A. Overview

Students majoring in Environmental Studies (ENVS) and Environmental Science (ESCI) are encouraged to participate in the Environmental Studies Program Honors Program. Writing a senior thesis is good preparation for future professional positions and graduate studies. It provides an opportunity to develop your research and writing skills. Graduating with honors demonstrates a high level of initiative and ability to work independently. An honors thesis is a way to become an expert on a topic of interest and gain recognition for your outstanding academic work.

To graduate with ENVS honors, a student must:
1. Have a 3.3 overall GPA and a 3.5 GPA in classes required for the major.
2. Complete a research-based thesis or creative project conducted under the direction of a faculty adviser. Due to the breadth of potential research topics, students can do original laboratory or field-based research, library-based research, or a terminal or creative project.

In summary, our requirements are:
1. Meet with your academic adviser
2. Complete your prospectus
3. Take ENVS 401: Research (4 credits) (not required for Clark Honors College students)
4. Take ENVS 403: Thesis (4 credits)
5. Give a public presentation
6. Submit your approved thesis to Scholar’s Bank

See below for a more detailed description of these requirements.

B. Timeline

Most students complete their research and writing during their senior year. However, the timeline is flexible if you are conducting research during the summer. Here is a typical schedule:

Fall Quarter
a. Determine your topic or area of interest
b. Meet with your academic advisor
c. Identify and secure your faculty adviser

Winter Quarter
a. Register for 4 credits of research (ENVS 401)
b. Submit prospectus to your faculty adviser
c. Complete research
Spring Quarter
   a. Register for 4 credits of thesis (ENVS 403)
   b. Make arrangements for oral presentation
   c. Finalize and submit approved thesis to Scholar’s Bank

C. Description of Requirements
1. Meet with your academic adviser
Sign up for an advising appointment, http://envs.uoregon.edu/undergrad/advising/, to meet with Peg Boulay (ESCI majors) or Katie Lynch (ENVS majors) to have your topic approved, discuss how the credits fulfill major requirements and brainstorm potential faculty advisers if needed. Be prepared to discuss timelines and other logistics.

Your topic must be environmentally related and interdisciplinary. In other words, you should look at an environmental topic from more than one perspective. For example:
   • If you are examining international policies that address climate change, you could include a short discussion of climate science.
   • If you are researching the ecology of an endangered species, you could discuss management implications of your findings.

Students enrolled in Clark Honors College (CHC) may complete a single thesis for both CHC and ENVS as long as the content is environmentally-focused.

2. Complete your prospectus
In order to become familiar with the literature and articulate your intended methods, you need to write a 6-8 page prospectus (double-spaced except for bibliography section). The purpose of the prospectus is to ensure that students have done appropriate background work to be successful in the research phase. Depending on the nature of your research, you may wish to complete this step either just prior to taking ENVS 401 (e.g., if you are doing summer field work) or while you are taking ENVS 401 (e.g., as your first assignment). You will work with your faculty adviser to determine the best approach.

The first step is to conduct a literature search to 1) become familiar with what is known and not known about your topic, 2) write your prospectus introduction, 3) refine your methods, and 4) find literature that might be helpful as you write your thesis. We recommend a minimum of 15 sources.

Although the prospectus structure may vary by discipline and topic, we recommend the following outline. However, you may include different content as approved by your faculty adviser.
   1) Introduction – The introduction should summarize essential background so the reader can understand the context, purpose and methods for the thesis. The Introduction should synthesize and cite some of the literature in the bibliography.
2) **Research questions or project goal** – Summarize what hypotheses you plan on testing, what questions you hope to answer or – for creative projects – what goals you hope to achieve.

3) **Methods** – What specific methods will you use to answer those questions or achieve those goals?

4) *(Optional)* **Preliminary Outline or Product** – What will your thesis or terminal project eventually look like? What sections will it have?

5) **Timeline** – When will you conduct your research and complete your thesis? Include all benchmarks and check-in points (in other words, work with your faculty adviser to create agreed-upon deadlines).

6) **Bibliography** – Include a list of resources that you have consulted or that may be of use to you as you conduct your research.

### 3. and 4. Take ENVS 401 Research (4 credits) and ENVS 403 Thesis (4 credits)

For ENVS honors students not in Clark Honors College, we require that you take 4 credits each of ENVS 401 (research) and ENVS 403 (thesis), both of which may count towards your major requirements, depending on the research topic. You will work with your academic adviser to determine how these credits might count towards your major requirements. CHC students may substitute HC 477 Thesis Prospectus for the ENVS 401 requirement, but need to register for ENVS 403.

The intent of these credits is to ensure that students have time in their schedules to dedicate to research and writing. The expectation is that you will spend approximately 12 hours/week working on researching then writing your thesis. Your faculty adviser serves as the instructor of record and determines what a passing grade constitutes (ENVS 401/403 credits are always P/N). Example assignments might include short updates, data summaries, preliminary analysis, detailed thesis outline, draft thesis, etc.

To be approved to register for ENVS 401 and 403, pick up an independent study form from 144 COL. Complete the form, ask your faculty adviser to sign it and return it to 144 COL for your academic adviser to sign. You will be notified when you are cleared to register.

### 5. Give a public presentation

You will give a public presentation summarizing your work. Your faculty adviser needs to be present and you may invite anyone else. Presentations are usually 20-30 min with 20-30 min of questions. CHC students may count their CHC thesis defense for this requirement by inviting the ENVS community to attend their presentation.

Please schedule your presentation to occur before the end of week 10 of the term you are finishing your thesis. You can work with the ENVS Undergraduate Coordinator or Student Advisers (SAs) in 144 COL to reserve 249 COL. Please send the SAs a flier announcing your presentation so they can advertise it to the Environmental Studies community.
Lastly, we require that the student deposit the thesis in Scholar’s Bank, 
https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/, by the end of finals week. Email scholars@uoregon.edu and ask to submit to the collection called, “Honors Theses (Environmental Studies Program)”, https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/4666. If you are in CHC, ask to be linked to both the Clark Honors College and Environmental Studies collections.

We do not have any formatting requirements other than we require a cover (title) page and abstract page that is signed by your faculty adviser. A template can be downloaded from the ENVS website. We recommend that you look at past undergraduate theses to see how other students have approached their topics. In addition to Scholar’s Bank, there are paper theses available in 144 COL.

D. Other Opportunities
Consider sharing your findings with a broader audience!
1. UO Undergraduate Symposium – You can give a presentation or show a poster at this annual event celebrating undergraduate research and creative work, http://undergradsymposium.uoregon.edu/.
2. Oregon Undergraduate Research Journal – You can gain experience with the peer-review process and publish your findings through this undergraduate-led journal, http://ourj.uoregon.edu/.
3. Hill Fund for Undergraduate Research – You can apply for up to $300 for materials or travel required for your research or for you to present your findings at a conference, http://envs.uoregon.edu/undergrad/resources/.

E. Frequently Asked Questions
Q: Do I have to collect my own data?
A: No, a thesis can consist of library research or creative work. For projects in the natural science disciplines, the ability to collect original data is valuable, but we leave the amount and type of data to the discretion of the student and faculty adviser.

Q: What if my results aren’t significant?
A: Results don’t have to be "positive" to be meaningful, as you can learn just as much from non-significant results. In fact, negative results may require you to apply important critical thinking skills.

Q: Are there any particular formatting requirements?
A: Other than the required cover and signed abstract pages, we do not have a strict set of prescriptive formatting guidelines because our students can work with faculty members from many disciplines. Therefore, we count upon the faculty adviser to uphold disciplinary standards. However, Environmental Science majors presenting research findings can expect to follow a standard scientific paper format: Abstract, Table of Contents, List of Figures and Tables,
Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, and Literature Cited. You may also wish to add an Acknowledgements section.

Q: Do I need a second reader?
A: No, ENVS honors students who are not enrolled in CHC do not need a second reader or a committee, only a faculty adviser. CHC students must follow CHC requirements.

Q: What else should I consider?
A: If you are conducting research that involves either people or animals, talk with your faculty adviser to determine if you need to submit your project for review from the UO Institutional Review Board or the UO Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee.