

BISHOP'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND GEOGRAPHY



Procedures and deadlines for HONOURS PROGRAMS

(Revised: May 2019)

THE HONOURS PROGRAMMES

The Department of Environment & Geography offers three honours programmes:

- B.A. Honours in Geography
- B.A. Honours in Environmental Studies
- B.Sc. Honours in Environmental Science

Eligibility:

Students who wish to transfer from a major to an honours programme should consult the 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 three degree (Geography, Environmental Studies and Environmental Science).

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

A degree with Honours requires the completion of 60 credits for the B.A Honours degrees (Geography and Environmental Studies) and 81 credits for the BSc. Environmental Science degree, including ESG 461 (Undergraduate Thesis Proposal) and 462 (Undergraduate 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 of Geography 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 ESG! 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 ESG theses should be completed at Bishop's, as opposed to another University on transfer credit or student exchange. Students must register in ESG 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 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 and 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 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 chair will circulate the thesis statement to departmental faculty and a departmental 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 chair will officially register 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 461)

Assuming acceptance of the Thesis Statement, the student must then complete a detailed Thesis Proposal (ESG 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 student's transcript.

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

Step 5 – Developing the Honours Thesis (ESG 462)

Assuming acceptance into ESG 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 throughout 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 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: Three Final Spiral-Bound Paper copies, and 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 three spiral-bound copies (and a PDF digital copy) of the final corrected thesis (if corrections are needed) to:

- The primary advisor,
- The secondary advisor,
- The department chair.

The chair's copy 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.