



***Advice to Current and Prospective Honors Thesis Advisors for  
Students in the Public Health Concentrations AY21-22***

Advising an undergraduate student on an Honors project and resulting thesis is often a very rewarding experience. The following advice is intended to help potential and current advisors to be fully aware of all requirements, avoid pitfalls that make the process less rewarding, and to increase the likelihood of a beneficial faculty-student collaboration for both participants.

1. Carefully review the **Honors Guidelines** distributed to students. To be aware of what is expected of you if you agree to serve as an Honors advisor.
2. It is the primary advisor's responsibility to assist the student in: 1) defining the project, 2) creating a work plan for all "deliverables," including setting deadlines for task completion, 3) meeting with the student regularly to review task completion and research products, and to monitor the student's progress throughout the course of the project period, and 4) agreeing to mentor the student in two semesters of independent study (PHP 1980) assigning grades for both semesters. A grade of incomplete (INC) is not allowed.
3. PHP1980 is a WRIT designated course. This means that faculty advisors are required to review drafts of two deliverables and to provide detailed written feedback to students during fall semester (for Spring graduation), allowing them time to improve their written work based on faculty comments and input. More specifically, students must satisfy the writing requirement by the end of the 7th (or penultimate) semester (fall semester for spring graduates). Advisors must ensure that students complete adequate writing and revision based on substantive feedback in the 1st of their two semesters of PHP1980. WRIT courses require that there be a minimum of 2 rounds of paper drafts on which substantive feedback on the writing is provided. These written assignments will typically consist of a section of the thesis paper and feedback can be in the form of viewable tracked changes in Microsoft Word, or written feedback that is scanned and submitted as a PDF, etc. Two written assignments with feedback must be submitted to the Director of Undergraduate Studies (Dr. Patricia Markham Risica and cc Elizabeth Mellen) by the end of the student's seventh semester (Fall semester for Spring graduation). Make sure that the student includes two writing assignments with time for your feedback before the end of their first semester in PHP 1980 with you.
4. Secondary advisors: The role of the secondary advisor can take different forms, ranging from full participation as a mentor to simply reviewing and commenting on the first completed draft of the thesis, and anywhere in between. Expectations of the role of the secondary advisor should be clear and agreed upon in advance by both the primary advisor and the secondary advisor, and should also be clear to the student.
5. Some students will come to you with a project in mind, while others will need assistance in developing a project from scratch. As the primary advisor, you will make the final decision regarding the nature of the final thesis deliverables to fulfill these requirements, though these should be consistent with the work approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Proposal.
6. Consider the student's skills, strengths and weaknesses before finalizing the project plan. In particular, consider the student's skills in data analysis or qualitative research methods. For example, if a student wants to model the determinants of binge drinking among adolescents, but has never conducted analyses more complex than cross tabs, he/she will probably need your tutoring in multivariate regression

techniques. You might also ask the student to identify someone to serve as a statistical advisor, who might serve as the secondary reader or serve separately. The need for this role should be identified and who will fill it very early in the project discussion. Also, you will help the student decide if an IRB protocol is needed for their work, and to support their creation and submission of such a protocol if it is warranted. All honors students must complete the CITI course on human subjects research if they have not already before beginning thesis work.

7. Schedule regular meetings with the student (every other week is advisable).

8. You and the student should together set deadlines for completion of all tasks for the thesis and put these deadlines and deliverables in writing. Students may be asked to determine target completion dates (a work plan) for all major tasks involved in implementing the project and writing the thesis (**keeping in mind that the student must receive grades for both semesters**), which they then submit for your approval. This planning and agreed documentation should avoid a common tendency toward misunderstanding of what will be accomplished when and / or procrastination in the absence of deadlines. Of course the timeline can be altered if the student and advisor(s) deem that revision is necessary and still allows all parts of the thesis to be completed.

9. Some students apply for UTRA funding or work with their faculty mentor on thesis-related research under other arrangements over the summer prior to their senior year. While the Honors thesis is officially a two-semester endeavor, work can begin during the summer or other semester before the official independent study work in PHP 1980.

10. All students must present their thesis to the public. Students may either present their work orally to an audience of faculty and their peers which are generally scheduled in mid to late April for May graduates, or they may choose to present via poster, which would be submitted for presentation at Public Health Research Day in early-April. Thesis advisors are asked to be present during student presentations.

11. All seniors graduating in 2022 are required to complete a “Public Health Communication” module delivered by Dr. John Fulton and the Rhode Island Department of Health which includes recorded lectures and related readings. Students work in designated groups to complete and post assignments to Canvas. Dr. Fulton will inform primary advisors whether their students have completed the necessary work, which is required to pass the independent thesis study, for advisors to consider when giving students a final grade for PHP1980. All seniors graduating in 2023 or after are required to take PHP1910 “Senior Seminar,” which includes the communication module.