

Honors Criteria

The “H” suffix is intended to advise students that a course provides honors content of significant difficulty and requires honors effort from students. An “H” suffix appearing on student transcripts is also meant to convey these facts. While the term “honors course” does not have a single, strict definition, the term is used with this common understanding within U.S. undergraduate education (and specifically among the UO’s fellow member institutions in the National Collegiate Honors Council and the Western Regional Honors Council).

Honors classes are expected to be distinctly and substantively different from corollaries in the regular curriculum. The Committee on Courses will look for a student experience that is deeper and more intense than what is provided in conventional classes. Considerations will include suitability for students, class size, structure of the class, faculty-to-student ratio, location in the curriculum, and increased availability of faculty members for feedback, counseling, and mentoring.

The Committee on Courses has discussed the criteria for including an “H” suffix in a course number and applies the following:

Preparedness. The academic skills needed to successfully participate are expected to be different for honors courses. Prerequisites should spell out specialized background skills (e.g., mathematics abilities, language fluency), or necessary experience or achievement (e.g., participation in an honors program, a cumulative GPA of at least 3.30 in their major). Include justification for the exclusion of nonhonors students.

Content. Content of the class, and the level of analysis, should be significantly deeper than for nonhonors classes (e.g., use of primary sources rather than texts, participation in modeling or simulation exercises, elaborating the subject in broader context or within more comprehensive theory). Please manifest this contrast in the proposal by explicit comparisons and examples.

Class size. Classes should be small enough to promote intensive student participation. The committee expects that lectures or colloquia will be smaller than twenty students; larger lectures may be suitable if smaller discussion or lab sections of twelve or fewer students facilitate direct interaction with the faculty and other students. Other class sizes will be considered only if it is demonstrated that other factors (e.g., a cohesive student cohort, multiple instructors present in the classroom) insure the continued, active participation of all students.

Mentoring. The faculty member(s) teaching the course should be available for close advising outside of class. Instruction tailored to individual students or groups is encouraged.

Faculty. Honors classes are taught by faculty members with doctorates or other terminal degrees in their fields. Other instructors, assistants, or course visitors may only be used to accompany these principal faculty instructors in class. Proposals should identify faculty members available to teach, and explain why the course and the faculty members are a good match.

Monitoring. Honors courses are resource intensive. They can evolve as student and faculty interests change. Proposals should identify how colleges, departments, or units will monitor the continuing suitability of the course for meeting student needs and its place in the curriculum.

Articulation. Proposals should explain how the course connects to the rest of the curriculum and why the course is not suitable as a more advanced course (e.g., upper division vs. lower division) instead. Proposals should include the typical curricular paths of students eligible for this class. Proposals should include what course equivalencies are appropriate and what articulation agreements are needed.

Implementation. An honors course will be given a unique three digit course number and an “H” suffix. Because of limitations, a multilisted course designated by an “M” may not carry an “H.” Generic course numbers, designating courses that are not reviewed, will not carry “H” suffixes. Student credit hours will be assigned as is done with regular courses.