Senior Thesis Projects
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What is the Senior Thesis Project?

Students will complete a Senior Project in the Major mostly likely during the last two semesters of their program. The first semester includes research and preparation. The second semester includes completion of the work and presentation at the Ramapo College Honors Symposium and one outside conference if possible. Each student will select his/her own Faculty Sponsor who will guide the work. The student and Sponsor will also select two additional faculty Readers whose expertise is complementary to the Project. Students should consult with the Director during his/her Junior year in order to discuss student selection of a Faculty Sponsor and the project proposal.

What is required for an Honors Project in the Major?

The goal of the project is developing in students the recognition of the value of intellectual mentorship and collaboration and the experience of initiating their own research or experiential work. Students have the opportunity to critically share their work and produce work of publishable quality. Ideally, students would have been narrowing and defining their project ideas within the curriculum and mentoring of the Program, as well as integrating ideas with their major and/or minor studies. You will determine at the beginning of your project what the scope of it should be. While we do not have exact minimum requirements for most projects, papers should be 20 pages or more. Projects of other types should be of a similar size and scope.

What are Faculty Sponsors and Readers?

For completion of the Senior Project in the Major, one Sponsor and two additional Readers are required to assist in mentoring the work of each student. The student selects his or her Reader in consultation with the Director. The Readers are selected by the Faculty Sponsor and student in consultation. Often these Readers provide competence in disciplines outside the field of the Faculty Sponsor but related to the work of the student, especially in the case of double majors or minors. Do not choose a sponsor or reader if they are going on sabbatical at any time during your senior year.

What forms do I need to supplement my Senior Project?

Over the course of your college career, you should be consistently meeting certain goals in order to ensure that you are on the correct path toward completion of your Senior Thesis Project. Accompanying these goals are several forms that must be submitted by strict deadlines. They are the Senior Thesis Idea Form (due at the Senior Thesis Info Session), the Senior Thesis Proposal Form (due by May 1st of the Junior Year) and the Senior Thesis Completion Form (due by the Monday after Spring Break of the Senior Year).

Can my project count as an Independent Study?

Yes. In order for your project to count as an Independent Study, you’ll need to fill out an extra form (Contract for Honors Independent Study) to turn in to us as well as complete the Independent Study process through the College. The Independent Study Registration Form has a hard deadline in September of each year and should be turned into the Registrar’s office. You’ll also need to follow their guidelines and fill out the RCNJ Independent Study Contract. Additional information can be found on the Registrar’s website.
Am I eligible to begin a Senior Thesis Project?

The Honors Program will look at your GPA and the number of Honors courses you have completed by the end of your Junior year. If you are not on pace to complete all of the Honors courses and/or do not have a 3.0 by this time, you will not be permitted to begin a project and you will be dropped from the Honors Program.

What are the project deadlines?

May 1st - The Thesis Proposal Form is due on May 1st of the year before you intend to conduct your research. It must be signed by three faculty members.

December 1st - We will check in on the status of your project with your sponsor. If your sponsor tells us that they have not met with you regularly or have not seen any work or research, we will meet with you to discuss discontinuing your project.

Mid-March - All work must be completed and signed off by your sponsor and readers by the Monday after Spring Break. If you are completing a poster, you must submit it to honors@ramapo.edu for printing by this date.

How often should I meet with my sponsor and readers?

You should be meeting with your advisors at a minimum of once per month throughout your senior year. Your sponsor should be guiding you throughout your research along the entire way. Your readers should not only read your project upon its completion, but they should be reading and critiquing your work on a monthly basis.

Who has the final say on whether my project has been approved?

Your sponsor and readers must sign off on your project in order for you to present at the Symposium and ultimately graduate with Honors. It is the student’s job to ensure that they are on the same page with their advisors regarding the initial goals and criteria of the project.

Can I complete my Senior Thesis Project during my Junior year?

While most students do their projects Senior year, we accept them Junior year as well. Additionally, if you begin the project Junior year and decide midway that you would benefit from additional time, you can postpone it until your Senior year without penalty.

Can I do my research during the summer before my Senior year?

Yes, this is greatly encouraged. The Spring semester of Senior year is often the busiest. Students who complete most or all of their work toward the Senior Thesis Project prior to the start of their final semester experience much less stress and have much more time to apply for jobs and/or graduate school.

Where can I find templates and examples of past presentations?

The Honors Luminis Group contains templates and past poster examples. If you log into Luminis, click on groups, click on Honors Students, and then click on files, you can download all of these materials.
What are the requirements for a poster presentation?

Those of you presenting posters, your poster will be there when you arrive on an easel. There will be a period of one hour where you are expected to stand beside your poster and answer questions for the audience who will approach you intermittently. You are welcome to walk away for bathroom breaks or to get a drink, but please eat before or after this portion of the event.

It should be created as a 36x48 document in Publisher or PowerPoint and include both the Ramapo Honors logo and the Ramapo College logo. It should also be approved by your Sponsor prior to submission.

What are the requirements for an oral presentation?

Oral presenters have 7-8 minutes per presentation. PowerPoints are encouraged but not required. You should not read directly from a paper or PowerPoint, you should present the information in a clear and concise manner directly to the audience. A student in the back of the room will hold up cards counting down from three minutes until you are out of time. If you start to go well over time, you will be cut off, so please rehearse your presentation so that it can be comprehensively covered in the time allotted. Even a great presentation will look bad if it has to be cut short.

When do you need my final project title?

We will ask you to complete a questionnaire in January requesting the abstract, project title, and a short bio. All of these will be printed in the program. If any of these should change, you can let us know before the final research deadline and we can make the changes before printing.

What if my project changes after submitting the Proposal Form?

You should speak with your sponsor and readers to correct the goals and criteria of your project. This should be documented in writing either via email or on paper with their signature so that there is no confusion regarding your end results and expectations.

Can I change my sponsor or readers?

In certain circumstances, your sponsor or readers can be changed. You should meet with us first to discuss why this is necessary. Do not choose a sponsor or reader if they are going on sabbatical at any time during your senior year.

What if my Sponsor or Readers fail to communicate with me?

You should choose advisors that you have a good relationship with. However, should any communication issues arise or if you find it difficult to meet with them, you should inform us immediately.

What is the schedule of the Symposium?

The Symposium is typically on the first Wednesday in April from 2:30-6:00 pm. We have a brief introduction followed by oral presentations from 2:30-3:30. We then break for an hour so our guests can eat while the poster presenters stand by their posters from 3:30-4:30. The remainder of the oral presentations take place from 4:30-5:30. We conclude with the Regalia Ceremony from 5:30-6:00.
What if I cannot attend the Symposium?

The Symposium should only be missed if you have class or an internship that you are required to attend. If you cannot attend, you will have to create a poster that we can display in your absence.

What is expected of me on the day of the Symposium?

On the day of the Symposium, you should arrive ahead of time with your PowerPoint and drag it to the desktop of the Pavilion computer with your name in the title. The Director will open the event with some opening remarks, then the Executive Board will speak, and then we’ll move immediately into the first half of presentations.

What is the regalia ceremony?

The Regalia ceremony is the presentation of your medal, graduate cords, and Honors Graduation Certificate. The cords and medal are provided to you for free and they will be there at the Symposium, so you don’t need to pick them up ahead of time. After the final presentations, there will be a five minute intermission where we’ll get set up for the ceremony. You will line up in the order in which you presented in front of the stage toward the right. The Director will put your medal and regalia over your head, and you will pose for a picture. You will then be handed your certificate by your Sponsor if they are there. If they are not and one of your Readers is, they can do this. Please approach the Sponsor or Reader ahead of time and let them know that they will be the one handing you the certificate. You will pose for a picture with them as well.

After receiving all three items, you will stand off to the side of the stage until the ceremony is over. We will then pose for a group picture before you are dismissed.

Is there a dress code at the Symposium?

You should dress professionally as you will be presenting to faculty and administrators from across campus.

Does completion of my Senior Thesis Project appear on my graduation transcript?

Your graduation transcript will show that you completed a Senior Thesis Project and that you graduated with Honors. The transcript does not include the title of your project. Your diploma will show that you were an Honors graduate as well.