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INTRODUCTION

This handbook provides essential information for students undertaking honours studies in the School of Social and Policy Studies (SSPS). The School brings together four social science disciplines, each with excellent reputations and rich histories of scholarship and teaching. Formed in 2010, the School combines the strengths, distinctive values, diverse interests and expertise of staff within the disciplines of Sociology, Social Work and Social Planning, Politics and Public Policy, and Women’s Studies. It is one of four schools within the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Science.

The Honours programs provide advanced study for talented students who have qualified in their respective majors. The honours programs of the School comprise 36 units of study, the equivalent of 1 full time year of study, or 2 years part time. The School has offers 3 different honours degree programs; the BA, BBSC, and BSWSP Hon, which span over the different disciplines. The BA (hons) and BBSC (hons) are separate 4th year degrees, and the BSWSP (hons) is an honours year embedded in the 4 year social work degree.

There is further information on honours at the school website, including further discipline specific information, and an application for financial assistance. There is a School Honours Convener, responsible for honours within the School, and there are 4 discipline honours conveners who provide guidance for students in their respective disciplines.

If you are considering honours, it is a good idea to talk to the honours convener in your discipline area about honours study.

HONOURS CONVENORS

Politics and Public Policy
Name: Dr. Rob Manwaring
☎: (08) 82017712
Room: 322 SSS
Email: rob.manwaring@flinders.edu.au

Social Work and Social Planning
Name: Dr Damien Riggs
☎: (08) 8 82012786
Room: 341 SSS
Email: damien.riggs@flinders.edu.au

Sociology
Name: Dr. Eduardo de la Fuente
☎: (08) 8201 7891
Room: 3114 SSN
Email: eduardo.delafuente@flinders.edu.au

Women’s Studies
Name: Assoc. Prof. Barbara Baird
☎: (08) 8201 3437
Room: 218 SSS
Email: barbara.baird@flinders.edu.au
ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Admission requirements vary as per discipline and course. Typically honours is open to students with consistently high marks in their respective major. Students who qualify for honours will typically be sent letters of offer in late December or early January for the following year. There are also applications available via the BA office for BA degrees, and through the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences for the BBSc honours degree. BSWSP honours is only available through a letter of offer.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE HONOURS PROGRAMS

Each honours program within the School varies slightly as to the formal requirements, but all of the programs in the School are comprised of coursework and a thesis for a total of 36 units of study. The BA Office (SSS 252) has administrative responsibility for the BA programs (Political Studies, Public Policy, Sociology, and Women’s Studies), and the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences (SSS 258) oversees the BBSc (Public Policy, Sociology Women’s Studies) and BSWSP (Social Work and Social Planning) programs.

The honours programs begin at the beginning of the academic year, but in some instances can be done as midyear entry.

Joint Honours programs may be available. Any student intending to undertake a Joint Honours program should consult as early as possible with the relevant discipline honours convenors to ensure that there a clear and agreed structure and agreement about assessment. The Joint Honours Program Agreement Form must be completed by the student, and approved by the honours conveners of all schools involved.

COURSEWORK

Please consult the information on the SSPS honours website for the relevant discipline specific coursework. Also, note that class contact hours in the Honours programs are often less than undergraduate study; this is not a good indicator of the amount of time and effort to successfully complete the honours year.

There is a School-wide honours topic, Research Practices and Principles, POLI/SOAD/SOCI/WMST 7031, that is required for Social Work and Sociology Students, and optional, but recommended for Politics and Women’s Studies students. The topic focuses on the practices of research and producing a thesis.


THESIS

One of the defining features of the honours year, and what distinguishes it from undergraduate work, is the opportunity to research and write a thesis. The thesis is 13.5 units (12,000 words) in the BSWSP, and 18 units (15,000 – 18,000 words) in the BA and BBSC programs. Working on a thesis is an opportunity for students to pursue academic research and writing at a more advanced level than undergraduate studies.

WORK IN PROGRESS PRESENTATION

All students will present on their work at a work in progress seminar in early June (probably in week 13 or 14). This will consist of a 10 minute presentation of your thesis work, given to other students, and academic staff from across the school. Students will present in panels of 4 or 5 students organized around a unifying theme. There will be time for questions and discussion. All
students undertaking *Research Practices and Principles* will be preparing a paper which will be the basis of their presentations. Student not undertaking the topic should consult their discipline honours convenor.

These seminars aim to provide a flexible space for an interchange of ideas between students and staff. They provide students with the opportunity to discuss some part of their honours thesis work, and for staff and students to collaboratively discuss and respond to any problems or complexities that may arise in the research process.

The presentation should familiarise the audience with the theory and methods which are being used. Students may like to present a brief overview of the relevant theories or main issues raised in a literature review. This could be followed by an outline of the research design or main approaches to be followed.

The progress so far should be described and students should raise any problems they have encountered. It is normal to have problems in any project. These problems may be of a theoretical nature such as working out what theory or theories seem the most appropriate; working in a poorly conceptualised area; the uneven nature of the academic literature; or contradictions between conceptual approaches. Methodological problems might be related to difficulties with operationalising concepts. Some could be of a more practical nature such as difficulties with access to informants, the lack of availability of sources, sampling problems, a poor initial response rate and attempts to compensate for this.

Students should feel that they can express their difficulties and problems, and should not feel constrained to present a watertight case. Once staff and others are familiar with the issue of each project, they might be able to suggest directions and references to help address problems.

**THESIS**

A substantial portion of the honours year is devoted to researching and producing a thesis. The areas of research, and modes of production, vary significantly within the School and even within disciplines. Students either develop their own topic, or participate in an existing project of a researcher in the School, or in some instances as a part of an outside organization. Additionally some supervisors have very specific projects that they would like to have undertaken by students. Students should work at finding a thesis topic as soon as possible after enrolling. Keep in mind that research is a reflexive process, and that your thinking will adapt and change as you immerse yourself in your subject. However, it is critical that you work to ground yourself in a focused area of research.

**THESIS SUPERVISOR**

Part of the process of identifying a topic is to identify a member of staff who can supervise the project. Students are encouraged to seek the advice of the discipline honours convenor about suitable supervisors. Usually a supervisor will a member of the lecturing staff in the discipline which the student in undertaking honours. The SSPS website has a list of all lecturing staff in the relevant areas. With the approval of the School Honours Convener, a supervisor may be from a different discipline, but still within the School. Because staff go on study leave, and other types of leave it is essential to inquire about the availability of the staff member during the time when the thesis is to be formulated and written.

After identifying a potential supervisor with the research interest that matches your own, you should email one of these people, having first considered their research interests and given some thought to a topic(s) that you might be interested in researching for your thesis. In this initial email you should briefly, in one or two sentences, outline the topic or topics you are interested in, and then ask whether the person would be interested to supervise the topic, and if
they aren’t, who else they would recommend. If they agree then you should arrange an initial face to face meeting.

When you first meet with your supervisor having confirmed that they are willing to supervise you, you should agree upon how often you will meet them and in which form. Some students and supervisors may prefer regular face to face meetings, whilst other students and supervisors may prefer to meet less often face to face, but to be in regular email contact.

It is the joint responsibility of supervisors and students to ensure that regular meetings are held. It is the responsibility of supervisors to ensure that a meeting is held with any student they supervise by the end of the second teaching week of Semester 1. At this meeting, the supervisor will explain clearly the role of an Honours supervisor, including the expectations the student and supervisor may have of each other.

**ETHICS**

Students who intend to undertake any research which involves human subjects must obtain approval from the appropriate University ethics committee (usually the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee). Students should be aware that getting ethics approval can be a lengthy process, and the ethics committee has a set meeting schedule that is available via the University website. [http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/info-for-researchers/](http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/info-for-researchers/)

There is further information and the appropriate links, including the application form on the SSPS website. [http://www.flinders.edu.au/sabs/saps/](http://www.flinders.edu.au/sabs/saps/)

**NOTES ON THESIS WRITING**

The following points, based on notes prepared largely by a former member of the School of Politics, Dr Cherry Gertzel, may be of help to students setting out on their first thesis and major piece of research.

- **Follow your star:** The thesis is the most personal and sustained piece of work in the Honours program, and it can be immensely rewarding – but it involves a lot of hard work and you need enthusiasm and commitment to stay the distance. Hence it is important that you have a genuine interest in your research. Make sure the subject is one in which you have an interest. Enthusiasm is essential since research and thesis writing are in many respects solitary tasks.

- **Remember the limits of time and space:** You have to work within certain limitations, especially of the **word length** prescribed for Honours theses. Thus you need to ensure that the specific topic you propose to investigate is able to be managed within that word length and in the time available to you.

- A thesis must have an argument which is followed through its successive stages in successive sections of the thesis. It must demonstrate the ability to use evidence and to evaluate sources, and above all show signs of a critical capacity. What you need to do is tell a story that leads the reader clearly and simply through your argument, and which ensures that they have all the necessary information as they read to assess what you are saying.

- **Handling sources and information:** If you do not already have an efficient method of note taking, then get one. Talk to your supervisor about it. An efficient method of note taking must enable you to find material already collected without having to search. It is advisable to develop a system for tracking the source information.
• It is important to record all sources consulted, both primary and secondary, in full, and in a form that assists the production of your bibliography. Don’t leave your bibliography until the end, since it is not something that can be completed in a rush.

• The bibliography is one of the most important parts of your thesis since it sets out for the reader the source materials used, and indicates the kind of evidence on which your thesis is based. (See below under ‘Thesis production requirements’ for advice on structuring the Bibliography).

• In the actual writing of the thesis, bear the following in mind:
  → Clarity is essential. The meaning may be lost with poor sentence construction (i.e., using active voice is nearly always preferable to passive voice. For example, ‘X extends her argument to...’ is infinitely preferable to ‘This argument is extended to...’. ‘The party executive transferred control to...’ is preferable to ‘Control of the party was transferred to...’).

  → Good style requires thought for the correct use of words, looking for the most appropriate adjective, etc. Economy of words is also important.

  → Time spent planning your thesis is time well spent, but you will find that your original plan will require modification and often a good deal of restructuring as you get into the research and discover more of the material and evidence. You need to leave ample time for rewriting. While it is true that you can read too much and be paralysed by doubt, the best way to handle an inability to write is often to go back to the original source.

  → Introduction and Conclusions should be just what they say, not a summary statement of each chapter. After writing the thesis, check that your overall Conclusion
    * refers to the argument and substance of the work;
    * notes any reservations, qualifications or doubts about the argument and evidence and therefore any outstanding problem to be settled;
    * notes what in your opinion is your achievement;
    * indicates possible directions for future research.

• Got ‘writer’s block?’ Then just write something! Redrafting a sloppy first draft is usually much easier than trying to write a perfect first draft. Honours theses lodged in the Library are also a good example of how to write a thesis and it can be worthwhile having a look at some of them.

THESIS FORMAT

In keeping with the University and Faculty rules on the format of theses, on which the following is based, these specifications should be followed:

• The thesis should be word-processed or typed on A4 paper, using one side of the paper only, and double-spaced.

The left hand margin should be at least 25mm and the right hand margin at least 20mm (and preferably at least 30mm and 25mm respectively), with top and bottom margins of at least 25mm and preferably 30 mm
The thesis should be laid out in the following order

1. A separate Title Page (see format below)

2. A separate page, headed ABSTRACT OR SUMMARY, summarising (in not more than 200 words) the argument of the thesis

3. A separate page, headed ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, where you may wish to acknowledge people who have particularly assisted you.

4. A separate page titled Table of Contents, with a list of the contents

5. The main text of the thesis, double spaced, with pages numbered consecutively and organised into chapters numbered

6. Appendices

7. A full bibliography presented in the correct style for your discipline

8. Wherever possible, tables should be included in the appropriate place in the text, except very lengthy or bulky matter, which should appear as an Appendix.

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**[SAMPLE TITLE PAGE]**

**TITLE**

Name

Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences
Flinders University,
Adelaide, Australia

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the [list your degree here]

*(Sign here)*

Date
ACADEMIC STYLE

SUBMISSION AND DUE DATE
The thesis is submitted to the SSPS office (SSS 342) by Friday June 14th, 2013 for completion, and by Friday October 25th for Semester 2 completion. Two examination copies must be submitted, and they must be bound. Soft binding, or spiral binding is okay. Should the thesis be assessed at Second **Eµuuqt'dgwgt** then you will be required to submit two hardbound copies of your thesis for filing in the library (see section on library copies).

EXAMINATION AND PROCESS FOR DETERMINING MARKS
In its Honours assessment process, the School of Social and Policy Studies has a commitment to fairly assess the student's academic work, and to promote the student's continuing education. We wish the assessment process to provide effective feedback on the intellectual development and the acquisition of relevant academic skills attained, including areas that could enhance or improve the present level. There is some variation between disciplines on the specific examination procedures and students are encouraged to read the relevant web pages on examinations in their discipline. Examinations will be conducted by disciplines.

All honours theses in the School will be marked by two examiners. Some disciplines have one internal and one external, though a thesis may also be marked by two internal examiners. The internal examiner will usually be from within the discipline. Usually the external examiner is drawn from outside of Flinders. The examiners are nominated by the discipline honours conveners with input from supervisors. Theses will be sent to the examiners along with a copy of “General Comments to Honours Examiners.” This document is available on the School website and students should also consult this document to note the categories where they will be assessed. Honours examiners will produce a report on the thesis, which will include the examiner’s name, and comments on the thesis, but not the mark. Examiners will email their report to the Discipline Honours Convener along with their mark.

After the Discipline Honours Conveners receive the reports, there will be a process of mediation of marks that will be undertaken by each of the disciplines. If there is no discrepancy in the examiners marks, there will be a simple averaging, and where there is a discrepancy there will be a process of consultation. The supervisor does not have a say in the final mark, but may offer input about extenuating circumstances or other important information. After the discipline process, if there is an irreconcilable difference between the examiners, and the mark difference is greater than 10 points, the School Honours Convener and/or Head of School will act as arbitrator and may appoint a third examiner.

Students will not receive individual marks from the examiners, but one final mediated mark. Notification of their final mark, and the examination reports will be sent via email as soon as possible after the assessment process is completed.
Students should note that this policy is in accordance with the Flinders University student manual, which may be found at the following web address: http://www.flinders.edu.au/ppmanual/student/assessment2.html.

If a student wishes to appeal their thesis mark, in the first instance they should contact the Discipline Honours Convenor within 10 days of notification of the mark.

**Thesis Library Copies**

If your thesis is assessed as of Second Class (Division B) standard or better, and you pass your overall Honours program successfully, then two copies of the thesis will be deposited in the University Library and formally listed in the Library catalogue. Two hardbound (case binding bookmode) copies are required. The author’s name and thesis title should appear on the spine.

The following conditions of access apply to Honours theses lodged in the Library:

- Requests from the author to restrict total access to the thesis will be considered only on the grounds that it contains confidential material or that it was a condition imposed by the owner of private records or material used by the author. Such requests need to be directed through the School Honours Convener.

- Academic staff and students of the University may consult any thesis without the prior consent of the author unless a total restriction has been placed on it.

- For three years after the deposit of the thesis, no copy may be made of the thesis or part of it without the prior consent of the author.

**Honours Assessment Criteria and Classifications**

Final Honours mark is determined by an aggregate of all honours units undertaken. In Politics, Public Policy, Sociology and Women’s Studies the overall honours mark is weighted 50% coursework and 50% thesis, and in Social Work it is 62.5% coursework and 37.5% thesis. All work undertaken in the honours year accounts for the final classification, and in Social Work and Social Planning the fieldwork component is Non-graded.

**Assessment Criteria**


The criteria for assessment of Honours should include (but are not limited to):

- Originality and creativity of thinking or performance
- Evidence of ability to undertake independent research
- Critical awareness of scholarship within the discipline
- Breadth and depth of understanding
- Comprehensiveness of treatment of subject material
- Capacity for achieving objectives
- Accuracy and clarity of presentation
HONOURS CLASSIFICATIONS

The performance for each Honours classification should exhibit the following:

- Honours First Class (H1): An Overall average of 85% or more.

  Sustained excellence in quality of written, oral and, where relevant, performative work, judged against stated criteria. This level of achievement should be rated as outstanding in the sense that students clearly demonstrate advanced scholarship within the discipline and a high level of ability to undertake independent research.

- Honours Second Class Division A (H2A): An Overall average between 75% and 84% inclusive.

  An overall high level of scholarship judged against stated criteria, which may include excellence in some areas. Students achieving this classification will have demonstrated the ability to undertake independent research. A score in the range of 75 to 84 will be awarded.

- Honours Second Class Division B (H2B): An Overall average between 65% and 74% inclusive.

  A substantial level of scholarship judged against stated criteria. While showing some variability in performance, students achieving this classification are assessed as competent within the discipline.

- Honours Third Class (H3): An Overall average between 50% and 64% inclusive.

  A satisfactory level of scholarship judged against stated criteria. Students achieving this classification are seen as having met the minimum requirements for the award.

- Fail: An overall average between 0% and 49% inclusive.

  An unsatisfactory level of scholarship judged against stated criteria. Students awarded this classification are seen as not having met the minimum requirements for the award.

GENERAL ADVICE

Honours is a difficult year and the most demanding students will have encountered so far in their study. The difficulty stems from the expectation that a high performance is required across all dimensions: coursework, thesis and SWSP students must also undertake fieldwork. Honours is the gateway to higher study at an advanced level and it is also the entry point of training to become an academic. Employers also regard a good Honours degree very favourably.

PLANNING

One of the keys to successful performance of Honours level is to begin and remain well organised. Students should also aim to complete at least two drafts of their thesis to enhance the standard of the writing. If students are completing honours full time, they will need to organise the deadlines for their coursework to mesh well with the deadlines for writing chapters and collecting data for their thesis. Students are advised to organise the demanding year around a flexible timetable based on the example provided, but modified to reflect their own program of study. The supervisor should be viewed as a guide, as someone to discuss and debate issues and assist in the development and execution of the thesis research and writing. It is
inappropriate to view the supervisor as someone who will provide comprehensive reading lists or already 'worked-out' thesis topics and recipes for their completion.

**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

There are limited funds available to assist students with their research and to cover some costs of the thesis and its production. The application can be downloaded from the SSPS School website: [http://flinders.edu.au/sabs/saps/funding.cfm](http://flinders.edu.au/sabs/saps/funding.cfm)

**SWITCHING FROM FULL TO PART-TIME**

A student who commences honours as a full-time students may change their enrolment to part-time (and vice versa). Note that this can only be done before the census date in a given semester. If you are considering changing your enrolment it is recommended that you talk to one of the honours conveners. Keep in mind that honours, unless otherwise permitted by the standing committee must be completed in 2 years.

**WITHDRAWAL FROM HONOURS**

An Honours student who withdraws will not be permitted to re-enrol as an Honours student in the Faculty, other than in exceptional circumstances and under conditions, which the Standing Committee may determine. Students who withdraw before 31 March will not be considered to have enrolled.

**SCHOLARSHIPS AND FURTHER STUDY**

Honours is a significant achievement, and as such is recognized both in the workplace, and as the primary qualification for further study. Students should be aware that most PhD scholarships need to be applied for in October, before the end of the honours year.

Information on scholarships and other forms of financial assistance can be obtained from the Higher Degree Administration and Scholarships Office located in the Union Building Basement (opposite the ISSU). The office maintains a database of scholarship schemes, and students are encouraged to check it regularly. The most common scholarships for Honours students considering undertaking a PhD are the Australian Postgraduate Awards (APAs) and the Flinders University Research Scholarships, however there are other study and scholarship possibilities available.