What are the benefits of doing an Honours essay?

- You are given the opportunity to work under the individual guidance and supervision of an English professor.
- You are given the opportunity to receive comments and criticism from a second English professor who is appointed as second reader for the completed essay.
- Your work on the Honours essay is excellent preparation for graduate school and for postgraduate education in many fields. Your work becomes part of the scholarly collection of the Centre for Newfoundland Studies and the Department of English.

How is the Honours essay graded?

Once the final copies have been submitted to the supervisor and the Manager of Academic Programs, the second reader is appointed. The second reader and the supervisor both prepare a brief report which may contain general comments, recommendations, specific instructions, etc., and a grade. These reports are sent to the MAP and a final grade is agreed upon.

The passing grade for an Honours essay is 70%.

Who selects the second reader?

The Head of the Department, in consultation with the supervisor and the Manager of Academic Programs, selects the second reader.

The Honours Essay

English 4999 is a one semester course. All Honours students are expected to complete the essay by the end of the semester in which they are registered for this course. Therefore, you should enter this semester fully prepared to proceed with the projected essay. You should have discussed your plans with the Head of the Department before the end of the preceding semester and should schedule a preliminary meeting with the faculty member assigned as your supervisor by the Head of the English Department.

For more information

Memorial University English Department, AA
709-864-8277 (phone); 709-864-4528 (fax)
english@mun.ca/www.mun.ca/english
Some tips:

Students usually register for English 4999 in the final year of their Honours program.

Students cannot register electronically for English 4999.

The Head of the English Department signs students into English 4999; supervisors do not do so.

Students are strongly advised to determine what they would like to research well ahead of the semester in which they are registered for English 4999. The topic can be virtually anything in the field of English literature or language on which the student is interested in working in depth and for which a supervisor can be found. Perusal of the collection of Honours essays in the Centre for Newfoundland Studies (QE II Library) and in the Department will provide some idea of the range of topics students have investigated.

Once you have the beginning of an idea for something you might like to explore, arrange an appointment with the Head of the Department.

Discuss possible supervisors with the Head of the English Department, who will approach Faculty in a more formal manner on your behalf and arrange for your official supervisor.

Meet with your official supervisor to begin the process of narrowing your topic to a workable scale.

Good luck and enjoy writing your Honours Essay!

What exactly is an Honours essay?

An Honours essay is an examination of an approved research topic in depth. It is usually between 10,000 and 12,000 words in length, although the length is determined to a great extent by the topic. The essay is examined on quality as well as quantity of work.

The Honours essay is written with the guidance of a faculty supervisor, but the student is responsible for the quality and thoroughness of the work. The essay demonstrates the student’s ability to:

- use appropriate methods of research, organization and analysis;
- define a manageable research topic in English literature or language;
- comprehend and synthesize existing theoretical and critical material relevant to the topic;
- present the findings of his/her research in a logical and comprehensible manner, free of mechanical errors.

Your proposal is a brief exploration of your topic with clarification as to process. It should include:

- a clearly articulated research question;
- scope and objectives;
- relationship of research to existing literature on the subject;
- preliminary list of sources and methods of research;
- proposed schedule for completing the essay.

Once your supervisor has approved your proposal, send a copy to the Manager of Academic Programs. You can consult sample proposals in the MAP’s office.

When should the proposal be submitted?

Ideally, the proposal should be sent to the Manager of Academic Programs by the end of the second week of the semester in which you are registered for English 4999.

Format:

The basic rules for the preparation of manuscripts in English are set forth in detail in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. You should use the latest edition.

The Honours essay should be typed on 8 x 11 paper, one side only, double spaced throughout, with one inch margins on all sides. The pages should be numbered on the top right with a simple Arabic number.

The appropriate order of presentation is: title page, body of paper, endnotes, works cited.

The general rule in using MLA guidelines is to double space text, endnotes, bibliography and set-down quotations. Always discuss appropriate formatting with your supervisor.

A suggested schedule:

WK 1: Finalize proposal. (You should have been working on this during the break between semesters.)

WK 2: Submit completed proposal to your supervisor and the Manager of Academic Programs.

WK 4: Arrange for the first drafting session with your supervisor.

WK 6: Arrange for the second drafting session with your supervisor.

WK 8: Arrange for the third drafting session with your supervisor.

WK 10: Submit your final draft to your supervisor.

WKS 10-12: Complete final revisions and give the completed essay to your supervisor. Be sure to submit a copy of your essay to the Manager of Academic Programs, who will send it to the second reader.

WKS 12-13: After receiving comments from the second reader, undertake revisions and final corrections and submit your final copy.

Submit the final copy to the Manager of Academic Programs and sign the release form so that a bound copy of your essay can be placed in the Library. This is in accordance with Regulations for the Honours Degree of Bachelor of Arts, (Arts Regulations 4.3.3.2b, MUN Calendar.)