



**2024-2025 Academic Year:  
Guidelines and Requirements for the Senior Honors and Thesis**

<b>SUBMISSION</b>	<b>DATE DUE</b>
<b>Final Honors Thesis</b>	
Seniors - December 2024 graduation	Friday, Nov. 22, 2024 by 5pm
Seniors - May 2025 graduation	Friday, Apr. 25, 2025 by 5pm

<b>Honors Thesis Proposal (Prospectus)</b>	
Juniors - December 2025 graduation	Friday, Dec. 6, 2024 by 5pm
Juniors - May 2026 graduation	Friday, May 9, 2025 by 5pm

**(A) Overview**

Public Health concentrating students who graduate with honors are required to complete an Honors Thesis. Two faculty members, are needed to advise the student with at least one being from Brown SPH. The other faculty member must have an interest and expertise in the project topic, and will work closely with the student. Honors Thesis Advisors provide mentoring and oversight throughout the project. If a student wants to include an advisor from outside of Brown, the situation and preparation of that faculty member should be discussed with the Director of Undergraduate Studies. One faculty member, acting as the primary advisor, will provide the majority of direction and oversight. That person will oversee the student's independent study via PHP 1980 during the two semesters of their thesis work. Both the primary advisor and the secondary advisor must approve the thesis as being of Honors quality in order for the student to graduate with Honors. The student must also make a public presentation of the thesis, as noted below.

In addition to two semesters of PHP1980 (thesis independent study), the student must successfully complete 12 courses for the Public Health concentration including PHP 1915, Senior Seminar. **The student must achieve a balance of A's over B's**, and be in Good Academic Standing as defined by university rules. This must be the case when the student applies to the honors program, and must be maintained throughout their senior year.

## ***(B) Types of Honor Projects***

There are several types of projects that can qualify for Honors Thesis. **Regardless of type, all projects should be based on one or more empirical and/or policy-related research questions, which are also grounded in a conceptual framework that guides the project.** Among the possible types of projects are:

- Primary data collection by the student. Collected data can be quantitative (e.g., a survey research project) or qualitative (e.g., as in an ethnographic study) in which open-ended interviews are conducted. Submission of an [IRB protocol](#) is likely for primary data collection. See below for more details on IRB. **\*\* Note\*\*** Primary data collection cannot occur before approval of the honors thesis prospectus.
- Secondary data analysis, in which the student answers original research questions based on quantitative data or qualitative data already collected by other researchers (e.g., government data, data collected by the student's advisor, etc.);
- Policy analysis, which may consist of a combination of a review of existing literature, government documents, interviews with key informants and/or government officials, etc. • Program-based thesis, in which the student participates in the development or evaluation of a program, and "carves out" a piece of the project for a thesis. This might be characterized as the implementation or evaluation of a program.
- Literature review, which may take the form of a traditional narrative review describing the state of science on a particular topic. This form requires substantial input from advisors regarding the scope, search terms and writing style (e.g. synthesis or annotated bibliography). A literature review may also be a more structured review, which examines literature using well-described methods to answer a specific research question, but which also requires significant support.

**All students are expected to complete the basic [CITI Online Training](#) in human subjects during their first semester of PHP1980.** Students should complete the training as early in the first semester of PHP 1980 as possible if not earlier. Upon completion or entering the honors program, students must email their certificate of completion to the Director of Undergraduate Studies ([patricia\\_risica@brown.edu](mailto:patricia_risica@brown.edu) cc: [kira\\_philips@brown.edu](mailto:kira_philips@brown.edu)) . Completion of CITI online training is required regardless of the need for IRB approval for the thesis work.

**Note:** The IRB does not consider some student projects that handle researching human subjects appropriate for IRB review. If your project deals with human subjects, you will need to meet with your advisor and consult the IRB to discuss the details of your project and determine whether an IRB application is necessary or consult with Dr. Risica to talk about the best practices.

## ***(C) Honors Topic***

The topic of the Honors Thesis is often based on prior coursework or projects in an area of interest to the student. While it is desirable to build on previous work, **the Honors Thesis must represent new work.** A student may also derive their thesis from their advisor's or other faculty member's project, **but it is imperative that the student carve out his/her own research question from the larger project.**

### ***(D) Thesis Format and Length***

**There is no single required format for the thesis.** However, most are prepared in a format similar to that of a book (e.g., with chapters) or in a format similar to a paper prepared for publication in a research journal (e.g., with distinct sections including Introduction, Methods,

Results, and Discussion). Often the nature of the project determines the format of the thesis. The format of the thesis should be agreed upon in advance by the student and advisors.

Book format theses are typically 50 pages or longer in length and research paper format theses typically 25-35 pages in length. Note that the stated length is not a requirement. It is up to the advisor to determine if a student has successfully completed the planned objective of the thesis regardless of the length. Substance matters more than length.

### ***(E) Timeframe***

The program hosts one or more Junior Honors meetings during Fall Semester for any junior concentrator considering the Honors track. Students are encouraged to attend this meeting. If attendance is not possible, it is highly recommended that students begin meeting with their PH academic advisor and/or the Director of Undergraduate Studies at that time.

Students are required to submit a proposal of the Honors project signed by an identified primary advisor. A template for the prospectus can be found **here**. Due dates for a honors proposal are listed above for both May and December graduates. The second advisor must also be named on the prospectus, although a signature is not required. It should be noted that students cannot substantially change the topic or methods of the project as it is described in the approved prospectus, unless approval is obtained from the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

### ***(F) Advising***

The role of the advisors is to mentor the student throughout the entire thesis process, including the design and implementation of the project, and not merely oversee the writing of a thesis based on already-collected data. Students who plan to spend the second semester of their junior year abroad should identify a topic and their primary and secondary advisors before they leave. Students may not conduct research while abroad unless the project is approved as a thesis prior to departure. Students may not conduct research then try to find a faculty member who will accept the project.

Typically, both the primary and secondary advisors are members of the Brown faculty, and at least one must also be a faculty member of the School of Public Health (SPH). At least one Brown SPH faculty member usually serves in the role of primary advisor and oversees the PHP 1980 independent study. Exceptions are sometimes allowable, with permission, but all deviations from this norm must be approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

The primary advisor is typically the individual who most directly mentors the student through the process of developing and completing the Honors Thesis. It is the primary advisor's responsibility to assist the student in: 1) defining the project, 2) setting deadlines for task completion, 3) monitoring the student's progress throughout the course of the project period,

and 4) assigning grades for both semesters of PHP1980 (see Section (G) below for more details). A grade of INC will disqualify the student from Honors. (See the Honors Thesis Advisor Handbook for details.)

The role of the second 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 second advisor should be clear and agreed upon in advance by both the primary and secondary advisor, and should be clear to the student as well.

### ***(G) Planning and Scheduling Thesis Work***

It is highly recommended that students and advisors document early in the first semester of thesis work (Fall Semester for Spring graduation) a work plan, including the terms of the Honors Thesis completion. Students and their advisors establish “deliverables” with target dates for all major tasks involved in implementing the project and writing the thesis. Students then meet with the advisor regularly to review progress on those tasks and the planned timeline. Students must receive grades for both semesters, but the balance of these tasks between semesters is determined by the student and advisor(s). A grade of incomplete (INC) is not allowed. Though changes in the plan can (often) occur, documentation of this planning and agreed timeline will avoid a common tendency toward misunderstanding and / or procrastination in the absence of deadlines.

All Honors students will register for PHP1980 as an independent study with their thesis advisor for two semesters, typically fall and spring of their Senior year. Students who are struggling with quantity and/or quality of thesis work during the first semester of PHP 1980 will be given feedback from their primary advisor, which will be reflected in the PHP 1980 grade. Students who choose to not complete their thesis or do not complete a Honors worthy thesis may still graduate, but without the honors distinction. The Director of Undergraduate Studies should be made aware of any student or advisor concerns as soon as possible.

PHP1980 is also an approved Writing-Designated (WRIT) course, therefore, during the first semester (Fall if graduating in May) must meet the following objectives. Thesis advisors must:

- require at least two written assignments of any length and in any language; • provide students with substantive feedback on each writing assignment (for example, students may draft and revise a written assignment or may simply be able to apply feedback on their writing to later assignments); and
- provide instruction, feedback, and guidance in either disciplinary or academic writing conventions.

As written feedback on drafts is the primary criterion for the designation and students must satisfy the writing requirement by the end of the 7th (or penultimate) semester, advisors must ensure that students undergo adequate writing and revision based on substantive feedback in the first of their two semesters of PHP1980. 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 scanned written feedback submitted as a PDF, etc. **Two written assignments with feedback must be submitted to the Director of Undergraduate Studies ([patricia\\_risica@brown.edu](mailto:patricia_risica@brown.edu) cc [kira\\_philips@brown.edu](mailto:kira_philips@brown.edu)) by the end of the student's seventh semester.**

### ***(H) Departmental Deadlines and Presenting***

All students must present their thesis to the public. Students graduating in May have two possible Brown-specific venues for presenting their thesis. They may either present their work orally to an audience of faculty and their peers, or they may choose to present via poster, which would be submitted for presentation at Public Health Research Day in early-April (scheduled during [National Public Health Week](#)). Oral presentations are generally scheduled in mid to late April, for May graduates. For students graduating in December, the oral presentation occurs in November. Since Research Day is in April, this option for presentation is not available to December graduates. Student may also choose to present their work at another scientific conference including a Rhode Island Public Health Association event, but should be confirmed with the thesis advisors and Director of Undergraduate Studies.

Students must plan to submit a full draft of their thesis to both advisors with time (approved by advisors) for feedback and revisions before submission of the thesis. Revisions to the thesis may also be required based on the comments and suggestions of the audience and advisors. The final copy of the thesis, with a Public Health Honors Thesis cover page (see attached template) signed by both advisors, is due to the Department according to the above deadlines ([patricia\\_risica@brown.edu](mailto:patricia_risica@brown.edu) cc [kira\\_philips@brown.edu](mailto:kira_philips@brown.edu)). Advisors may also want a hard copy of the final thesis so students should inquire accordingly.

Honors Thesis Title

by

Student Name

Date Submitted, 2025

Honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduating with the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors in the Public Health Concentration, School of Public Health, at Brown University

(signature of primary advisor)  
(Primary Advisor's Name Typed)  
Primary Advisor

(signature of secondary advisor)  
(Secondary Advisor's Name typed)  
Secondary Advisor