



# H-Option Frequently Asked Questions

## What is an H-Option?

An H-Option is a contract agreed to by an Honors eligible student and the instructor of a regular course offered at IPFW. The contract alters the course in some significant fashion, which provides the student with honors credit for the course.

## Why was it developed?

While it is highly recommended that every Honors student complete at least 3 credit hours of Honors work in an actual Honors Course, the H-Option fills a special niche in any course of study. It allows students who may not be able to fit an Honors Course into their schedule in a given semester to engage in Honors learning. It allows the student and the instructor to pursue a topic that interests them in an in-depth manner. Additionally, the work done in an H-Option can often lead to an Honors Project or a Senior Project. The primary reason for its development, however, was to enable motivated students and dedicated instructors to engage in active, mutually beneficial learning.

## Which Students can do an H-Option?

Any student who is Honors Eligible (3.3 GPA or above) qualifies for an H-Option. Honors students from any discipline may H-Option any course (regardless of class standing, for example). The ways to become Honors Eligible are as follows:

### If you have not yet completed 12 credit hours

Top 10% of your high school class  
650 SAT score in writing, critical thinking,  
OR mathematics  
1800 combined SAT score  
27 ACT score

### With 12 or more credit hours

with GPA-related grades  
3.3 cumulative GPA  
Transfer in with a 3.5 GPA

## Which Faculty can do an H-Option?

There are no specific qualifications for faculty members to oversee an H-Option contract. Any faculty member may participate (provided that their Department Chair approves of the contract).

## Is an H-Option appropriate for this course?

The H-Option may be applied to virtually any course, but if it is feasible for the student, the Honors Program encourages students to take a course as an Honors Course instead of an H-Option. We especially discourage students from H-Optioning a course when an Honors section of the same course is offered in that semester.

Because of the opportunity for in-depth thinking and analysis that an H-Option presents, the Honors Program seeks to promote H-Options in 200 level courses or above. Of course, H-Options can be of great benefit to students and faculty in any course, but we feel that non-introductory courses maximize the potential benefits.

## **Why should I pursue an H-Option?**

Students who pursue an H-Option usually do so because they are interested in the course and desire to learn more about some aspect of it. As mentioned before, the H-Option can often lead to creative and innovative Honors and Senior Projects. Of course, it is also a way to obtain honors credit.

We believe that faculty will find working with highly motivated students both intellectually stimulating and rewarding. An H-Option also gives faculty some practical benefits: it allows specific elements of the course to be explored in depth, innovative and experimental elements of the course may be tested and refined, and deeper relationships with promising students may be cultivated.

## **What is expected of me?**

The specific expectations of the student and faculty will vary according to the nature of the contract. However, there are some common expectations that are shared among all H-Options. First, H-Options, by their very nature, require a time commitment from the instructor and the student. A student who commits to going beyond the expectations of a course is expected to spend enough time to honor that commitment; similarly, the instructor should spend enough time to honor the student's commitment. Second, H-Options are individual and rely on the interactions between individuals. This means that the faculty's interaction with the student is an essential element of the course, regardless of the nature of the contract. Third, H-Options thrive on innovation. The more creativity and involvement that is put into an H-Option, the more interesting and beneficial the experience will be for both the student and the instructor.

## **What makes a course Honors?**

Is it the workload? The grading scale? Actually, it is participation, which does not (necessarily) mean classroom discussions or points for attendance. Instead, it refers to the students' active roles in their intellectual development; in some way, students must be encouraged to participate in the educational process and meet the program's learning outcomes (see next question). This could range from discussions to experiential learning, from reading to presenting findings, and everything in-between.

Of course, different disciplines (and even different courses) are conducive to different teaching methods and different people (both students and instructors) have different styles of teaching and learning. Realizing this, the structure of the H-Option is left intentionally open to allow students and faculty the flexibility to derive the maximum amount of benefit from the experience. This also means that, in large part, the instructor in an H-Option is given great weight in determining what arrangement meets the goals of the Honors Program; please keep in mind – however it is structured – the H-Option work should be significant (10-20% of the course). This is said, not to put pressure on you, but simply to let you know the seriousness with which H-Options are treated.

## **What are the learning outcomes for an H-Option?**

Students enrolled in an H-Option course are expected to develop some (although not necessarily all) of the following skills: critical thinking, analysis and synthesis, problem solving, clear oral and written expression, the ability to conduct research, and independent thinking.

## **How does it work?**

An H-Option is a contracted change in the course that is agreed upon by both the student and the instructor. Within the first couple weeks of the course (to provide the most flexibility in the structuring of the contract), the instructor and the student will meet and discuss how the course will be altered (see below for some ideas). Upon agreement, an H-Option Contract is completed; signed by the student, instructor, and department chair; and then sent to the Honors Program Center, in WU G25. **We recommend that contracts be turned in by the third week of classes, but 4 weeks from the start of classes is the absolute deadline for H-Options (two weeks in summer).** The contract is then reviewed and, if it meets all of the requirements, is processed. Please note that the course syllabus must be included. Once processed, the student is enrolled in a 0 credit hour pass/not pass honors course with the same title as the original class with a course number of HON and 150, 250, 350, or 450 (depending on the level of the regular course) after the withdraw deadline. A student may drop an H-Option, but only before the withdrawal deadline. When the final grades are turned in, the instructor will assign a grade to the regular course and pass/not pass to the honors course – the net result will be that the student will be awarded honors credit for the course.

## **What are the requirements for an H-Option?**

Though it is not always explicitly stated, it is essential to the success of an H-Option that both the honors student and the instructor are interested and committed to it. If, for whatever reason, both sides cannot find the agreement exciting or stimulating, the proposal needs to be reconsidered. The changes should not **necessarily** be more work; it can often be appropriate to make the changes a different type of work. For example, instead of adding a paper, perhaps changing the focus or style of an existing assignment is appropriate; instead of assigning more readings, perhaps time to discuss existing readings in-depth with the instructor would be beneficial. Whether the assignments are new or reworking the course elements, the H-Option should be given appropriate consideration in the course grade and the minimum expectations for acceptable work must be established. This is reflected in the 3 options of the **Grading Policy** section of the H-Option Contract: “Rearrange existing points” is altering the point values of existing assignments (such as three tests were each 20%, are now 15% with the H-Option part using the “new” 15%); “Additional points” is adding points to the course’s total (the H-Option is worth 200 points while the rest of the assignments are the same [worth 1000 points], making the total points for the course 1200 instead of 1000 - each letter grade still maintains the same percentages as before); “H-Option only” assesses the H-Option on its own, without the grade impacting the work in the regular section of the course (the student either passes the H-Option work or does not, the rest of the course is assessed without alteration).

## **What are some examples of changes to a course?**

Here are some examples of what changes have been made to courses in previous H-Options. This list is not exhaustive, and is meant only to provide some ideas and spark your creativity.

- Assist the faculty mentor with the mentor's current research or projects.
- Combine two simple assignments into one bigger, more complex project
- Design a web-page using content and research relevant to the class.
- Do research that is more analytical or applicable than what the general requirements are.
- Research a topic more in-depth or research it from a different perspective than the rest of the class.
- Schedule time with the faculty mentor to discuss topics more in-depth.
- Work on a project to present at an undergraduate research symposium or to have published.
- Work or observe in the field and report on how it relates to the class.
- Write a lesson plan to teach the class material to the class or a specific age group.