPA of 3.25 or higher. Any student meeting that threshold will have their membership automatically renewed. For any student with a cumulative GPA below 3.25, the Honors Director and Board will examine that student's overall record, possibly including their GPA trend over time, GPA from more recent semesters, and any feedback from instructors. In most cases, students making progress and demonstrating continued interest in the program will have their membership renewed.

Honors Scholar Requirements

The Honors Scholar award is the highest academic status granted by the Las Positas College Honors Program.

In order to become an Honors Scholar, a student must fulfill all of these requirements:

1. Complete at least 5 honors contracts in courses totaling at least 15
2. Graduate with a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher.

Honors Scholar Benefits

As an Honors Scholar you'll receive the following awards at graduation:

- An Honors Scholar medal
- An embossed golden seal on your diploma
- Special recognition at the graduation ceremony.

Graduating as an Honors Scholar also entitles you to various benefits with our transfer college partners such as:

- Priority admission at several private and public colleges
- Guaranteed and/or priority scholarships upon admission
- Guaranteed and/or priority access to housing
- Guaranteed access to the honors program upon admission to the college.

Do I have to become an Honors Scholar?

No. For a variety of reasons, many students choose to take only a few Honors courses. If you join the Honors program near the end of your time here, for instance, it would be challenging to finish the requirements in time. However, even a couple of Honors course designations look great on your transcript!

3 - Honors Contracts

Honors Contracts are individually designed projects that give you a unique opportunity to work one-on-one with your professors on personally created projects which complement the regular work in the course attached to the Contract. This is a great opportunity to pursue creative, self-directed work and receive Honors transcript credit at the same time. However, you should be aware that an Honors Contract does take organization and discipline. It is recommended that you pick a course to do an Honors Contract in only if you are willing to delve deeply into a specific topic and dedicate time and hard work into research and analysis on the topic.

What Courses Are Eligible?

Any **transfer-level** course is eligible for developing an Honors Contract, if the instructor is willing. Note that this means “below-college-level courses” like Math 50, 55 or 107, and English courses prior to English 1A, are not eligible.

Honors Contract Guidelines

- The project proposed for an Honors Contract should require at least 25 hours of additional student work. This is time the Honors student puts into their project beyond the standard work required of all students in the attached course.
- The Honors student should schedule contact with their mentor for guidance every 2-3 weeks.
- The project should involve critical thinking, creativity, rigorous scholarship, and independent study.
- The project should require original work and should engage primary sources whenever possible.
- The contract should include **clear outcomes** for the project which may include one or more of the following:
 - A 12-15 page research paper
 - Experimental research and write-up

- A creative project, such as a musical composition, visual art, or student-created application along with a written description and analysis
- Other types of projects that show a high level of intellectual engagement and scholarship.

All projects should contain a written analysis and comparative scholarship even when the project's primary outcome is laboratory research, performance, or a physical artifact.

Initiating an Honors Contract

Within the first 2 weeks of the semester, you should approach the Honors Director to obtain approval for doing the Contract, then contact your instructor and begin developing a proposal. Your proposal will clarify exactly what you plan on doing for your Honors Contract, how you will do this, and when it will all be done.

Embedded Honors

Some instructors have designed courses with an “Embedded Honors” option. This is essentially equivalent to pursuing an Honors Contract, and is subject to the same procedures and policies, but you will have a pre-defined template for the project you pursue, given in an Honors Addendum to the course syllabus.

The list of courses with Embedded Honors options changes each semester. Please see the Honors website for updated information.

Contract Proposal Summary

You will fill out the actual Honors Contract Proposal Form online. There is a link to the form on the LPC Honors Program main web page. You will fill out one form for each of your contracts. Most of the information on the proposal form covers specifics such as your name, date, semester, course and mentor teacher. The most involved section of the proposal form is the Honors Contract Proposal Summary. This is a 1-2 page summary where you discuss the basic content of your project. The summary proposal will contain the following sections:

- I. What is the **guiding idea**, question or thesis for your project?
- II. What **methods** will you use for your research?
- III. What **outcomes** produce will you create to show what you have learned?
- IV. What is your **timeline** for completing the project?

Two samples of the Honors Contract Proposal Summary can be found on the following pages.

I. Guiding Question/Thesis/Idea

Racial discrimination is a problem that has plagued human cultures for centuries, and the problems created by racial discrimination continue to today. The philosophical movement of **existentialism** proposes that humans are born without any essential nature, and that who we are is solely the product of the choices that we make and the way we live our lives. Thus, it seems likely that existential thinkers could offer us advice for ways of eliminating racial bias in our culture. If people have no essential nature, then it would not make sense to discriminate against others based on some imagined “essence” that they are perceived to have. In my project I plan to explore the possibility of using existentialist philosophy as a guide for overcoming stereotyping and racial discrimination.

II. Method of Research

I will begin my investigation of this topic by studying the recent data on racial attitudes, racial discrimination, and stereotyping. After familiarizing myself with this data, I will read through Jean Paul Sartre’s essay *Existentialism is a Humanism* and explore the ways in which his existentialist philosophy might offer solutions to the problems associated with contemporary attitudes about race. After composing a summary of my findings, I will compare the ideas presented by Sartre with the ideas of two other existentialist philosophers (yet to be determined) to investigate their comparative value of offering solutions to this problem. I will complete my project by summarizing my findings and offering my own ideas on the potential value of existentialist solutions to these problems.

III. Outcomes/Product

My final project will consist of a 12-15 page essay covering the topics discussed above. My essay will be in the standard format used for journals in the social sciences.

IV. Project Timeline

- **September 2:** Honors Project Proposal submitted. Literature search on racial attitudes and first reading of Sartre’s essay begins.
- **October 1:** Submit summary of literature review, and analysis of Sartre’s ideas in *Existentialism is a Humanism as applied to racial attitudes*.
- **November 4:** Submit summary of two other existentialist philosophers applied to my topic and contrasted with Sartre’s views.
- **November 20:** Submit rough draft of APA style essay to my professor
- **December 9:** Submit final draft of essay to my professor

I will meet with my instructor at least **once every 3 weeks** to discuss my progress, plans, and results as my research project progresses.

I. Guiding Question/Thesis/Idea

Synthetic fertilizers are well known to create high yields of crops with minimal investments relative to income generated by most crops grown in wealthy counties. But in countries with less developed economies, synthetic fertilizers often represent a cost that is unsustainable for the small farmer. Synthetic fertilizers also have negative ecological effects that can be mitigated by using natural fertilizer such as compost or manure. For my project I want to investigate whether radishes grown with only natural fertilizer can create a yield comparable to beets grown with synthetic fertilizer. Because newly planted radishes are normally ready for harvest within one month of planting, I will have time to run several conditions of radishes and measure the outcomes of radishes grown with synthetic fertilizer, natural fertilizer, and with no fertilizer at all.

II. Method of Research

This research will involve both a **literature search** and an **experimental design**.

For the **literature search**, I will investigate studies done on the comparative effects of synthetic and natural fertilizers, especially on radishes. I will use the information gained from the literature search to form my hypothesis, investigate experimental designs, and determine proper dosing guidelines for the fertilizer types.

For the **experimental design**, I will create a series of randomized trials in which I compare batches of radishes grown in three conditions: 1.) without fertilizer, 2.) with chemical fertilizer, and 3.) with natural fertilizer. The yield from each condition will be harvested and measured for total production by weight. This information will help provide information on the possibility of creating high yield radish crops without the use of expensive artificial fertilizers.

III. Outcomes/Product

The outcome of this research project will be an experimental writeup completed in APA style with the standardized sections found in research papers published in scientific journals. The essay will be at least **12 pages** in length. I will also create a power-point presentation to share my findings with the class in a **10-minute** discussion.

IV. Project Timeline

- **September 2:** Honors Project Proposal Submitted. Literature search begins.
- **October 1:** Complete summary of literature search, and proposed experiment design.
- **October 7:** Plant seeds for all three experimental conditions
- **November 4:** Harvest all plants and measure outcomes
- **November 20:** Rough draft of APA style essay turned in to my professor
- **December 9:** Final draft of experimental write-up completed and submitted

I will meet with my instructor at least **once every 3 weeks** to discuss my progress, plans, and results as my research project progresses.

4 - Honors Events

Honors Research Symposium

This statewide conference for community college honors students is the major academic event of the year. Held every spring at either Stanford or UC Berkeley, the Honors Research Symposium Honors students an opportunity to present their work in an academic setting to fellow scholars. Students who have participated, either as presenters or attendees,

Any Honors project you complete can be submitted for presentation at the Symposium. The selection process is competitive: in recent years, only around 35% of the submitted proposals were accepted. No need to worry, though! Our Honors director and your mentor will help you refine your proposal to give you the best chance. And if you are selected, we will work with you to prepare and practice your talk.

LPC Honors Showcase

At the end of each semester, if student interest is high, we hold a “local” LPC Honors Showcase on our campus. Any student with a recently completed or about-to-be-completed Honors project -- within the last 2 semesters -- is invited to participate in this community event, giving a 15-minute presentation summarizing their work. Participation is not required, but it is a wonderful time to celebrate your achievements and develop your presentation skills.