Graduating with Honors

Am I eligible?

Graduating “magna cum laude” or “summa cum laude” has two components:

1) An exceptional upper division GPA
   ✓ Must be 3.50 or higher for magna cum laude (= with high honors)
   ✓ Must be 3.80 or higher for summa cum laude (= with highest honors)

2) Completion of a thesis, research project, or some other approved body of original work, which is submitted for evaluation according to the rules of the UF Honors Office, the College of Engineering, and the student’s major department

The requirement for “cum laude” is solely based on having a 3.30 or higher upper division GPA. Therefore, a student with above a 3.5 or 3.8 upper division GPA who chooses not to undertake a thesis may still graduate cum laude (= with honors). Note that your upper division GPA starts calculating in the semester after which you have earned 60 college credits from any mechanism (including AP, IB, etc.). Thus, the grades you earn in the first semester where you are listed as a “3EG” on your transcripts are the first grades that go into your upper division GPA.

Although students are responsible for knowing the requirements for the various honors designations, if you’re eligible to graduate with any type of honors the College of Engineering will contact you during your junior year to help you plan ahead. Once you have committed to writing a thesis, your major department will shoulder the responsibility for reminding you about important deadlines, helping you register for research credits (if applicable), and providing you with general support.

Please note that post-baccalaureate (2nd bachelor’s degree) students are not eligible to receive any type of honors recognition; however, exceptions to this policy are sometimes allowed. If your department supports you, they can submit a letter of exception addressed to Dr. Kevin Knudson (via Dr. Janna Underhill, Engineering Student Affairs, 208 Weil Hall) and signed by the department chair. The letter also needs to include a space for a signature line for the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Student Affairs. Submit the letter no later than the same day departments submit preliminary degree certification online. (For this date please refer to Academic Deadlines and Calendars.) The Dean’s Office will forward the letter to the UF Honors Office.
Who should undertake an honors thesis project?

A student who:

✓ Maintains an upper division GPA that meets the minimum requirement for magna or summa cum laude graduation for the College of Engineering
✓ Wishes to be more competitive for graduate or professional programs, or to stand out from the crowd with prospective employers
✓ Has the motivation and drive to work independently and manage her/his time well
✓ Is prepared to work hard to continuously improve her/his writing and analytical skills
✓ Is excited about developing positive mentoring relationships with faculty experts
✓ Wants to cultivate her/his innate curiosity and passion for learning new things

What’s the general timeline for writing a thesis?

Writing an undergraduate thesis may not be as time-consuming as writing a graduate thesis, but it still requires a great deal of planning and dedication. Be prepared for a 2-4 semester commitment that looks something like this:

1. **ASK QUESTIONS**  
   - Discuss your interest in an honors thesis with your academic advisor and/or your department’s Undergraduate Coordinator, and listen to their valuable advice.

2. **FIND A MENTOR**  
   - Research faculty members who may be willing to mentor you, and discuss project ideas with them. Where to start looking:
     - Your department’s online faculty directory
     - Within other departments/colleges
     - UF Center for Undergraduate Research

3. **COMMIT TO A PROJECT**  
   - Select your faculty mentor (or co-mentors), and begin to shape your project idea into reality. Note that this process may require you to do some additional training, either in the classroom or in a lab.
   - Notify your departmental academic advisor of your decision to write a thesis.

4. **PLAN AND ORGANIZE**  
   - Write a thesis proposal and turn it in to your mentor. Make adjustments and carefully improve your research design as needed, based on their guidance.
5. **LOOK FOR EXTRA RESOURCES**
   - If needed, explore funding/resources for your project. Talk to your mentor, and visit the University Scholars Program website.

6. **GATHER YOUR EXPERTS**
   - Create your undergraduate thesis committee with the help of your faculty mentor. Fill out the Appointment of Supervisory Committee Form, obtain the necessary signatures, and turn in the completed form to your major department.
   - You are required to have at least three committee members, one of whom must be from outside your major program.
   - It’s okay to have co-chairs for your committee. It’s also okay if one of those co-chairs is from another UF department or college; however, at least one chair must be from your own major department.

7. **DIVE INTO YOUR PROJECT**
   - Work on your project under the supervision of your faculty mentor.
   - Register for research credits as needed. For the College of Engineering, research credits are designated as EGN4912 “Engineering Directed Independent Research” and may be taken for 0 to 3 credits per semester (with a maximum limit of 12 credits). See your departmental advisor for assistance with registration.

8. **ANALYZE AND WRITE**
   - Summarize your data and document what you learn. For assistance with formatting, go to the Honors Program website. Make sure you work closely with your faculty mentor(s) during this critical time; their editing and constructive suggestions will help you produce an even better thesis.

9. **PRESENT YOUR FINDINGS**
   - Complete the Honors Thesis Submission Form, and have your mentor sign and date the form. Your department will help you get the additional signature from your department’s Honors Coordinator. Note that all information must fit on the front of the form and must be typed in the proper format, with all appropriate signatures included.
   - Present your research to your committee. Upon completion of your presentation, if the supervisory committee approves your designation as magna or summa cum laude they will sign the Final Oral Examination Form. The department chair will also sign this form, then she/he will forward both of these forms to EG Undergraduate Student Affairs. EG Undergraduate Student Affairs will send copies of the appropriate signed forms back to your department. You do not need to send a copy of your thesis to the College.
   - Your departmental academic advisor will make sure that your graduation is certified with the appropriate honors designation.
10. ARCHIVE YOUR WORK
   ✐ Submit a hard copy or electronic copy (as requested) of your thesis to your department, along with a copy of the completed Honors Thesis Submission Form.
   ✐ Submit all of the following to the UF Library IR Coordinator (IRManager@uflib.ufl.edu):
     • A pdf of your completed and signed Honors Thesis Submission Form
     • A pdf of your completed honors thesis
     • A signed Internet Distribution Permissions form (optional: if this form is not received, your thesis will not be made public)
     • If you have any copyrighted materials in your thesis, a signed letter of permission to quote or copy each copyrighted piece
   ✐ This information will be included in a searchable database which can be accessed by going to the Undergraduate Thesis Database. The only information that will be publically available is your name, thesis mentor, and thesis title. No contact information will appear, nor will the thesis be accessible.
   ✐ Don’t forget to send copies of your thesis to your family!

Summary of Required Forms/Paperwork

Departmental Requirements
All of these items must be submitted by you to your major department by the deadline(s) specified by that particular department (consult your departmental academic advisor):

✓ Appointment of Supervisory Committee Form
✓ Honors Thesis Submission Form
✓ Final Oral Examination Form
✓ Honors Thesis

UF Requirements
All of these items must be submitted by you to the UF Library IR Coordinator (IRManager@uflib.ufl.edu) by May 4 in spring semester, August 10 in summer semester, and December 21 in fall semester (pdf is the preferred format):

✓ Electronic copy of the Honors Thesis Submission Form
✓ Electronic copy of the completed thesis
✓ Electronic copy of the signed Internet Distribution Permissions form (optional)
✓ Electronic copy of a signed letter of permission for each copyrighted piece of material quoted or copied in your thesis (only if needed)
Honors Cords Information

Honors cords may be purchased at the UF Bookstore in the Welcome Center in the Reitz Union. When you pick up your regalia, just ask for them. However, you cannot purchase honors cords unless your honors certification is electronically available at the bookstore. The honors certification is based upon the recommendation of your major department at the time the initial degree list was certified. In other words:

*You must apply to graduate no later than the end of the third week of classes in the term you plan to graduate, or you may not be able to get your honors cords later!*

Neither the bookstore nor the UF Registrar has information regarding College of Engineering honors criteria. If you have questions about your honors designation, please contact your major department. If your honors status changes between creation of the initial degree list and the time of graduation, you should return to the bookstore to purchase or exchange your honors cords as appropriate.

What if I still have questions or concerns?

You can always speak to your department’s Undergraduate Coordinator or to your own academic advisor. Your contact in the College of Engineering’s Undergraduate Student Affairs Office is Dr. Janna Underhill. Please feel free to email her with your quick questions or to ask for an in-person appointment (janna@eng.ufl.edu).

Please also refer to the Honors Thesis Procedural Flow Chart on the next page!
Honors Thesis Procedural Flow Chart

During your junior year, you will be notified by the EG Undergraduate Student Affairs Office of your eligibility to graduate magna or summa cum laude

Find a research mentor and commit to writing a thesis

Turn in a thesis proposal to your research mentor and finalize your research plan

Fill out an Appointment of Supervisory Committee Form, get signatures, and file it with your department

Experiment and write!

Fill out an Honors Thesis Submission Form and have both your mentor and your department’s honors coordinator sign and date it

Present your thesis to your committee; if approved, they will sign and date a Final Oral Examination Form and then forward the form to your department chair for signature

Electronically submit your thesis, a copy of the Honors Thesis Submission Form, and any necessary Internet and/or copyright permissions forms to the UF Library system

Since you applied to graduate on time, you can pick up your honors cords at the bookstore – congratulations!

Your department will forward copies of your completed Honors Thesis Submission Form and Final Oral Examination Form to the EG Undergraduate Student Affairs Office for signatures/processing

EG Student Affairs will send copies of appropriate signature forms back to your department; you do not need to send a copy of your thesis to the College

Your department will note the appropriate final designation of magna or summa cum laude for you, and the EG Undergraduate Student Affairs Office will certify your graduation as such

The UF Honors Office will add your thesis to their searchable database of undergraduate research

✍️ = Student’s responsibility

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