

To: Hedley Freake, Senate C&C Committee (SC&CC), Chair

From: Lynne Goodstein, Honors Board of Associate Directors (HBAD), Chair

Date: September 17, 2010

Re: New Proposals for Honors Courses with General Education Content Area Designations

Following the meeting on April 6, 2010 with Eric Schultz (then chair of Senate C&C Committee), members of the General Education Oversight Committee (GEOC) (Katharina von Hammerstein MCL and Murphy Sewall MKTG), and members of HBAD (Rachel O'Neill MCB; Jonathan Hufstader ENGL; Eric Rice MUSIC; Del Siegle EPSY; Margaret Lamb; and me), the policy statement below was discussed by HBAD at its meeting on April 16. This memo was approved by HBAD at its meeting on May 21. Minutes of that meeting were approved today, September 17, 2010.

Background.

The UConn Honors Program curriculum for Sophomore Honors recognizes that during their first two years of study Honors students balance exploration of new subjects and intellectual interests with planned study toward the completion of one or more majors and a general education plan of study. Honors courses in the first two years of study are therefore designed to be either (pre-) major courses or general education courses. The three-credit Honors interdisciplinary core courses represent a subset of Honors courses intended for first and second year students; such courses are distinctive in their explicit design to expose students to the connection of knowledge across disciplines. HBAD approves the designation of courses as "Honors interdisciplinary core courses."

In discussions prompted by faculty, SC&CC and GEOC have recognized a tension between the intended principle of course openness in general education and Honors general education courses intended primarily for students in the Honors Program. The policy outlined below is designed to provide a greater measure of reconciliation between the general education principle of course openness in general education and guiding purpose of the Honors Program to provide accelerated and challenging learning opportunities to high achieving students.

Policy

New honors course proposals for which general education content area designations are sought will fall into one of the following categories with associated statements made about which students might enroll:

- **Alternating model.** The new general education course proposed will alternate between an honors version and a non-honors version. The catalog description will not mention honors. An honors version of the course will be scheduled with "honors grading basis" and may be listed with a 100% honors reserve cap (with a note that the course is "open to students in the Honors Program and by instructor permission"). [Appendix, Honors course Type IV, Type V]
- **Same semester model.** The new general education course proposed will offer in the same semester both honors and non-honors versions of the course. The catalog description will not mention honors. An honors version of the course will be scheduled with "honors grading basis" and may be listed with a 100% honors reserve cap (with a note that the course is "open to students in the Honors Program and by instructor permission"). While the Honors Program has a strong preference for new proposals for a whole course to be taught in honors format (e.g. lecture, discussion, *and* lab), there may be circumstances in which only one course element (e.g. a discussion section or lab section) is taught in honors format.

[Appendix, Honors course Type II, Type III, Type V]

- **Stand-alone model.** The new general education course proposed has been designed explicitly for delivery to a group of students in the Honors Program or similarly equipped to take a course in which course content is accelerated and course expectations (e.g. for engagement, reading, assessed work) are consistent with honors grading. The catalog entry will include “honors” (or, if relevant, “honors core”) in the title or description. In the catalog and scheduling notes the course will be “recommended for [first-year and sophomore] students in the Honors Program; open to all” to signal to non-honors students that they may take the honors course. The course will be scheduled with “honors grading basis.”

[Appendix, Honors course Type VII]

HBAD and Honors Program staff will work to ensure that faculty associated with new honors course proposals and their departments are aware of general education and other guidelines that may shape the details of a new course proposal. It is, however, the department that has the responsibility to schedule and staff its courses, including honors courses. For example, therefore, HBAD and Honors Program staff will make clear that Senate committees expect there to be a strict alternation between honors and non-honors format for a course proposal that adopts the “alternating model;” it will be the responsibility of the department(s) in question to implement the strict rotation.

Note:

This memo was ratified by Senate C&CC in October 2010.

Appendix: Types of Honors Courses – Amended to reflect the new policy on new proposals for Honors Courses

Following is a list of all types of honors courses at UConn. No catalog changes are required for courses that already exist. New honors course proposals, however, will be expected to adopt the **suggested catalog language and scheduling notes** indicated by type below:

I. Honors conversions.

Honors students enroll in non-honors classes and contract with instructors to perform additional, higher-level work and to meet on a regular basis with the instructor to discuss this work. Conversions may be done individually or as a member of a small group of honors students (“group conversions”). Only Honors Program students who complete conversions earn honors credit; an honors conversion is not an option for a student who has not been admitted to the Honors Program.

- Zero percent of official contact hours is taught as “honors.”
- Honors conversions are entirely at the discretion of the instructor; there is no mention of the possibility of honors conversion in catalog copy.
- Only students completing the extra work for the honors conversion obtain “honors credit” provided they pass the course with a letter grade of B- or better.

II. Honors discussion or laboratory sections (usually one hour per week) attached to non-honors lectures.

Students attend the non-honors lecture but attend an honors-only discussion or lab section (e.g. PSYC 1100 and 1101, General Psychology I and II; FREN 1171 French Cinema). When students sign up for the honors section, they are automatically enrolled in the regular lecture. Only students who are enrolled in the honors discussion or lab section earn honors credit.

- Approximately 30% of official contact hours (the discussion) is taught as “honors.”
- There is no mention of the possibility of an honors discussion or laboratory section in catalog copy, but it is clearly indicated in PeopleSoft and the class schedule. **Scheduling note says: “Open to students in the Honors Program and by instructor permission” to signal to non-honors students that they may be able to gain admission to the honors course.**
- All students taking the honors course or section obtain “honors credit” provided they pass the course with a letter grade of B- or better.

III. Freestanding honors sections with the same course title and number as non-honors classes offered in the same semester.

Students attend a freestanding honors class in which the number of the class is the same as the non-honors version and the catalog description of the class does not stipulate “honors.” The honors classes tend to be smaller than the non-honors version. The honors classes are restricted to honors students or non-honors students with instructor permission. The class is scheduled with an “honors reserve cap” and an “honors grading basis” by the Registrar (e.g. this fall, SOCI 1001W Introduction to Sociology, and SOCI 1251 Social Problems).

- 100% of official contact hours is taught as “honors.” Non-honors versions of these classes are offered during the same semesters as the honors sections.
- There is no mention of the possibility of an honors section in catalog copy, but it is clearly indicated in PeopleSoft and the class schedule. **Scheduling note says: “Open to students in the Honors Program and by instructor permission” to signal to non-honors students that they may be able to gain admission to the honors course.**
- All students taking the honors course or section obtain “honors credit” provided they pass the course with a letter grade of B- or better.

IV. Freestanding honors sections with the same course title and number as non-honors classes offered in different semesters.

It is also possible that non-honors sections of the classes would alternate by semester or year with the offering of honors sections (e.g. ANTH 1001W Anthropology Through Film, Fall 2008 and Spring 2010 (Honors); POLS 3208W Politics of Oil, Spring 2009 and Spring 2010 (Honors); and SOCI 3823 Sociology of Law, Fall 2009 (Honors) and Spring 2010). In other respects, these classes operate like Category III above.

- 100% of official contact hours is taught as “honors.” Non-honors versions of these classes are offered during a different semesters as the honors sections.
- There is no mention of the possibility of an honors section in catalog copy, but it is clearly indicated in PeopleSoft and the class schedule. Scheduling note says: “Open to students in the Honors Program and by instructor permission” to signal to non-honors students that they may be able to gain admission to the honors course.
- All students taking the honors course or section obtain “honors credit” provided they pass the course with a letter grade of B- or better.

V. Classes with specialized numbers and course descriptions that refer to “honors” for which there is a non-honors equivalent.

These courses are alternatives to non-honors classes that cover similar content. The honors courses incorporate more rigorous curricula and other elements of honors teaching (e.g. CHEM 1147Q and 1148Q, Honors General Chemistry, offered as alternatives to CHEM 1127Q and 1128Q; ENGL 3800, Honors I: Approaches to Literature, offered as an alternative to freshman composition classes ENGL 1010 and 1011). For the examples cited, the honors course and non-honors alternative are offered in the same semester. Hypothetically, the honors course and non-honors alternative could be offered in different semesters.

- 100% of official contact hours is taught as “honors.”
- Honors may be included in the catalog title.
- Catalog copy includes the note: “Open to students in the Honors Program and by instructor permission” to signal to non-honors students that they may be able to gain admission to the honors course.
- All students taking the honors course obtain “honors credit” provided they pass the course with a letter grade of B- or better.

VI. General education includes not just the content areas, but also the competencies Q and W. There are a number of courses that are listed as honors only that fulfill W and Q requirements, including: ENGL 3801W and 3803W, Honors II and III: American Literature; ENGL 3805, 3807, 3809, and 3811 (all W’s), Honors IV, V, VI and VII: English Literature; MATH 2130Q, Honors Multivariable Calculus; and MATH 2420Q, Honors Differential Equations.

These classes tend to be smaller and may serve high achieving students in or exploring particular majors. Honors reserve caps may apply when the same or equivalent course is offered; otherwise, instructors should consider how they would indicate to high achieving students outside the Honors Program how access to the course could be obtained. The classes are scheduled with an “honors grading basis” by the Registrar.

- 100% of official contact hours is taught as “honors.”
- Honors may be included in the catalog title.
- Catalog copy includes a note to indicate the intended students for the course as well as how non-honors students may be able to gain admission. For example, courses may indicate they are “recommended for students in the Honors Program but also open to other qualified students with instructor consent”
- All students taking the honors course or section obtain “honors credit” provided they pass the course with a letter grade of B- or better.

VII. Classes with specialized numbers and course descriptions that refer to “honors” for which there is no non-honors equivalent.

These classes were developed expressly for an honors population. They incorporate content and pedagogy appropriate for the motivation, ambition, and high academic abilities of honors students. They capitalize on the fact that honors students can accelerate their learning and, thus, the classes may incorporate innovative content that goes beyond any one non-honors course (e.g. SCI 1051 Geoscience through American Studies). Some of these classes were designed and designated as “honors interdisciplinary core courses.” These classes tend to be smaller. The classes are scheduled with an “honors grading basis” by the Registrar.

- 100% of official contact hours is taught as “honors.”
- Honors (or, if relevant, “Honors Core”) may be included in the catalog title.

- Catalog copy includes the note: “Recommended for [first-year and sophomore] students in the Honors Program; open to all” to signal to non-honors students that they may take the honors course. Note: The course would involve honors grading and honors expectations of students.
- There is an expectation that at least 50% of seats in an honors course of this type will be taken up by students in the Honors Program. This expectation would be reinforced by reserving 50% of seats for students in the Honors Program and opening the balance of seats to any student.
- All students taking the honors course obtain “honors credit” provided they pass the course with a letter grade of B- or better.

VIII. The final category of honors-only general education courses includes **W courses students enroll in while writing their honors theses**. There is a long list of these courses; a sample includes: ACCT 4997W, Senior Thesis in Accounting; ANSC 4697W, Undergraduate Honors Thesis Writing in Animal Science; EKIN 3697W, Honors Thesis; ENGL 4897, Honors VIII: Honors Thesis; HIST 4997W, Senior Thesis in History; HDFS 4087W, Honors Thesis, and so on.

- 100% of official contact hours is taught as “honors.”
- Honors may be included in the catalog title.
- Catalog copy includes the note: “Open to students in the Honors Program and by instructor permission” to signal to non-honors students that they may be able to gain admission to the honors course.
- All students taking the honors course obtain “honors credit” provided they pass the course with a letter grade of B- or better.