

BISHOP'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, AGRICULTURE & GEOGRAPHY



Procedures and deadlines for HONOURS PROGRAMS and INDEPENDENT STUDIES

(Revised: March 2023)

THE HONOURS PROGRAMMES

The Department of Environment, Agriculture & Geography offers four honours programmes:

- B.A. Honours in Geography
- B.A. Honours in Environmental Studies
- B.A. Honours in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems
- B.Sc. Honours in Environmental Science

Eligibility:

Students who wish to transfer from a major to an honours programme should consult the relevant co-Chair of the Department. Admission to any of the Honours Programmes is by permission of the Department, and must be applied for near the completion of the major in either of the four degrees (Geography, Environmental Studies, Environmental Science, and Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems).

In order to be eligible to enter the Honours programme a student must have a cumulative average of 70% in all departmental courses taken at Bishop's University.

A degree with Honours requires the completion of 60 credits for the B.A. Honours degrees (Geography, Environmental Studies, Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems) and 81 credits for the B.Sc. Environmental Science degree, including ESG/AGR 461 (Honours Proposal) and ESG/AGR 462 (Honours Thesis) and all other required courses within the programme.

About the Undergraduate Thesis

The undergraduate thesis is a course of independent research in which the onus is on the student to design, carry out and present the results of an original research project. Students should be aware of the high degree of motivation and self-discipline needed to successfully complete an honours thesis. The student works under the supervision of one or two faculty members but the course is not faculty-led.

The successful completion of the undergraduate thesis involves several well-defined steps. The initial task of the student is the identification of a specific research topic. This topic may fall within any of the broad sub-areas covered by the Department and the student should be guided, in the first instance, by his or her own personal interests. There are, however, some practical constraints on the choice of a research topic. The four main constraints are:

- 1) data availability and accessibility;
- 2) the resources of the Department, both in terms of faculty expertise and the physical resources for data gathering and analysis;

- 3) the constraints of time. The Thesis is intended to be one course among five in each of two semesters;
- 4) financial considerations. Some forms of data gathering, analysis and presentation may involve the student in considerable out-of-pocket expenses, e.g., mail questionnaires, photocopying, etc.

In short, a study which examines the evolution of beach profiles on the coral atolls southwest of Bora Bora, while potentially very rewarding, would not be encouraged in EAG! Even places like Toronto, Montreal and Cape Cod may pose time and money problems, while also attempting to complete courses back at Bishop's.

The undergraduate thesis normally contains several distinct components:

- 1) The **statement of the research problem** and/or the hypothesis that is being tested in the thesis. The choice of an appropriate methodological approach is an integral part of the statement of research purpose.
- 2) A **literature review** which situates the research project within the broader context of geographical research.
- 3) **Presentation of the data** (quantitative and/or qualitative). Data types include field measurements in physical geography, questionnaire and interview surveys, primary historical sources, secondary statistical data, etc.
- 4) **Analysis and results of the data**. Depending on the nature of the data and the methodology selected, the analysis of the data may take a number of distinctive forms. Maps are also an important part of data analysis and presentation.
- 5) **Bibliography and References**.

Procedures, Deadlines and Evaluation

All EAG theses should be completed at Bishop's, as opposed to another University on transfer credit or student exchange. Students must normally register in ESG/AGR 461 and be accepted into the Honours programme during registration in September.

Here are the normal steps to take:

Step 1 - Signalling your intent to pursue the Honours

Deadline: Before the end of the previous Winter semester

Before the end of the winter semester of the academic year, students intending to apply for admission to the Honours programme for the next academic year should indicate their intentions to the relevant co-Chair of the Department, and should discuss the choice of a thesis topic.

The student should also identify, and consult with, a potential primary supervisor within the Environment, Agriculture & Geography department in signalling his/her intention to develop a thesis statement (see step 2).

Step 2 - Submitting the Thesis Statement

Deadline: The Friday before Fall semester add/drop deadline

The student interested in being admitted to the Honours program must develop, in consultation with the potential faculty advisor, a thesis statement. This statement must be submitted to the department co-Chair, for Departmental approval, no later than [the Friday before the University Add/Drop date](#).

What is the Thesis Statement?

First, the Thesis Statement is NOT a Thesis Proposal; it is a pre-Proposal. We understand that you are just beginning your Proposal, but we need some evidence that you have a good idea of what you want to do, and how you will do it to ensure your success. The Thesis Statement should be only a few pages long, written clearly and succinctly, and include the following:

- Title of the thesis (on cover page with student's name)
- Introduction (background, purpose, hypothesis or research question)
- Preliminary Literature Review
- Outline of proposed methods, including possible sources
- Proposed method of analysis
- Anticipated timetable for work completion, ensuring that work conforms to Departmental deadlines
- Preliminary bibliography

Students should consult style manuals such as those listed later in this Handbook.

How will the Thesis Statement be evaluated?

The Thesis Statement will be evaluated on the following bases:

- 1) suitability of topic as a subject for geographical investigation
- 2) the student's conceptualization of the nature of the topic and the areas to be investigated
- 3) suitability of the research and analytical methods for both topic and the student concerned
- 4) feasibility of completing the study within the time allowed

The Department co-Chair will circulate the thesis statement to departmental faculty and a decision will be made concerning:

- 1) whether the student should be admitted into the honours program, and
- 2) who will be the primary advisor and secondary advisors

If the Thesis Statement is accepted, the Department co-Chair will officially register the student into the Honours programme before the add/drop date.

If the Thesis Statement is NOT accepted, the student will not be admitted into the Honours program.

Step 3 – Developing the Honours Proposal (ESG/AGR 461)

Assuming acceptance of the Thesis Statement, the student must then complete a detailed Thesis Proposal (ESG/AGR 461). The Proposal must include four major sections:

1. an *Introduction*, including a detailed hypothesis or research question, a description of the study area, and a conceptual background (ie, how does the proposed study fit into the relevant literature);
2. a detailed *Literature Review*;
3. a *Methods section*, including a detailed discussion of the research methods to be used to collect and analyze data;
4. an extensive *Bibliography*.

During the academic year, it is expected that the student will meet regularly with his/her adviser. The frequency of these meetings and how each student should prepare for them is left to the student and the adviser to arrange. It is understood that the work schedule agreed to by the adviser and the student may vary, according to the adviser and student's needs and demands. However, all Departmental deadlines and regulations must be respected.

Step 4 – Submitting the Honours proposal, including a public presentation

Deadline for submission of the Thesis Proposal: On or before the last day of classes in the Fall Term

The student will submit to his/her primary advisor and secondary advisor a final copy of the Proposal, including a detailed introduction, a literature review, a discussion of the approach/methods to be adopted in the thesis, and an extensive bibliography. A 20- minute public presentation and discussion of the Thesis Proposal will be made to the department at the end of the Fall Term, usually the day after the last day of classes.

Evaluation of the Thesis Proposal

Faculty are free to discuss the Thesis Proposal with the student and the student's adviser. Each faculty member has the right to make oral and written commentary on each Thesis Proposal.

Following the submission of the Thesis Proposal and informal presentation, the primary advisor, in consultation with the secondary advisor, and any other faculty member (if desired) will determine a grade for the Thesis Proposal, and submit this grade to the department chair for inclusion in the students transcript.

Important: a recommendation will be made as to whether the student should proceed or not with the second part, ESG/AGR 462. If a negative recommendation is rendered, the student will obtain a grade for ESG/AGR 461, but not be allowed into ESG/AGR 462.

Step 5 – Developing the Honours Thesis (ESG/AGR 462)

Assuming acceptance into ESG/AGR 462, the student will complete an Honours thesis with a minimum of seven major sections, allowing for variability depending on the specific theme or sub-discipline in question:

1. Introduction,
2. Literature Review
3. Methods
4. Data Presentation and Analysis
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion
7. Bibliography

Honours students should meet with their advisors on several occasions through-out the academic year, Honours students are encouraged to discuss their research with their fellow students, and invite them to the 20 minute public presentation (see Step 6). In this way, the student will benefit from the suggestions of others.

Step 6 - Submitting the Honours Thesis, including a presentation

Please note that submission of the Honours Thesis happens in 3 stages. There are fairly strict deadlines to adhere to, to ensure advisors have adequate time to evaluate the work in progress and students have time to make changes before final submission, in order to develop the best possible product, and to ensure the student's success, as follows:

Deadline for Submission #1: Digital Draft of Completed Honours Thesis: Three weeks before the last day of classes in the Winter semester

A draft digital copy of the complete thesis with illustrations included (final copy quality is not necessary for the illustrations) will be submitted to the thesis advisor. On the advice of the advisors involved, changes may be made to the thesis.

Deadline for Submission #2: Final completed Honours Thesis & 20-minute Public Presentation: Last day of classes in the Winter semester; Public presentation on the day after the last day of classes

A final digital completed thesis – for evaluation purposes – will be submitted to the primary and secondary thesis advisors. This copy will be used for the student's public presentation at the end of the term – usually on the day after the last day of classes.

The Departmental co-Chair will advertise the open, public honours presentation.

The primary advisor, in consultation with the secondary advisor and other faculty members (if desired), will suggest a grade for the revised draft copy of the thesis, and submit this grade to the department chair for addition to the student transcript.

Deadline for Submission #3: One PDF digital copy of Honours Thesis: Last day of Exams

After receiving comments (if any) from the advisors involved, and making those corrections to the satisfaction of the advisors, the student must submit a PDF digital copy of the final corrected thesis (if corrections are needed) to:

- The primary advisor,
- The secondary advisor,
- The department co-Chair.

The electronic version will be kept on file in the Department for future students and faculty to consult.

The normal Departmental penalty of 10% per day for late submissions applies to the Honours Thesis.

THE INDEPENDENT STUDIES

The Department of Environment, Agriculture & Geography offers two courses:

- Independent Study I / Internship I (ESG 346)
- Independent Study II / Internship II (ESG 347)

The outline for both of these courses is the same but ESG 346 must be taken before taking ESG 347.

1. Eligibility

In order to be eligible to complete the course, the student must be at least a second-year student in one of the major programs in the department (Environmental Science, Environmental Studies, Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, and Geography) at Bishop's University. The student must hold an accumulative average of 75% in classes of their major program.

To signal their intention to take ESG346 or ESG347, interested students should contact the co-Chair in the semester prior to the semester in which the course will take place. The rest of the steps are outlined in section 3.

The admission of a student into ESG346 or ESG347 is by decision of the department, following a departmental meeting early each semester. Admission into ESG346 and ESG347 will be done by our administrative assistant once permission has been granted.

2. About the Courses

Students should be aware of the high degree of motivation and self-discipline needed to successfully complete the course. The student works under the supervision of a faculty member but the course is not faculty-led.

The course can be completed one of two ways:

1. INDEPENDENT STUDY: The onus is on the student to design, carry out and present the results of an original research project on a topic of interest to the student and related to their major program. This includes developing an extensive literature review.

2. **INTERNSHIP:** The student should obtain an internship with an organization in a field related to their major program. The internship would consist of: working approximately six hours per week; keeping track of hours worked, tasks completed and reflections; and writing a report at the end of the semester.

During the academic year, it is expected that the student will meet regularly with their supervisor. The frequency of these meetings and how each student should prepare for them is left to the student and the supervisor to arrange. The work schedule could vary based on the project; however, all departmental deadlines and regulations must be respected.

3. Procedures, Deadlines and Evaluation

Students must obtain a supervisor and register in ESG 346 / ESG 347 during the registration period in either the Fall or Winter semester.

Here are the normal steps to take:

Step 1 – Find a supervisor (and possibly employer)

Deadline: Before the registration period of the semester in which the student wishes to take the course

Before the start of the semester at the latest, students intending to take ESG 346 or ESG 347 should indicate their intentions to the co-Chair of the department, and should discuss whether they would like to do an independent study or internship, and the potential topic or employer. The student should also consult with, and identify, a willing supervisor within the department.

If the student intends to carry out an internship, the student should also consult with, and identify, a willing host organization.

Step 2 - Submitting the proposal

Deadline: 1 week before add/drop deadline

The student interested in taking the course should discuss with their supervisor and develop an independent study or internship proposal. The proposal must be submitted to the supervisor, and approved by the department, in order to be registered in the course. The proposal document should include a title, a brief proposal and a few references (approximately a half to one page).

The topic for an independent study may fall within any of the broad sub-areas of the department and it is recommended that the student be guided by their own personal interests. There are, however, some practical constraints on the choice of a research topic. The four main constraints are:

1. Data availability and accessibility
2. The resources of the department, both in terms of faculty expertise and the physical resources for data gathering and analysis
3. The constraints of time. For full-time students, the course is intended to be one of five courses. Although students may choose to get a head start on their project, it is only a one-semester course.
4. Financial considerations. Some forms of data gathering, analysis and presentation may involve considerable out-of-pocket expenses for the student (e.g., mail questionnaires, photocopying).

*Note that all research that involves human participants (interviews, questionnaires, surveys, etc.) requires ethics review and approval before the research is started.

Step 3 – Submitting a progress report

Deadline: Determined by supervisor (approximately the midway point of the semester)

The student must complete a progress report midway through the semester. The progress report should be approximately one page, in bullet points, and include the following:

1. Tasks completed
2. Tasks to be completed
3. Any issues encountered and, if applicable, how they were resolved

Step 4 – Developing and submitting the final report

The structure and content of the final report will depend on whether the student is carrying out an independent study or internship.

a. Independent Study

The formal report normally contains several distinct components. The components and style of the report could vary based on the nature of the project. They could include:

- **Introduction:** detailed research question and/or the hypothesis that is being tested with background description of topic

- A **literature review** that situates the research project within the broader context of its field of research
- **Methods**: detailed discussion of the research methods used to collect and analyze data
- **Data presentation** (quantitative and/or qualitative) **and analysis**: Data could include field measurements, surveys and interviews, primary historical sources, secondary statistical data, etc.
- **Analysis**: Depending on the nature of the data and the methodology selected, the analysis of the data may take a number of distinctive forms
- **Discussion** of the implications of findings, study limitations and suggested avenues of future research
- **Conclusion**
- **Bibliography**
- **Appendices** holding supplemental information and/or data (optional)

b. Internship

The formal report for an internship may vary based on the type of internship, but would normally contains several distinct components such as:

- **Job title and name of the organization** where the internship will take place
- **Presentation of the organization** (history, purpose, etc.)
- **Description of the student's role and tasks completed**
- **Outcomes** of the internship (results, deliverables, etc.)
- **Description of experience gained** throughout the internship and **other reflections**
- **Conclusion**
- **Bibliography**
- **Appendix** with photos from the internship (optional)

Deadline for submission #1, a digital draft of the final report: Two weeks before the last day of classes

A digital draft of the final report will be submitted to the supervisor. The supervisor will provide comments and make suggestions for improvements to the draft.

Deadline for submission #2, a revised and final version of the final report: The last day of classes in the semester

A final PDF version of the final report will be submitted to the supervisor. The student will be evaluated based on this final version. The supervisor may choose to provide the student with a

rubric or further details on how the final report will be marked. The normal departmental penalty of 10% per day for late submission will apply.