



**Carleton  
University**

**School of  
Social Work**

**Honours Essay  
Guidelines**

*Revised July 2022*

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## 1.0 Overview

SOWK 4908, the Honours Essay, is a formal academic research study undertaken by a fourth year Bachelor of Social Work student under the supervision of a faculty supervisor. Completing an honours essay provides students with the opportunity to use the knowledge they have gained throughout their degree to pursue a larger-scale academic project, engaging with primary and secondary sources to analyze a research question pertinent to social work or social welfare.

The Honours Essay is a 1.0 credit course that is counted toward a student's free electives and is not a mandatory component of the Bachelor of Social Work. Honours essays are intended to begin in the fall term and be completed by the end of winter term; under some circumstances (documented illness, injury, or other extraordinary circumstances), students may be permitted to continue their research and writing into the summer term. Registration in the Honours Essay over the summer term will be dependent on the availability of a faculty supervisor.

## 2.0 Faculty Supervision

Students must arrange for supervision by a faculty member. Prior to contacting a potential supervisor, students should have some idea of the research they would be interested in undertaking in order to make a proposal to the faculty member.

When approaching a faculty member as a potential supervisor, students should consider and discuss:

- The research background and interests of the supervisor and whether they are compatible with the student's intended research area
- Working style and expectations
- Schedule for consultation and advising

Students should also approach potential supervisors with a clearly written outline that addresses the preliminary topic and general ideas to explore (for more details on the Statement of Interest, please see **How to Get Started in the Honours Essay, Section 4.0**).

The Undergraduate Supervisor may assist the student in selecting a faculty supervisor if necessary, however students should take the initiative to seek out a supervisor first. In some circumstances, a supervisor from outside the School of Social Work may be selected with written permission of the Undergraduate Supervisor.

The faculty supervisor will select another faculty member or the Undergraduate Supervisor to be the second reader of the student's final essay for grading purposes.

## 3.0 Administration

### 3.1 Timeline

When thinking about whether you want to write an honours essay, one important consideration is time. As you will learn from this document, a great deal of preparation goes into the honours essay before you even register for the course or begin your research. Students who are interested in writing an honours essay should expect to begin the registration process in May or June at the end of their third year. For a list of steps, please see **How to Get Started in the Honours Essay, Section 4.0**. An estimated timeline of each stage of the honours essay is presented in **Appendix A**.

### 3.2 Registration

Students must complete the Honours Essay Agreement Form (see **Appendix B**), have it signed by the faculty supervisor, and present it to the Undergraduate Supervisor prior to registering for SOWK 4908. If approved, the Undergraduate Supervisor will also sign the registration form and the student will provide the completed form to the Undergraduate Administrator. The Undergraduate Administrator will then provide instructions for registration in Carleton Central.

Tuition fees for the honours essay will be equal to those for any other 1.0 credit course. If students are able to arrange to work on the honours essay during the summer term, standard tuition and ancillary fees will apply.

### 3.3 Style

Student must choose one writing style in consultation with their faculty supervisor and ensure that citations and references are consistent. Recommended style manuals include:

- The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA)
- The Chicago Manual of Style
- A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations – Kate L. Turabian

### 3.4 Components

The completed honours essay will be between 40 and 60 pages, double-spaced, in 12-point font. The margins should be no less than 3 cm on all sides. All pages, with the exception of the first page, must be numbered. Along with the completed essay, the final submission must include:

#### *Title Page*

The title page will conform to the writing style selected by the student and will include:

- The title of the research paper (in a historical study, the title will include dates)
- Author's name
- "Honours Essay Submission"
- The School of Social Work and Carleton University
- Faculty Supervisor's name
- Second Reader's name
- Date of completion

For a sample title page, please see **Appendix C**.

### ***Abstract***

An abstract of no more than 150 words will follow the title page. The abstract summarizes the contents of the honours essay:

- Identifies the research question
- Outlines the methodological and theoretical approaches used in the study
- Discusses the principal findings and conclusions

### ***Acknowledgement***

An acknowledgement may be included if desired by the student. An acknowledgement recognizes those persons who assisted in bringing the project to completion.

### ***Table of Contents***

A table of contents is required for the final document. Chapters and subheadings must be used throughout the paper and referenced in the table of contents.

### ***Introduction***

This includes a clear statement of the research question/issue.

### ***Method or procedure***

This section describes how information was collected and how the conclusion was reached.

### ***Theoretical perspective***

This perspective or framework consists of a set of concepts or assumptions that inform the position or argument.

### ***Literature review***

A review of the general literature that exists on this topic or a selected aspect of it.

### ***Findings/Analysis/Discussion***

Under one of these headings, the thesis question is answered with the collected data (i.e. this is where you make your case).

### ***Summary/Conclusion***

There is a difference between these two. A summary briefly restates the points already made, whereas a conclusion outlines the overarching idea reached over the course of your work following the deliberate processes outlined in your study.

### ***References***

Includes, in an appropriate bibliographic style, those resources that were used for the study.

## **3.5 Deadlines**

Proposals must be submitted to the faculty supervisor no later than the last day of classes in the fall term.

The deadline for submission of the final honours essay is the last day of the term in which you are registered (i.e. the final day of classes in winter term). Please review the Undergraduate Calendar for this date in the year you are completing your essay. Late submissions may delay graduation to the next available term.

## **3.6 Grading**

The final grade for SOWK 4908 is comprised of:

- Proposal ..... 15%
- Honours Essay ..... 85%

Both the proposal and the final paper will be evaluated by the faculty supervisor in consultation with the second reader. The faculty supervisor will hold responsibility for submitting the final grade to the instructor of record for entry in Carleton Central.

Any student who is not satisfied with their grade for the honours essay has the right to appeal the grade by the processes outlined in the Undergraduate Calendar, Academic Regulations of the University.

## **3.7 Consent to Publication/Use of Essay as Reference**

The School of Social Work will keep electronic copies of all completed honours essays on file. These documents may be shared on the School website or with future students as a reference to

guide them in their own research project. If you do not consent to having your essay published or shared, you must send an email to the Undergraduate Supervisor and Undergraduate Administrator with the following statement:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do not consent to the use of my Honours Essay as a teaching aid or reference for future students, or to its publication online by the School of Social Work.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name & Student Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## 4.0 How to Get Started in the Honours Essay

There are several steps in the process of registering for the Honours Essay (SOWK 4908). If you are interested in this option, it is best to give thought to it before the end of your third year. Find out as much as you can about SOWK 4908 and think about topics you may wish to explore further.

Once you are completing your third year in the BSW, the steps in the process are:

### 1. Selecting a topic or general research idea

The topic of the essay must be related to an aspect of social work or social welfare, and the paper is expected to be analytic. An analytic paper is a systematic defense or refutation of a particular argument, or a conclusion reached by inquiring into the research topic. The process begins when a student has an interest in a specific social work/welfare topic that they wish to investigate further. The idea might come from your coursework, field placement experiences, faculty members, fellow students, your own experiences, readings, etc.

### 2. Initial meeting with the Undergraduate Supervisor

Students interested in registering for the Honours Essay must meet with the Undergraduate Supervisor, who can answer some of your questions about the process and will know which faculty members may be available for supervision.

### 3. Preparing a Statement of Interest

Before meeting with potential supervisors, you must prepare a brief (1-2 page) Statement of Interest. Your Statement must:

- Identify the topic
- Provide some sense of what you want to explore within that topic
- Identify your preliminary argument
- Articulate a preliminary research method
- Explore potential theoretical frameworks
- Provide a few central references

In short, your statement will need to reflect that you have thought about the topic, done some basic research, and are generally aware of what is involved in conducting an independent research project.

The Statement of Interest is not to be confused with the research proposal described in **Section 5.0**. The Statement of Interest is done on your own and precedes meeting with faculty and even the Undergraduate Supervisor; it provides a launching point for discussion of your interests. Your ideas about the project are not expected to be fully developed at this stage and your approach may shift as you conduct research and delve more deeply into the project, however you should have begun to think about the process.

#### **4. Selecting a supervisor**

As specified above, it is the student's responsibility to find a supervisor for the Honours Essay. For more information on faculty supervision, please see **Section 2.0**. You may approach more than one faculty member, but be sure to let them know that you are checking with several people to see who is available and may be the best fit. Please be aware that not all faculty members will have space in their workload or availability to take on more supervisory work. This is another reason to begin the process early.

#### **5. Submitting the Honours Essay Agreement Form (see Appendix B)**

Once a faculty member has agreed to supervise your work and a second reader has been determined, you will need to complete the Honours Essay Agreement Form. This form must be filled out completely and, once completed, requires the signatures of you, your faculty supervisor, your second reader, and the Undergraduate Supervisor. You must provide copies to all of the above, as well as to the Undergraduate Administrator.

#### **6. Setting a schedule**

Once the Honours Essay Agreement Form has been completed, you will need to arrange a work schedule with your supervisor that includes:

- A clear understanding of both of your expectations
- Regular meeting times (once a month or more is recommended)
- Setting deadlines for work
- Being respectful in keeping appointments, and
- Clear communication

Consistent failure to appear at appointments, adhere to deadlines, meet commitments, or regularly changing appointment dates may be regarded as voiding the contract between the student and the faculty supervisor. In order to avoid this, it is essential that the supervisor and student have clear and open communication. In the event that problems arise, the Undergraduate Supervisor must be contacted.

#### **7. Registering for the Honours Essay**



You now need to formally register in SOWK 4908. Once you have provided the Honours Essay Agreement Form (see **Appendix B**) to the Undergraduate Administrator, they will provide you with instructions to register in Carleton Central.

Both the Agreement Form and formal registration in Carleton Central must be completed in order to register for the Honours Essay.

## 5.0 Research Proposal

Preparing a robust research proposal is an important formative stage in developing your honours essay. You are expected to submit a formal research proposal of 7 to 12 pages, double-spaced. The proposal will be assessed by your faculty supervisor and the second reader selected by your supervisor and/or the Undergraduate Supervisor.

The proposal should reflect the clear and systematic approach that you have applied to your research question and should indicate how you plan to move forward with the essay itself. The research proposal is initiated by you but is done in consultation with and under the guidance of your supervisor.

Not only does the proposal give you the opportunity to begin exploring your area of study and to start mapping out your proposed direction, but it also provides an important opportunity for your supervisor to provide input on defining the parameters of your research project. It is important to establish the foundations of your essay with the support of your supervisor and second reader early in the process.

The research proposal can be understood as an informal contract between you and your supervisor, with your supervisor and second reader identifying modifications that are thought necessary for successful completion of the project. You will be working directly with your supervisor, who is expected to guide and assist you through the process with ideas, challenging questions, administrative support, and intellectual input. It is your responsibility to monitor your progress in light of the completion deadline for your proposal.

If your research involves human participants, your proposal must be submitted to the Carleton University Research Ethics Committee and it is your responsibility to ensure that the timelines for the ethics process are followed (and that your proposal is completed in time to allow for this process). An estimated timeline of each stage of the honours essay is presented in **Appendix A**.

Your research proposal will contain many of the same elements as your final paper but will be at a much more preliminary level. The proposal should include the following:

- Title page (even if the title is preliminary)
- Introduction: identify the topic and why it is important
- Method
- Thesis or central propositions, assertions, or arguments that you will be making (this will likely be tentative at this stage)

- Theoretical framework: concepts and assumptions that will be used to analyze and support your thesis and why these were selected
- Sources of evidence: where you will get your data
- Literature review: indicate you have a grasp of the main literature on this topic and where some of the gaps may be
- Preliminary references
- Work schedule: this should indicate the number of meetings, times and dates of meetings, and what will be completed by each date. This must be developed in consultation with your supervisor.

**Two copies** of the research proposal must be submitted to the faculty supervisor. The research proposal will constitute 15% of your final grade, with the grade jointly determined by your supervisor and second reader. Since your supervisor and second reader will both need time to read and comment on your proposal, please allow at least two weeks for this stage of the process.

The expectation is that the ideas in your proposal will be discussed with your supervisor, with input from the second reader, and issues or concerns raised in a supportive and constructive manner. A successful research proposal meeting should leave both you and your supervisor confident that the project is robust and doable within the allotted timeframe. Following a successful meeting, you should know where to focus your energy and how to approach your research. While there is always room for changes and it is likely that not everything will fall perfectly into place, the large pieces of the research puzzle should have their orientation set at this stage of the process. Some sections of highly developed proposals may be moved directly to the honours essay itself, but this should be determined in consultation with your supervisor.

## 6.0 Ethics Review

All research involving human participants must be approved by the appropriate board of the Carleton University Office of Research Ethics. If your honours essay requires ethics review, you must plan accordingly when setting up your work schedule with your faculty supervisor.

More information involving the ethics review process can be found at [the website of the Office of Research Ethics](#), including upcoming meetings of CUREB-A and CUREB-B, submission deadlines, forms, and application checklists.

Please note that per their website:

The Tri-Council Policy states that REB review is not required for research that relies exclusively on secondary use of **anonymous** (not anonymized) information, or anonymous human biological materials, provided the process of data linkage or recording or dissemination of results does not generate identifiable information.

In the case of all other types of data (including anonymized or de-identified data), approval must be sought from the REB. In all cases, we advise you to contact the Office of Research Ethics to confirm whether you need approval and, if so, what steps to follow.

## 7.0 Preparing the Final Research Paper

The final honours essay will be an analytic paper that states and systematically defends a thesis. It will have a clear method for how the research is being conducted, reflect an awareness of the main literature on the topic (and identify where some of the gaps are), and will articulate a theoretical approach or framework that will be used to explain the data/information that has been collected. You are expected to do research that is uniquely yours, and while similar studies may exist there should be some elements of originality in your work. This does not mean that you are required to come up with entirely new and untested ideas, but rather that your paper must demonstrate that you have gone through the research process with an idea that you can explain using the standard components of a research study. For example, your study can agree with or refute the results found in another study. In either case, you need to demonstrate your own process in reaching your conclusion.

In preparing your essay, you must spend time organizing it clearly, writing well, and developing ideas that can be retested. Be sure to carefully review the required style and elements indicated in **Section 3.0**.

Upon completion, two hard copies of the honours essay must be provided to the faculty supervisor for grading. A PDF of the completed essay should also be submitted to the faculty supervisor electronically.

## 8.0 Summary of Steps to Complete the Honours Essay

1. Select a topic/general idea.
2. Meet with the Undergraduate Supervisor about your interest in the Honours Essay.
3. Prepare a Statement of Interest.
4. Meet with potential faculty supervisors; when a supervisor is found, agree on the research question and method.
5. Complete the BSW Honours Essay Agreement Form.
6. Register for SOWK 4908 in Carleton Central.
7. Work on research proposal with faculty supervisor; completed proposal to be submitted to faculty supervisor and second reader.
8. Make any revisions suggested by the faculty supervisor and second reader. You will then move to the next stage, subject to the approval of your supervisor and second reader after reviewing the changes.
9. If the study involves research on human participants, proceed to Ethics Review.
10. Gather data (e.g. interviews, surveys, systematically reviewing existing data).
11. Write the honours essay with guidance from the faculty supervisor.
12. Submit two copies of the final draft to the faculty supervisor.
13. The essay will be graded by the faculty supervisor in consultation with the second reader; the final grade will be submitted by the instructor of record.

## Appendix A: Honours Essay Timeline

Below, we have sketched a general timeline for writing an honours essay, outlining the steps and the approximate amount of time each stage takes. The timelines are based on a range; the shorter end of the range would require significant hours of work on a weekly or even daily basis. The longer timeframe represents someone devoting part-time hours to the work or having any kind of disruption to the research. If using secondary data, the project may be completed in 7 months, but if using primary data, the work can take 8-10 months to complete.

<b>Stage of Work</b>	<b>Average Time</b>	<b>Accumulated Time</b>
Formulate research question and decide on readers	2 weeks	2 weeks
Draft research proposal	4 weeks	6 weeks
Proposal defence and revisions	2 weeks	2 months
Draft ethics application and receive approval	4 – 6 weeks	3 – 3.5 months
Data collection (if using secondary resources this may take longer)	4 – 8 weeks	4 – 5.5 months
Data analysis	4 weeks	5 – 6.5 months
Pulling together first draft	8 weeks	7 – 8.5 months
Supervisor reads first draft	2 – 3 weeks	7.5 – 9 months
Revisions and final draft	4 – 6 weeks	8.5 – 10.5 months
Supervisor and second reader evaluate and grade essay	2 – 3 weeks	9 – 11 months

APPENDIX B



**Carleton  
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**SOWK 4908 Honours Essay  
Agreement Form**

**PART 1. STUDENT INFORMATION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_, Student #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Surname First name

**PART 2. HONOURS ESSAY INFORMATION**

PROPOSED TOPIC AREA

RESEARCH QUESTION

**PART 3. CONSENT TO SUPERVISE**

SUPERVISOR:

SECOND READER:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**PART 4. PROPOSED DEADLINES**

RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUBMISSION DATE

ETHICS REVIEW APPLICATION DEADLINE

HONOURS ESSAY SUBMISSION DATE

*These deadlines may be subject to change in consultation between the faculty supervisor and student.*

**PART 5. CONSENT OF UNDERGRADUATE SUPERVISOR**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Submit completed form to Social Work Undergraduate Administrator for further registration instructions.**

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

RECEIVED: \_\_\_\_\_

**SAMPLE TITLE PAGE**

Violence Against Disabled Persons

By

Mary Smith

**HONOURS ESSAY**

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
For the degree of Bachelor of Social Work

School of Social Work  
Carleton University

Research Advisor: Professor Gerald O'Connor

April 2019