The Honors Student Handbook was drafted by the 2014-2015 Honors Student Council (Zachary King, President) and Dr. Christensen (Associate Director). The current version of the handbook was approved by:

The Honors Student Council
The Honors Advisory Committee
Honors Director
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Mission Statement

Honors at Radford University is defined by intellectual curiosity and active engagement in the educational process. In turn, these qualities are expected to result in the pursuit of excellence in one’s scholarly and creative activities.

The Honors Academy mission is:

1. To give *recognition* for academic excellence
2. To provide opportunities for more academic *rigor*
3. To foster a *community* of distinction
Honors Curriculum

Members of the Honors Academy pursue the distinction of Highlander Scholar, the highest recognition for graduates of Radford University. To achieve this goal, honors students complete a curriculum of at least 27 honors credit hours. These credit hours typically overlap with the coursework that students would take as part of their overall graduation requirements. The honors section of the Radford University Undergraduate Catalog provides the official curriculum and can vary across catalog years. The current honors curriculum is as follows:

- 6 credits in University Core A honors courses (HNRS 103, HNRS 201, HNRS 202)
  - Of these three courses, HNRS 103 is required of all honors students during their first semester in honors.
- 9 honors credits from the list of courses found in University Core B, College Core A, or College Core B. Unless otherwise approved, credits in this area must come from courses (not contracts in non-honors section). Students are encouraged to spread these honors courses among different areas.
- 9 upper-level honors credits in a combination of:
  - honors contracts in the major
  - independent study (e.g., --- 498) in the major
  - study abroad for academic credit
  - upper-level honors seminars (300-level or higher)
- 3 credit honors capstone project (---- 488). The capstone project must be presented at a scholarly conference or other public venue.
- 3.5 cumulative GPA in all coursework at RU by graduation

Honors Courses

Each fall and spring semester, the Honors Academy offers courses that are limited in size to a maximum of 20 students
(unless noted otherwise), populated by academically mature students, and taught by faculty members dedicated to designing classes in which student engagement is the rule rather than the exception.

Because enrollments are limited, honors courses allow for more student-faculty exchange and are more conducive to collaborative learning. The instructors teaching the courses are highly qualified experts in their field. Honors courses emphasize the development of critical thinking skills and excellence in written and oral communication.

Lower-level honors courses fulfill at least one category of the Core Curriculum requirements. However, always check your major requirements to determine which honors courses fulfill Core Curriculum requirements for your major. Unless otherwise approved, honors credits in the Core Curriculum must be earned in honors courses (not honors contracts).

Two upper-level honors seminars are offered. HNRS 300 is a 1-credit preparation for the honors capstone project. Students would typically take this course 18-24 months prior to their planned graduation. HNRS 310 is an interdisciplinary course with different topics each semester. The goal of this course is for upper-level students from different majors to bring their unique perspectives together on a unifying topic of inquiry.

Honors Contracts

Honors contracts allow students to receive honors credit in what would otherwise be a non-honors class. Honors contracts are only permitted for meeting upper-level requirements in the honors curriculum (unless an exception is approved by the Director). Therefore, honors contracts should only be pursued for 300- or 400-level courses in one’s major. Honors contracts are opportunities for you to tailor major courses to your specific interests and career goals. Although the course instructor must approve your ideas, use the contracts as a chance to do something exciting, creative, and interesting! There are four steps you need to complete when initiating an honors contract.
• In consultation with your academic advisor or an honors faculty fellow, consider which courses might be most appropriate for an honors contract.
• Pick-up an Honors Contract Proposal Form in the Honors Academy office (160 Floyd Hall).
• Meet with the course instructor to discuss if and how the course requirements could be modified to receive honors credit. This meeting should occur within the first week of the semester.
• Return the completed form to the Honors Academy office no later than Friday of the fourth week of the semester.

Throughout the semester, work closely with the professor to ensure that you are meeting the contract’s expectations. At the end of the semester, the Honors Academy office will contact the professor to determine whether you have completed the contract. The Honors Academy office will then notify the registrar to change your transcript so that the course title includes an honors designation.

It is not professional to contract a course and then simply not complete the contract. The professor is providing extra time and mentorship to honors students – please respect their commitment to your education. If you believe that you cannot complete a contract (or need more time), discuss the situation with your professor immediately. If the professor agrees that the contract is no longer feasible, contact the Honors Academy office immediately.

**Study Abroad**

Students will receive upper-level honors credit for any study abroad course that appears on one’s transcript. The course can be led by Radford University faculty or by another accredited university. The study abroad course does not need to be an honors course. Detailed information about study abroad can be found in the RU International Education Center ([http://www.radford.edu/content/international/home.html](http://www.radford.edu/content/international/home.html))
The Honors Capstone

The honors capstone project is a one-semester or two-semester (3 credit hours) culminating experience. The project can be a thesis, a portfolio of creative works, a major research project, a performance, or an exhibit as long as that project is not one that is regularly required by one's major.

The honors capstone project must represent scholarship in the student's particular discipline. Although certainly constituting essential experiences, student activities such as internships, student teaching, and study abroad do not represent scholarship in one's discipline. Therefore these activities cannot constitute one's honors capstone project in and of themselves. However, such settings can provide opportunities that are not available on campus and which might contribute substantially to one's capstone project.

The honors capstone project should be a topic that you find enjoyable. Relate it to your career interests, job prospects, and life goals. It should be something about which you are proud and that excites you! This opportunity to pursue excellence and individual learning stands apart from the typical classroom experience.

There are several steps to complete an honors capstone (all of these steps are completed within the HNRS 300 course).

• Meet with the Director or Associate Director one year before you anticipate graduating. Typically this is spring of junior year. Students who spend senior year away from campus (e.g., student teaching) should have this meeting two years prior to graduation. Typically this is spring of sophomore year.

• Identify a faculty capstone mentor from your major. Meet with him or her several times to outline the goals and methods for the project.

• Complete the necessary paperwork (both available in the Honors Academy office), including:
  o Honors Capstone Proposal Form, which is submitted to the Honors Academy office
  o Honors Capstone 488 course registration form, which is submitted to the Registrar
• Meet with your capstone mentor regularly (weekly) until the project is complete.
• Present your capstone project in public, typically at the RU Forum. Notify the Honors Academy office if you are presenting your capstone elsewhere.
Admission to Honors

Admissions to Honors is space-limited. There are three ways to be eligible for applying to the Honors Academy:

- **Outstanding high school students** will be invited to apply to the Honors Academy if they meet at least two of the following three criteria:
  - 1100 SAT (combined V+Q) or 24 ACT
  - 3.5 high school GPA
  - Top 20% of high school graduation class

- **New freshman** may earn an invitation to apply to the Honors Academy after one semester at Radford University by making at least a 3.5 GPA for that first semester's work. Invitations to apply are sent out by email over winter break. Students apply and, if admitted, begin honors coursework during the spring semester.

- **Transfer students** may apply to join the Honors Academy on a case-by-case basis. Successful applicants typically have qualifications consistent with both the high school (3.5 HS GPA, top-20% class rank, and >1100 SAT) and freshman criteria (>3.5 GPA for all college work). Credits earned at another collegiate honors program can count toward the Radford University honors curriculum. If you are interested in pursuing honors as a transfer student, contact the Honors Academy director (honors@radford.edu).
Honors Privileges

Honors students enhance the intellectual vibrancy of campus life for all members of the Radford University community. In recognition of this contribution, active honors students who maintain academic excellence are afforded certain privileges to facilitate their educational goals. These privileges include:

- Honors Scholarship ($500/semester)
- Priority course registration starting fall of freshman year
- Honors classes capped at 20 students
- Enhanced academic advising and direct faculty mentorship
- Honors housing
- Social and scholarly events for the honors community
- Highlander Scholar designation on your diploma and special regalia at graduation

Maintaining Honors Status

Honors status is a privilege: More students are interested in an honors education than there is space available. This privilege is in place because active honors students elevate the intellectual vibrancy of the entire campus community. A student admitted into the honors program maintains this status by making academic progress, being an active part of the honors community, and representing the honors program with professionalism. Details of each component are described in detail below.

*Academic Progress*

The table below lists the minimum GPA and number of honors credits required to maintain active honors status as students’ progress toward graduation. The goal is that students should more closely approximate the graduation requirements as they get closer to graduation. Because some honors students begin college with numerous transfer credits (AP, dual-enrollment, IB), the academic progress requirements are based on only *credits*
earned at RU. In this way, all freshmen have the same GPA and honors credit requirements regardless of how many transfer credits they brought with them. However, the graduation requirements (described in the Honors Curriculum section) are based on total credit hours and not merely the credits earned at Radford.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credits at Radford (non-transfer)</th>
<th>Radford Cumulative GPA</th>
<th>Honors Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-35</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-50</td>
<td>3.3</td>
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<td>81-95</td>
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<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96-graduation</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the above GPA and honors credit requirements, students are required to take HNRS 103 during their first semester in honors. Students are also required to take either HNRS 201 or HNRS 202. Completing University Core A without one of these two courses indicates that the student is no longer making adequate progress in honors.

**Honors Community Participation**

Honors students strive to cultivate and maintain strong, positive relationships within the Honors Academy, Radford University, and the extended community. Honors students develop interpersonal connections that encourage opportunities for intellectual growth and career advancement. With these goals in mind, honors students are expected to be active participants in the honors community, including:

- Living in the Floyd residence hall during freshman year

1 Athletes and commuter students are exempt from this requirement.
• Meeting with your assigned honors faculty fellow (as requested)
• Participating in some form of honors programming each semester. Most honors programming is open to all students, but some events are targeted at specific audiences. For these targeted events, attendance could be required when advance notice is provided. These types of events include:
  o Honors Move-In Social (new freshmen)
  o Honors Convocation (all honors students)
  o Honors Spring Banquet (graduating seniors)
  o Faculty Fellows programming (if your honors advisor is leading the program you are expected to attend)

Professionalism

Honors students strive to maintain a high level of professionalism in daily interactions with other members of the Radford University community (students, faculty, and staff). In general, honors students have a history of exceeding this goal. Unfortunately, a student who is unable to maintain professional behavior has the potential to damage the reputation of the entire Honors Academy. Therefore, as a community, we all have a responsibility to educate and mentor students to develop professional behavior.

From the outset, admitted honors students are assumed to be professional adults and begin with score of 100 points. Indeed, most honors students will never have the score drop below this level. The Director can be notified of unprofessional behavior by any member of the university community. When notified, the Director will meet with the student to discuss the situation, mentor the student, develop remedies (if possible), and document any consequences. Unprofessional behaviors can result in the loss of points and, if extensive or prolonged enough, the loss of honors status. Loss of professionalism points is at the discretion of the Director, ranging from minor (repeated missed meetings) to major
(university violations). Honors students who have their professionalism score drop below 90 are no longer considered as meeting the expectations of an honors student.

Students can earn back professionalism points. Points can be awarded – at the discretion of the Director – for engaging in service activities, attending extra honors events, or being otherwise meritorious. Furthermore, every fall or spring semester in which an enrolled student has no incidents will result in the return of five professionalism points.

Levels of Honors Status

Honors status is evaluated by the Director following the fall, spring, and final summer semester. Students who are meeting all expectations for academic progress, honors community participation, and professionalism are considered as having “active honors status.” Active honors students are entitled to all honors privileges.

Following the first semester that an honors student fails to meet the required standards for academic progress, honors community participation, or professionalism, he or she is considered as having “probationary inactive honors status.” The student will be notified of the change in status and is required to meet with the Director or Associate Director to develop a plan for regaining active status. Assuming that a plan can be put in place, the student retains all honors privileges except priority registration.

If an acceptable plan cannot be put in place, or if the student is on probationary status for two consecutive semesters, the student will be considered as having “inactive honors status.” The student will be notified of this change in status. Inactive honors students who wish to regain their active status must meet with the Director to confirm their change in status. Although students with ongoing inactive status will no longer receive priority registration or the honors scholarship, we welcome these students to continue as part of the honors community. As such, students on inactive status may still take advantage of honors advising, may take honors classes, and will continue to be invited to honors events.
Students who no longer wish to participate in the honors community can request to have their honors status “dropped” at any time. These students forego all honors privileges. Students with a conduct violation that results in an academic grade penalty or university suspension can have their honors status dropped by the Director.
Exceptions to Honors Requirements

Because every student’s educational trajectory is somewhat different, the requirements to be an active honors student might not apply in all cases. Students can petition for an exception to the honors requirements using the following procedures:

1. Request a meeting with the Director to discuss the request. The student should make sure that he or she has a clear understanding of the requirement and its purpose.

2. If, after meeting with the Director, the student believes an exception is appropriate, then a petition is submitted. The petition should be formal request sent via email to the Director. The petition should include the specific requirement as outlined in this handbook, whether a deferment or exemption is requested, and any justification for the request. The Director is expected to reach a decision within two weeks and notify the student via email.

3. If the petition is denied, the student may appeal the Director’s decision to an honors appeals committee. The student must notify the Director of an appeal within two weeks of the Director’s decision. The honors appeals committee will include the Director, two honors faculty fellows (one of whom chairs the meeting), and two members of Honors Student Council. The appeals committee should meet with the student within two weeks of the appeal request, at which time the student provides the specific requirement, whether a deferment or exemption is requested, and any justification for the request. Once the committee and the student have discussed the request, the committee is expected to reach a decision within two weeks and notify the student via email.

Some honors requirements are not petitionable. Non-petitionable requirements include the graduation requirements for total honors credit hours (27), the honors capstone, and GPA (3.5 or higher).
Honors Academy Organizations

Honors Academy Student Organization (HASO)

HASO provides social and service opportunities to all active honors students. HASO is led by the honors student liaisons, who serve as co-presidents. The liaisons are selected by the Director and Associate Director to serve for an academic year. In addition to leading HASO, the liaisons represent the Honors Academy at a variety of campus functions.

Honors Student Council (HSC)

The HSC represents all active honors students by recommending policies and procedures to the Director and the faculty Honors Advisory Committee. The sixteen-member HSC includes four representatives from the freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior classes. These representatives are elected by fellow active honors students at the end of every fall semester to either 1-year or 2-year terms. Unfilled positions can be appointed by the Director. The HSC president is an ex officio, non-voting member of the Honors Advisory Committee.

Honors Advisory Committee (HAC)

The HAC recommends policies and procedures to the Director. The HAC includes the Director, the Associate Director, the Honors Faculty Fellows, and the Honors Librarian. The president of the HSC serves as an ex officio, non-voting member of the HAC.