

Guidelines for Honors in Cognitive Science

The Cognitive Science Honors program gives students an opportunity to pursue an independent research project under faculty supervision during their senior year. The project should make an original contribution to the field of cognitive science. Students work with a faculty advisor to create a thesis proposal that includes a research question and plan for execution. The research plan is then executed and the work written up in a thesis that is evaluated by the student's advisor and a second reader. Weinberg College makes the determination about the award of honors at the end of the student's senior year.

Thesis Proposal.

The student interested in pursuing Honors must submit a proposal for an honors thesis project to the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) for Cognitive Science. This is due by the end of the first week following the conclusion of spring quarter before the student's senior year.

With the proposal, the student should also submit the name of the faculty member who has agreed to be the thesis advisor, supervising the student's work on the thesis project. In consultation with the thesis advisor a second reader will be identified, who may be a Cognitive Science faculty affiliate, or a Northwestern faculty member in an adjacent field.

The thesis proposal should be about 3 pages, including a timeline for the research. Extra pages may be used for References. There are no strict formatting guidelines, but students are encouraged to following the style guidelines for the discipline closest to their research, e.g., Chicago, APA, or ACM styles. The purpose of the Honors thesis proposal is to document that the student has a topic and plan for research that has been vetted and approved by their advisor. The student will not receive critical feedback on the scientific merit of methods of their project, but the proposal must provide enough information about the research question and methods to demonstrate that the student is on track with a feasible project that can be completed in the allotted time. The proposal requirement is also a way to be sure that students are ready to start their honors research project by the start of senior year.

Coursework.

Students must complete two quarters of COG SCI 398 (in fall and winter of their senior year) to complete their honors requirements. This course is an independent study intended to carve out time in the student's schedule to pursue a project of sufficiently high quality. With approval from the DUS, the second quarter of 398 may count as an elective toward the student's major requirements.

GPA Requirements & Graduation.

Honors students must plan to graduate in June of their senior year. They must also meet the following GPA requirements at the time of graduation: a minimum GPA of 3.3 overall, and a minimum GPA of 3.5 in courses taken toward the Cog Sci major.

Thesis.

The thesis should present research that makes an original contribution to the field of cognitive science. The two faculty readers of the thesis will evaluate it and make a recommendation regarding the award

of honors. The evaluation must describe the original contribution of the work and comment on its strengths and weaknesses.

The student should submit the thesis to the DUS no later than April 30. It is highly recommended that the student gets feedback on the thesis from their advisor before the submission deadline, so the student can make improvements before submitting it to the DUS. There is no revision of the thesis after it has been submitted to the DUS. The DUS will distribute the thesis to the student's advisor and second reader for evaluation.

If the thesis is reviewed as satisfactory by the student's advisor and second reader, and assuming all other requirements for honors are met, the DUS consults with the Cognitive Science Director and the Program Committee, and submits a recommendation to Weinberg College that the student be awarded honors. This recommendation is due in the College in mid-May.