Guide for Undergraduate Honors Thesis Area of Honors: DS or IST or SRA

College of Information Sciences and Technology

Guide for Undergraduate Honors Thesis

College of Information Sciences and Technology

This guide is for students completing a Schreyer Honors College thesis in the College of Information Sciences and Technology. You will find an overview of the thesis process, definitions of the roles of those involved with your thesis, expectations and requirements in the College of IST, a description of four major phases of a thesis project, a schedule of activities for completing a thesis, a "getting started" document, and answers to common questions.

If you have questions about what is presented here, ask your honors adviser or your thesis supervisor (if one has been confirmed). If they do not have the answer, feel free to contact either of the following people:

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Overview of Thesis Project

Completing an undergraduate honors thesis is a culminating academic experience for Schreyer Honors College (SHC) scholars. The SHC Thesis Project Guide states:

> While the purpose of the completed thesis project, once it's out in the world, is to advance knowledge, understanding, or creative value in its field, the purpose of the thesis experience as a whole is to develop your intellectual and professional identity in the field, and to help you think about your future.
> (https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/thesis/project.cfm)

As such, the thesis experience is designed to pique your intellectual curiosity, develop research skills, contribute to advancing knowledge, provide an opportunity to work closely with a faculty member, and help you explore the possibility of a graduate degree or other research-focused work.

Students often ask, "What does a thesis project look like?" There are two parts of the answer—the first regarding the project itself, and the second regarding the written document that describes the project. The SHC website states:

> The thesis project can take many forms — from laboratory experiments all the way to artistic creations. The thesis document captures the relevant background, methods and techniques, as well as describing the details of the completion of the individual project.
> (https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/thesis/)

In the College of IST, students have completed survey studies, interpretive analyses of multimedia artifacts, statistical analyses of large data sets, design studies, case studies, and more. To view examples of theses in the College of IST, see the Penn State library's honors library site, where all SHC electronic honors theses are catalogued and accessible: https://honors.libraries.psu.edu/search/.

The thesis document, a written description of the entire thesis project, typically begins with an introductory section (often referred to as a chapter) that establishes the importance of the project's research question. Most thesis papers then present a review of relevant work related to the project, a description of the project and the methods used, a presentation of the results, and a discussion of the findings. Some thesis papers also include a final conclusion section that may outline suggestions for future research. In addition to these main chapters, all theses include title page, signatory page, abstract, table of contents, list of figures, acknowledgements, bibliography, appendix items, and the Scholar's academic vita.

Phases of a Thesis Project

A thesis project unfolds in several phases—most of which begin long before you ever begin writing the thesis paper itself. The bulk of the work takes place over the final three or four semesters.

Phase 1: Notice and Explore Topics

Semesters 1 - 4[1] (Freshman and Sophomore Year)

The first phase (which typically takes place in freshman and sophomore years) entails noticing and exploring topics of interest. This occurs by paying attention to ideas presented in class, student listserv messages, research articles on the IST website, and announcements about visiting researcher seminars. In many cases the instructor of a course, a researcher who gives a thought-provoking seminar, or an honors adviser can help direct students to resources on topics of interest.

Phase 2: Narrow Topic and Identify Thesis Supervisor

Semester 5 (Fall, Junior Year)

The second phase (which usually takes place in the fall of junior year) includes narrowing your potential thesis topic and identifying a thesis supervisor, the person who is responsible for overseeing your thesis project. You should work closely with your assigned honors adviser (meeting frequently to discuss your interests), in order to hone in on a topic and choose a faculty member to supervise your thesis. Once a faculty member has agreed to be your supervisor, the two of you will continue to narrow your topic and eventually formulate a research question for your study.

Phase 3: Prepare to Undertake your Study

Semester 6 (Spring, Junior Year) & Summer between Junior/Senior Years

The third phase (which usually takes place in the spring of junior year and the following summer) is a busy planning phase. You need to learn about what is required to carry out a study (the research methods course, **IST 489H**, covers this), complete any required certifications for working with human participants (if there will be any in your study), formulate your exact research question, read and review scientific literature to show that you have a good understanding of your topic, and design your research project. This is a semester to work closely with your honors adviser and/or thesis supervisor.

Phase 4: Undertake your Study and Write your Thesis Paper

Semesters 7/8 (Fall/Spring, Senior Year)

The fourth phase (which typically takes place in the senior year) includes carrying out your study and writing your thesis paper. Studies take a variety of forms, and the form will largely be determined by your exact research question and the methods you choose to complete your study. Your thesis supervisor will be your primary guide as you conduct your research and determine the different chapters to be written.

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[1] If you plan on studying abroad in spring of your *junior* year, you should complete your research methods course (**IST 489H**) requirement in spring of your *sophomore* year. (This course is offered only in spring semesters.)

Roles

Although the thesis is an independent project, your work will be guided and approved by two faculty members: a thesis supervisor (selected by you), and an honors adviser in your area of honors (typically your assigned honors adviser). These faculty members are both responsible for reading your thesis and judging its merit.

Thesis Supervisor

The thesis supervisor is responsible for overseeing a student's work on an independent thesis project. Your supervisor should be a faculty member whose research specialty qualifies him or her to direct you in the design and completion of your study.

You are responsible for identifying and inviting a faculty member to be your thesis supervisor. Given that it is important for you and your supervisor to establish a good working relationship, you are encouraged to meet with several faculty members before deciding which one might be a good fit. Your assigned honors adviser can be helpful in suggesting names of faculty members who are best qualified to work on your particular project. Many students consider asking their honors adviser to be the thesis supervisor, if the proposed thesis is in line with the honors adviser's research. For more information on the thesis supervisor, see the "Proposal, Supervisor and Area of Honors" section of the SHC Thesis Project Guide (https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/thesis/project.cfm).

Honors Adviser in the Designated Area of Honors

An honors adviser from the area in which you pursue honors must approve your thesis. (In the College of IST, there are two areas of honors: IST and SRA.) The honors adviser is charged with confirming that the thesis is an appropriate and adequate study in the chosen area of honors.

If you did not invite your assigned honors adviser to be your thesis supervisor and you are doing your thesis in the same area of honors as your major, your assigned honors adviser will fulfill the role of honors adviser in your designated area of honors.

If your assigned honors adviser will be your thesis supervisor, you need to invite a second faculty member to read and approve the thesis. Your honors adviser should suggest faculty members who are eligible to fulfill this second role.

If you are doing your thesis in an area of honors outside of your major, you will need to find an honors adviser in your chosen area of honors who will agree to read your thesis and determine its appropriateness for the area of honors that you have chosen.

Expectations and Requirements

College of IST faculty members expect SHC students to take responsibility for managing their thesis projects. You are in charge of requesting regular meetings with your honors adviser and your thesis supervisor, carrying out the plans that you and your thesis supervisor discuss, setting and meeting deadlines for yourself, and knowing the SHC requirements for your thesis. That said, thesis supervisors and honors advisers are committed to guiding your work on your thesis and will do their best to answer your questions.

SHC Thesis Requirements

IST and SRA scholars must fulfill all honors thesis requirements set forth by SHC (https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/thesis/—see especially the formatting and submission requirements). In addition, take special note of three deadlines related to thesis completion: the thesis proposal deadline, the mandatory thesis format review submission deadline, and the final thesis submission deadline (https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/resources/dates.cfm).

College of IST Thesis Requirement: IST 489H

In the College of IST, all scholars are required to have formal preparation for doing a thesis. Most often, students fulfill this requirement by taking **IST 489H** (Research Methods for Information Sciences and Technology). This course (http://bulletins.psu.edu/undergrad/courses/I/ist/489H) is offered each spring semester and is intended to introduce students to all the steps of the research process, from defining a research topic idea to analyzing results. On occasion, typically only if a student has worked with the thesis supervisor in a research lab setting, the thesis supervisor may elect to provide one-on-one training for carrying out a study. However, more often than not, even when a student has worked with the thesis supervisor in a lab, the thesis supervisor will still prefer that the student complete the **489H** course.

The recommended timing for the research methods course is *spring of the student's junior year*; because at this time, students typically have a reasonable idea of their general thesis topic, and this is the last opportunity to provide training before they undertake a study the following year. In cases where a student has planned to study abroad in spring of the junior year, the student should take **IST 489H** *in spring of the sophomore year*. Although sophomores may not have a good sense of their thesis topic, they still benefit from walking through the course with a trial topic, so that they can learn the research process.

Semester by Semester Plan for Junior and Senior Year[2]

Honors advisers highly recommended the semester by semester plan detailed here for juniors and seniors. Students who are not able to follow the suggested timeline (due to graduating early, scheduling a semester abroad, taking more time for additional majors or an IUG, etc.) should work with their honors adviser and/or thesis supervisor to alter the recommended schedule of activities.

Phase 2: Narrow Topic and Identify Thesis Supervisor

Semester 5 (Fall, Junior Year)

- Schedule time to meet with a faculty member who you *and your honors adviser* think might be a good thesis supervisor for your project. (This could be your honors adviser.)
- Arrange to briefly meet with the faculty member every other week or so to begin discussing and narrowing thesis ideas. (This informal method confirms mutual interest and faculty accessibility.)
- Consult Appendix A for suggestions on selecting a thesis topic.

Phase 3: Prepare to Undertake your Study

Semester 6 (Spring, Junior Year)

- Take IST 489H (research methods course)—required for all College of IST honors students, unless your thesis supervisor suggests doing one-on-one training with him or her.
- Continue to meet with your thesis supervisor, focusing on determining a research topic area, beginning a literature review, identifying a specific research question, and a developing a rough research plan. (Note: This can take place while taking IST 489H!)
- Consult Appendix A for a step-by-step guide to prepare you for conducting a literature review.
- Consult Appendix B for library resources for doing research (compiled by the IST librarian).
- Complete Institutional Review Board (IRB) training and certification, if your proposed study requires IRB approval.
- Investigate research grants and scholarships to support thesis expenses or conference presentations. See summary of funding opportunities here:
  http://ist.psu.edu/current-students/undergraduate-research-opportunities
- Choose the area of honors in which you will do your thesis.
  Review SHC options for choosing an area of honors here:
  https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/thesis/project.cfm
- Determine the two faculty members who will read your thesis. (Review "Roles" above.)
- Submit thesis proposal to SHC toward the end of the semester.
  Check due dates here:
  https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/resources/dates.cfm
  Submit proposal through the SHC Student Records System here:
  https://www.shc.psu.edu/students/

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[2] Phase 1 typically occurs over the first two years. For a Phase 1 checklist, ask your honors adviser for a copy of the Undergraduate Honors Thesis Overview.

Summer between Junior/Senior Years

- Prepare readings and notes for the literature review, using a tool such as Mendeley, or another organizing system, to organize notes on studies that you read for your literature review.
- *If necessary,* get IRB approval for your study. Visit the Institutional Review Board's (IRB's) Centralized Application Tracking System (CATS) site to learn about how to submit a proposal. http://www.research.psu.edu/orp/humans/cats-centralized-application-tracking-system-1)

Phase 4: Undertake your Study and Write your Thesis Paper

Semester 7 (Fall, Senior Year)

- Register for three credits[3] of research project course (IST/SRA 494) with your thesis supervisor. Credits are earned for weekly meetings with your thesis supervisor, writing the literature review and gathering data (once IRB approval is completed, if required).
- Complete your study in the fall semester—or at least by early spring semester.
- Begin writing and assembling chapters of your thesis. Students may work from the Schreyer Word template: https://www.shc.psu.edu/documents/academic/thesis/thesis_template.doc.

Semester 8 (Spring, Senior Year)

- Register for 3 credits of research project course (IST/SRA 494) with your thesis supervisor. Credits are earned for weekly meetings with your thesis supervisor, analyzing data, and writing and re-writing the final thesis paper. Plan for at least one re-write of your thesis.
- Finish writing your thesis. Students may work from the Schreyer Word template: https://www.shc.psu.edu/documents/academic/thesis/thesis_template.doc.
- Schedule three due dates in your own work calendar:
  - Get from your thesis supervisor the date by which she or he wants to receive your thesis to be read and reviewed by the two faculty members approving your thesis—in advance of the SHC deadline. (Note: You are expected to provide *at least* one week for faculty to read your thesis, and to provide an *additional* week for you to make corrections).
  - Note date for mandatory Thesis Format Review: https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/resources/dates.cfm
  - Note date for final thesis submission (there are no exceptions!): https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/resources/dates.cfm

- Submit your thesis for mandatory Thesis Format Review through SHC Student Records System: https://www.shc.psu.edu/students/
- Submit your thesis through the SHC Student Records System: https://www.shc.psu.edu/students/

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[3] A maximum of six IST/SRA 494 credits are allowed for the thesis. SHC recommends registering for three in fall semester and three in spring semester.

Appendix A: Beginning your Research Project

Students should work with the thesis supervisor to develop a plan specific to the research to be undertaken. Use the information in this section for reference and to guide discussion about your research topic, literature review, and research question.

Defining a Research Question

The process of identifying a research question is shown in **Figure 1**. The process begins by identifying a topic of interest to the Scholar. Next, literature is gathered from a variety of sources to identify current problems, common understandings in the field, and findings. This information forms the foundation for further contributions by the Scholar articulated in the form of a specific research question.
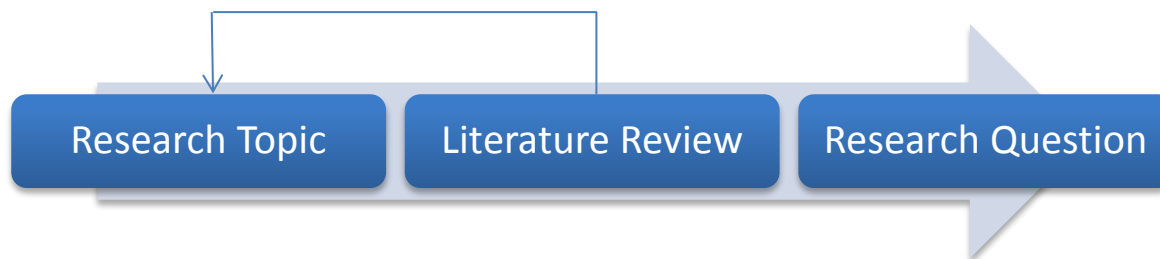

Figure 1 Process to articulate a research question

The process to articulate the research question is actually not just iterative, as shown in **Figure 1**, but also "recursive." Recursive means that at any point the student may back up and refine the research topic based on new literature findings, and begin the process again. The process is repeated until a research question is identified representing a very *narrow* point of investigation within the much broader area of the research topic. The literature review becomes the critical bridge between the research topic and question.

Choosing a Topic

Begin by looking at whatever lists of topics you have kept in the previous year or by thinking about areas of study in which you have a strong and sustained interest. Choose one of the topics as a starting place for investigation. Take time to read two or three articles about this topic. Follow particular strands of interest by reading articles referenced in the two or three articles. If you find that your interest wanes, move to another topic on your list of possible topics and begin again by reading a few articles and following particular strands of interest. Once you land on something that seems viable, undertake a literature review to dig deeper.

Starting a Literature Review

So, how does a Scholar begin a literature review? Consider designating regular time to the task, determining the best sources from which to retrieve articles, and investigating resources to make the job easier.

Designate Time

Allow regular time each week to review the literature related to a research topic of interest. A thesis should not have only five articles in the list of references. Reading each week assures that you will have

time to read enough. As an initial exercise, begin by searching for information on "*how to conduct a literature review?*"

Determine Sources from which to Retrieve Articles

Although it is acceptable to begin searching typical (e.g., Google) sources, it is also important to use more scholarly search engines:

- Google Scholar: http://scholar.google.com/
- Citeseerx: http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/
- PSU's LionSearch: http://www.libraries.psu.edu/

In addition, specific databases at LionSearch should also be investigated, including Forrester Research, Gartner Reports, IEEE Xplore, and ACM Digital Library, for example.

Scholarly sources offer several benefits. One is credibility, as a "peer review" process vets the work. Another is that they provide a writing example for the Schreyer thesis, including use of in-text citations linked to a bibliography.

Investigate Resources to Make the Job Easier

Don't reinvent the wheel. Where there are resources to direct you, make use of them.

Literature Review Basics

To get started, review Bryman & Bell's online Research Project Guide http://global.oup.com/uk/orc/busecon/business/brymanbrm3e/01student/project_guide/. In particular review section **A.3 Preliminary Literature Review**, and **C.5 Literature, Research Skills, and Key Words**. When conducting the review of the literature, document key words and publications that provide useful and consistent results. Consider the bibliography in scholarly papers to be another source of ideas, and remember that full, online text copies of these publications can often be found using LionSearch.

 In addition, there are several technologies that can help keep track of literature. A free browser tracker such as Diigo—https://www.diigo.com/—can be used to quickly save interesting links for later review. A browser add-on is clicked to save the hyperlink into the user's library. To help organize the links, the user has the option to assign keywords and save the link to a designated category.

At some point, the student will want to begin documenting citation information and saving full PDFs of references that might be used to craft the written literature review of the thesis. This can be done using a free citation tool such as Mendeley—http://www.mendeley.com/. Mendeley has extensions for many browsers, uses a Word plug-in to insert and manage citations in the paper, and will also generate the end-of-paper bibliography.

Using Citations

There are useful resources to help students give credit to sources used in the research paper. Discuss with your thesis adviser the citation style you will be using, such as the APA citation style.

For example, the Purdue OWL offers guides to in-text APA citations at https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/, and the end-of-paper APA bibliography at

https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/05/. Review the use of citations and the bibliography at this complete, sample APA paper: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/media/pdf/20090212013008_560.pdf.

Finally, Knight Cite offers a free online tool to generate individual end-of-paper APA bibliography references at http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/?standard=APA.

A quick summary of using the APA citation style includes:

- In-text APA citations are often written as the author's last name and year of publication in parentheses at the end of the section credited to that author. There are special rules for citations involving multiple authors, using specific content from the source (e.g., quotes, tables, figures), missing date, anonymous author, or when the author's name is already used in the text.
- End of paper bibliography lists are sorted by first author's last name.
- Every source cited in-text must have complete information referenced in the bibliography, allowing the reader an opportunity to find and review the original source.
- The bibliography only includes references that are cited in-text. Other sources not cited may optionally be listed as a separate appendix item.

Writing Guidelines
Scholarly writing is a unique style of writing that is both formal and without bias. Evidence is logically presented to the reader in order to convince the reader to agree with the presented argument.

One writing guide example is available at: http://www.personal.psu.edu/ejg8/class/ist594/IST594_WritingStyleGuide_v1.pdf. This guide includes tips on how to caption and cross-reference figures, as well as common pitfalls to avoid.

Getting Started
Every journey begins with a single step. This is also true for the Schreyer honors thesis experience. Begin early in the third year to identify a research topic, and develop a relationship with the thesis adviser. Set aside a few hours each week to develop an awareness and understanding for your topic of interest. The result will be the satisfaction of having contributed new knowledge to the world!

Appendix B: Resources for Doing Research: Electronic Databases

Electronic databases described below are found by clicking on letter, such as "L" for "LexisNexis" in the "Lion Search" window at PSU Libraries.

START HERE

Books, Articles and More | Databases | E-Journals | Course Reserves | Site Search

Search for databases or Try These First.

[Search]

Alphabetical List A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
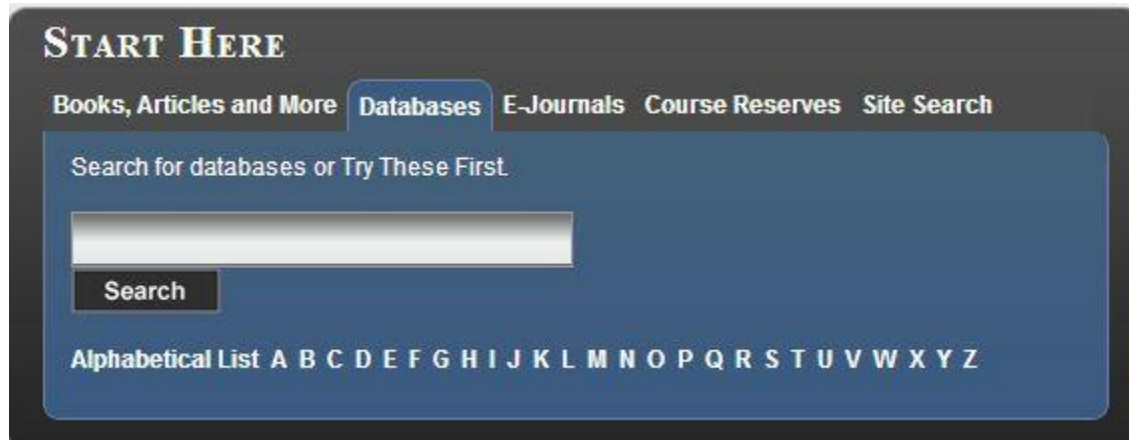
Finding Scholarly Articles and Technical Information

LionSearch*
Looking for a specific journal, magazine, or book? *LionSearch*, our online catalog, contains our print collections and also many of our electronic collections, as well. A good place to start.

ACM Digital Library*
Contains every publication of the Association of Computing Machinery in full text.

IEEE Xplore* and *Compendex / Inspec**
Comprehensive technical and scholarly coverage of topics in computer science, information technology, electronics, engineering, etc.

Web of Science*
Provides citation indexing with particular strength in science and technology.

Finding News

LexisNexis Academic*
An excellent source for locating trade publications and news (including major publications such as the New York Times, USA Today, Washington Post, Financial Times, etc.). Also consider *Google News*.

Finding Data

Statistical Abstract of the United States
http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/
An indispensable compilation of data from the censuses related to most aspects of American life.

World Development Indicators*
Includes nearly 800 statistical indicators related to social and economic development. Data can be downloaded for further manipulation.

Other Useful Resources

The Pew Internet & American Life Project
http://www.pewinternet.org/
Contains reports that include demographic data about users of the internet, technology, and special topics such as social networking websites.

Safari Computer Books Online*
Provides electronic access to current computer manuals from a variety of publishers.

Interlibrary Loan*
http://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/ill.html
If Penn State doesn't have the book, journal article, conference proceeding, or other research material that you need, request it using this service.

KnightCite citation generator
http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/
A web-based citation generating tool. Includes the three main citation styles: MLA, APA, and Chicago. Note that IST 594 uses APA.

Appendix C: Common Questions, Organized by Topic

Time Commitment

Q: How long does it take to complete a thesis?

A: From first conception (often in the required research methods course, IST 489H) to final submission, most students take 3 semesters to complete a thesis. Typically, the actual study (collecting survey data, or designing a product and testing it, etc.) occurs in the fall of senior year. Typically, the analysis of the study and the writing of the thesis paper occur in the spring of senior year.

Scope of the Thesis

Q: How long is a thesis?

A: A thesis is as long as it needs to be to answer the research question that the student seeks to answer. Your thesis needs to establish the importance of your question, explain relevant work that has been done related to your question, describe the study that you designed, present the results, and explain your findings. In general, 20 pages would not be enough room to accomplish all of this. Is 40 pages enough? Do you need 100 pages? You cannot answer that question until you have defined your question and planned your study (and, in some cases, looked at your results). The length should not be a goal; nor should it be a deterrent. Seniors who have completed a thesis will tell you that once you've completed the study, the thesis writes itself.

Q: Where can I find examples of IST and SRA theses?

A: All available SHC electronic honors theses are catalogued in the Penn State library and can be accessed at the honors library site: https://honors.libraries.psu.edu/search/

Thesis Preparation

Q: In addition to a research methods course, what would prepare me for undertaking a thesis?

A: Working in a faculty member's research lab with other undergraduate and graduate students or working individually on a faculty member's research project are excellent preparatory experiences for undertaking an honors thesis.

Area of Honors

Q: What is an "area of honors" and how does it impact my thesis?

A: Areas of honors correspond to the majors offered to undergraduate students at Penn State. Students must designate an area of honors when they submit their thesis proposal. This signals to Schreyer Honors College which honors advisers are appropriate representatives of a disciplinary area to read and approve the thesis as an appropriate study for the area of honors that is designated. In the College of IST, there are two areas of honors: IST and SRA.

Q: May I choose an "area of honors" outside my major?

A: In principle, students who begin in SHC as incoming freshman at Penn State may choose an area of honors outside the major. However, even if you were admitted to SHC as an incoming freshman student, you must check with the Department or College offering the area of honors to be sure that they will allow you to complete your thesis in their area—and, if so, whether there are additional requirements that you need to complete. Gateway students are approved for an honors thesis only within the College that recommended they be admitted to SHC. For a more detailed response, including different scenarios, see the "Proposal, Supervisor and Area of Honors" section of the SHC Thesis Project Guide: https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/thesis/project.cfm

Thesis Readers

Q: Can I add a third reader to my thesis?

A: Yes, you can add a third person to read your thesis. (Most students do *not* add a third person.) In cases where a student works in a research lab with a faculty member who is not an honors adviser and who is not the thesis supervisor, but who has helped as much as the thesis supervisor and the student wants to recognize the contributions of the additional faculty member, it is possible for the student to list a third person on the thesis signature page. Note that if a third person signs on the signature page, that person's name must also be included on the title page. If you are considering this option, contact the Coordinator of Student Records at SHC (Ms. Debra Rodgers, djr255@psu.edu) for directions.

Q: How do I go about designating faculty members to be a supervisor, an honors adviser, or a third reader on my thesis?

A: As is the case any time that you want to use someone's name to assist you (with letters of references, character reviews, independent studies, etc.), always ask faculty members before using their names—and wait for their response before adding their names to any forms. You cannot assume that a faculty member will have time to supervise your thesis, so never add a faculty member's name to a thesis proposal or other thesis-related form without asking the faculty member, first, whether she or he would be willing to serve in the capacity that you desire. Once you have confirmation that the faculty member agrees to work with you, you may add the person's name on appropriate online forms—typically by choosing a name from a dropdown menu. If you find that the people you wish to designate do not appear on SHC forms, contact the Coordinator of Student Records at SHC (Ms. Debra Rodgers, djr255@psu.edu) for assistance.

Thesis Proposal

Q: When do I have to submit a thesis proposal to SHC?

A: A proposal must be submitted by the SHC deadline at the end of the semester that occurs one year prior to intended graduation (e.g., spring semester of the junior year, if the student is planning on graduating in spring of the senior year). See SHC Important Dates page for specific dates: https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/resources/dates.cfm

Q: Whose names do I need to list on my thesis proposal?

A: Two faculty members must be listed on the online thesis proposal form: a thesis supervisor and an honors adviser. In cases where the thesis supervisor is the student's honors adviser, another eligible

faculty member from the chosen area of honors may be chosen. See the SHC Thesis Project Guide for more details: https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/thesis/project.cfm

Funding

Q: Is there funding at Penn State for any of the following: materials and equipment, presenting my thesis at a professional conference, collecting data in other cities or countries, remaining in State College for a summer to work on my thesis?

A: Yes, yes, yes, and yes. For funding opportunities through the College of IST or through the Penn State Office of Undergraduate Education, see the IST Undergraduate Research page: http://ist.psu.edu/current-students/undergraduate-research-opportunities. For funding opportunities through SHC, see their research funding page: https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/research/fund.cfm

Q: Where else, outside of Penn State, might I look for funding?

For funding opportunities outside Penn State, see the External Funding section of the SHC research funding page: https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/research/fund.cfm

Submitting a Thesis

Q: Who must sign the thesis?

A: Two faculty members must sign the thesis: a thesis supervisor and an honors adviser. In cases where the thesis supervisor is the student's honors adviser, another eligible faculty member from the chosen area of honors may be chosen. See the SHC Thesis Project Guide for more details: https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/thesis/project.cfm

Q: By when do I need to give the completed thesis to those who will be signing it?

A: You need to determine a date with your thesis supervisor. Typically this will be 2 weeks prior to the SHC deadlines, so that a) the faculty who will be reading your thesis will have a week to comment and b) you will have a week to implement their requested changes.

Q: What are the SHC thesis deadlines?

A: You need to submit a completed thesis by the SHC deadline that is set for the semester in which you intend to graduate. Note that there are actually several deadlines, which are listed by semester at SHC>Current Students>Important Dates: https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/resources/dates.cfm

Q: Where do I find the requirements for formatting and submitting my thesis?

A: For information on formatting and submitting a thesis, see formatting and submission guides here: https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/thesis/

Q: Where do I actually submit my thesis?

A: To submit the thesis, visit the eHT (electronic Honors Thesis) site: https://honors.libraries.psu.edu/author/

Guidelines for Topic Choice, Writing Schedule, Citing and Referencing

Q: Where can I find tips and lessons learned for things like choosing a topic, creating a schedule for writing, and citing appropriately?

A: SHC offers a Thesis Project Guide that is full of reminders and tips that come from lessons learned from many thesis projects: https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/thesis/project.cfm

Combining an Undergraduate Thesis and a Graduate Thesis (for IUG)

Q: If I want to pursue an Integrated Undergraduate Graduate (IUG) degree, does that change my thesis requirement?

A: When pursuing an IUG, a student is required to produce a master's quality thesis. The master's thesis will also count as the undergraduate honors thesis. For those students who would like to complete two studies, they may submit two separate theses but at least one must be master's quality.

Q: What is a common schedule for completing a master's level thesis for students pursuing an Integrated Undergraduate Graduate (IUG) degree?

A: There is no common schedule, because each master's thesis project will differ in its requirements, depending on the research question and the actual study that is designed. Many master's thesis projects require students to spend a summer doing research—often in State College or wherever data is collected. The timeline for completing a master's thesis is generally longer than that required for an undergraduate honors thesis. Still, most IUG students finish their undergraduate and graduate work in 5 years or 5 years plus one additional summer. (Note: In order to keep within a 5-year time frame, students should have advanced standing from multiple AP or other credits, such that they would otherwise be able to graduate a semester or more early; they should expect to take summer courses; and they should expect to spend at least a summer doing research.)