Honors College Diploma Structure & Academic Requirements

What students should know about the new system

As we become an Honors College, we will slowly phase out the current six-diploma structure to make way for a brand new structure with just two diploma options: the **Honors Laureate: Self-Directed Diploma** and the **Honors Laureate: Area-Directed Diploma**. This new structure is just as flexible as the old one but with a new way to organize honors credit and new credit options that better support Virginia Tech’s goals for the 21st century student. See the *Earning an Honors Laureate Diploma* page of the website for more information.

All students who entered Honors prior to Fall 2017 may continue to work toward an old diploma or switch to a new Honors Laureate diploma. All students entering Honors in Fall 2017 or later must work toward an Honors Laureate diploma.

**The Honors Laureate Diploma Structure**
The **Four Elements of an Honors Education** make up an Honors Laureate diploma. Much like our current system, students can choose ways to earn honors credit within these Elements:

1) Honors College Curriculum
2) Disciplinary Depth
3) Transdisciplinary Capabilities
4) Undergraduate Research & Guided Experiential Learning

Students must complete at least six credits in each Element for a total of at least 30 honors credits. Students have two diploma options from which to choose, each requiring 30 honors credits:

**Honors Laureate: Self-Directed Diploma**
This diploma enables students to fully customize their honors education.

**Honors Laureate: [Destination Area/Strategic Growth Area–Directed] Diploma**
This diploma enables students to pursue an honors-enhanced curriculum within a set discipline or disciplines. Students follow a predetermined check sheet. To review check sheets, see the *Earning an Honors Laureate Diploma* page of the website.

**The Four Elements of an Honors Education**
Below is the complete list of honors credit opportunities sorted by Element along with brief descriptions of changes.

1) **Honors College Curriculum**
   Students must earn at least 6 credits in this Element.

   - UH 1054 Honors College First-Year Seminar
   - UH 1604 Honors Undergraduate Research Practices
   - UH 2054 Honors College Second-Year Seminar
   - UH 2124 Honors Reading Seminar
   - UH 2604 Honors Transdisciplinary Research
   - UH 2804 Honors Portfolio Practices
   - UH 4004 Honors Tutorial
   - UH 4104 Honors Peer Education Practicum
   - UH 4504 Honors Discovery and Innovation Studios
   - Connectivity Modules

   *What Changed?*
   Most of these courses are new; some are being revised, and others have not yet been created.
2) Disciplinary Depth
Students must earn at least 6 credits in this Element. *All credits must be within a student’s primary major.*

- Departmental Honors Course
- Faculty–Student Agreement
- Independent Study
- Graduate-Level Course

**What Changed?**
Nothing yet, but we plan to help departments expand their honors course offerings. (“Departmental Honors Course” still refers to the courses taught from the disciplinary departments with course numbers that end with an “H”). A form will still be required to request honors credit for a Faculty–Student Agreement.

3) Transdisciplinary Capabilities
Students must earn at least 6 credits in this Element. *All credits must be outside a student’s primary major, but they can now be inside a minor or secondary major.*

- Departmental Honors Course
- Faculty–Student Agreement
- Independent Study
- Graduate-Level Course

**What Changed?**
By allowing credits from minors or secondary majors, this credit is more attainable for students pursuing complex courses of study. A form will still be required to request honors credit for a Faculty–Student Agreement.

4) Undergraduate Research & Guided Experiential Learning
Students must earn at least 6 credits in this Element. Some of these experiences must be documented with the new Guided Experiential Learning form, which combines several old forms. All forms for the new diploma structure are available on the *Earning an Honors Laureate Diploma* page of the website.

- Undergraduate Research
- UH 3204: Honors Service Learning
- Study Abroad or Study Away
- Innovation Hubs
- Internship or Co-Op
- Field Study
- Partners in the Parks
- Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets Leadership Experiences

**What Changed?**
Students can now earn credit by studying at one of the University’s new Innovation Hubs.

More detail on the new Honors Laureate diplomas and a full breakdown of the ways to earn honors credit is available on the *Earning an Honors Laureate Diploma* page of the website.
NEW HONORS ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

We recognize that pursuing an honors education involves risk as well as reward. Real academic challenges do not guarantee success. We would like to free honors students to take the academic risks that could become some of their most educational experiences. Moving forward, as long as students demonstrate progress toward an honors diploma, they will have the freedom to remain in the Honors College without worrying about the risk of significant academic challenges.

Honors students will no longer have to maintain a specific GPA throughout their time in Honors. Instead, students must earn an initial GPA and a concluding GPA—the time in the middle, the “GPA flex period,” will not be monitored. Students earn the privilege of the GPA flex period by doing two things:

1) Submitting a Course of Study Planner by the end of the first semester in Honors.
2) Achieving a 3.60 cumulative GPA after two traditional semesters in Honors.

The Course of Study Planner (COSP), the centerpiece of planning an individualized Virginia Tech Honors College education, is due for review by the end of a student’s first semester in Honors. The Honors College will not remove students who do not complete a COSP. However, students who meet the GPA benchmark but do not submit a planner cannot enter the GPA flex period and will be required to maintain a 3.60 cumulative GPA after every semester until the planner is submitted and approved.

Spring 2017 Transition Details for Specific Groups
The Honors College does not expect current students to meet the new 3.6 benchmark in order to enter the GPA flex period. Instead, we have established guidelines to transition students to the new system based on when they entered Honors. If you entered in:

Spring 2016 or earlier: You are automatically in the GPA flex period as of January 2017. Honors will not check your GPA until the semester in which you graduate. See below for more detail.

Fall 2016 or Spring 2017: You must earn a 3.50 cumulative GPA by the end of Spring 2017 to enter the GPA flex period. Honors will remove those who do not earn a 3.5 cumulative GPA. However, students can request reinstatement later once they achieve at least a 3.60 or better cumulative GPA.

HONORS ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

For Students Pursuing an Old Honors Diploma

Minimum GPA
Students in their first or second semester of Honors must achieve a cumulative 3.50 or better GPA by the end of Spring 2017. All other current honors students are now in the new GPA flex period. To graduate in Honors, achieve at least a cumulative 3.30 or better GPA and complete honors diploma requirements.

Honors Diploma Progress
Earn honors credit in two or more of the four old categories of honors credit. Complete the requirements of the diploma you select. Earn credit at least once every twelve months and complete the yearly Progress Survey.

Credit Limit
You may count up to six credits from any one way to earn honors credit toward your honors diploma. After six credits, any additional credit in that way will no longer count toward your honors diploma.

Grading Scale
Take courses as A–F unless P/F is the only option. Students no longer have to earn a course grade of “B” or better to count a course for honors credit.

For Students Pursuing a New Honors Diploma

Course of Study Planner & GPA
Submit a COSP by the end of the first semester for Honors approval and achieve a 3.60 or better cumulative GPA after two traditional semesters in Honors in order to enter the GPA flex period. Failure to submit a COSP requires maintaining a cumulative 3.60 after every semester until the planner is submitted and approved. To graduate in Honors, achieve a cumulative 3.30 or better GPA and complete honors diploma requirements.

Honors Diploma Progress
Complete at least six credits in each of the Four Elements of an Honors Education for a total of at least 30 honors credits. Earn credit at least once every twelve months and complete the yearly Progress Survey.

Grading Scale
Take courses as A–F unless P/F is the only option.