



## Department of Geography Honours Program Guidelines

The Geography Honours Program offers exceptional fourth year Geography undergraduate students with a GPA of 6.0 or higher the opportunity to undertake a concentrated course of studies related specifically to their research interests.

The program is divided into two courses:

- **GEOG 499A (1.5 units); and**
- **GEOG 499B (1.5 units).**

These courses support the completion of a supervised independent research project chosen by the student (the Honours Thesis), and the presentation and defense of the Honours Thesis in an oral exam at the end of the second term.

Much of the learning is self-directed with a supervisor, and in addition, there are regular class meetings with the Honours cohort taught by the Honours Advisor.

The main task of GEOG499A is to develop the Honours cohort community that supports and sustains students as interdisciplinary researchers, as well as to begin the individual research process (including writing your research proposal, completing a literature review, getting the ethics review in place if necessary, and beginning data collection). GEOG499B completes the research process (including on-going data collection and analysis, writing the thesis, and presenting your work publically in the oral defense). GEOG499A and GEOG499B are tied courses, meaning that both courses must be completed to successfully complete the Honours Program. If you withdraw from the program by not taking 499B, a grade of N (i.e., F) will be assigned to 499A. Therefore, **it is important to understand that when you register for Honours you are making a commitment to completing both GEOG 499A and 499B.**

Undergraduate students considering future graduate work will find that the Honours Program provides them with certain advantages over and above their Major degree program. The formulation of an Honours Thesis, with its associated skills development (e.g., literature review, fieldwork, data collection, analysis, interpretation, writing, and oral examination), affords invaluable research experience and provides a unique specialist project that can be discussed in graduate school or professional school applications or interviews. The chance to work closely with a research expert in an area of your interest means that you will have someone who knows you well who can

provide a more detailed letter of reference for you as well as a mini-graduate school experience. Past Honours students report the importance of the program for supporting their graduate school applications and future success in the job market. An Honours thesis can often ladder to a Masters project which can then save you time to degree at the graduate level.

### **Contacts for Assistance:**

This document provides important information and guidelines for the completion of your Honours Thesis. The following people can help with questions.

Dr. Cameron Owens, Honours Advisor and Instructor for 499A and 499B  
Email: [camo@uvic.ca](mailto:camo@uvic.ca); Phone: 250-721-7330; Office: DTB B210

Dr. Cameron Owens, Undergraduate Advisor  
Email: [geogadvising@uvic.ca](mailto:geogadvising@uvic.ca); Phone: 250-721-7330; Office: DTB B210

Catherine Duncan, Honours Program Assistant  
Email: [geoginfo@uvic.ca](mailto:geoginfo@uvic.ca); Phone: 250-721-7327; Office: DTB B203

## **1. Entry and Program Requirements and Procedures:**

### **1.1. Entering the Program**

1. Graduating with Honours entails meeting more stringent GPA requirements than the Major degree. To be eligible for the Honours program, students must have achieved a minimum average of 6.0 (B+) for upper year courses. To calculate this average, only 300 and 400 level courses will be considered. Students must have completed a minimum of 12 units (8 courses of 1.5 units) of 300 or 400 level courses, of which 9 units (6 courses of 1.5 units) or more must be in Geography. Applicants must be eligible for fourth year standing (42 units completed). Please note that students must complete the all program requirements for the BA Major or the BSc Major Program in addition to GEOG 499A and GEOG 499B in order to graduate with an Honours degree. A GPA of 6.0 (B+) must be maintained in all 300 and 400 level courses.
2. Students interested in the Honours Program must secure a thesis Supervisor before applying. The role of a Supervisor is to help you define, develop, undertake, and write up a research project. Once you have identified your general area of interest, you may approach faculty members who teach or conduct research in your area of interest. Anyone who is a [faculty member](#) or an [adjunct faculty member](#) is technically eligible to serve as a supervisor. The profiles on the department website allow you to explore likely synergies in terms of areas of interest. Be sure that the person you are thinking of as a potential supervisor will be on campus and available for the two terms you will be doing your Honours project. It is also a good idea to meet with them early to check compatibility of working styles and their willingness to serve as your supervisor. The Honours Advisor and Undergraduate Advisor can also provide advice on potential supervisors.

3. The Honours Program is undertaken over two consecutive terms, normally September to April. January to August and May to December are also possible by special arrangement. The application **deadline is in the second week of classes of the term in which you wish to begin (see the [Honours section of the website](#) for specific dates)** but you will want to have done your background work to obtain a supervisor long before that to ensure you get your preferred choice. Each faculty member normally supervises PhD, Masters, and Honours students and thus can only take a limited number to give them the attention they deserve.

The application form can be found in the [Honours section of the website](#). It **must be signed by your Supervisor and the Honours Advisor before submitting** to the Honours Program Assistant. An application without these signatures will not be accepted. Submission to the Honours Program Assistant by email to [geoginfo@uvic.ca](mailto:geoginfo@uvic.ca) is preferred, but hard copy submissions are also accepted at the Geography Main Office in DTB B203.

4. The department will confirm that you meet the GPA requirements and will forward an email of acceptance to the Advising Centre for Humanities, Science and Social Science. To complete the application process, **it is the student's responsibility to declare the Geography Honours Program as their major**. You will then be registered by the department in GEOG499A and GEOG499B and be added to the CourseSpaces site for the course.

## 1.2. Procedures and Processes for your Individual Program

The specific process of your individual program will depend on your research design and your Supervisor. However, the following guidelines apply to all students.

1. Meet with your Supervisor early in the first semester of your program to formulate and refine your thesis topic and scope. Avoid choosing a very broad, unmanageable topic for the thesis.
2. Consider applying for the [Jamie Cassels Undergraduate Research Scholarship](#) to financially support the completion of your Honours program. You can also apply to the Department of Geography's Ross Fund for funds to cover research expenses. Contact the Honours Program Assistant for more information on the Ross Fund.
3. Secure a Second Reader **early in your program**. The role of the Second Reader is to provide additional advice on the research and thesis and to participate in the oral exam.
4. Working with your Supervisor and Second Reader, prepare a research proposal. You will receive a deadline and more information on this from the Honours Advisor in the 499A syllabus. At minimum, the research proposal should include:
  - A rationale/problem statement/motivation for your research – why your research is relevant/important

- Research goal/objectives/questions – what you want to find out
  - Literature review – what has been written about your research objectives or question that is relevant to your thesis
  - Methods – how you will gather and analyze primary or secondary data to answer your research questions
  - Timeline – how you will budget your time to meet the completion deadline
  - Ethics application (if applicable)
5. Complete your Ethics Review, if applicable. Students whose research methodology may involve human or animal subjects must work with their Honours Supervisor to develop an ethics proposal for approval by the [UVic Human Research Ethics Board](#) or the [UVic Animal Care Committee](#). Approval may take several weeks and may require you to re-submit your application, so plan to complete this as soon as possible to avoid delays in data collection.
  6. Start data collection. Note “data” or “evidence” may take many different forms depending on the nature of your research.
  7. At the end of the first term and upon completion of the proposal, the Honours Advisor will consult with your Supervisor to ensure that you have completed the requirements for GEOG499A to your Supervisor’s satisfaction. You will then receive an ‘INP’ grade for GEOG499A and be registered in GEOG499B for the second term of your Honours Program.

***Extensions to GEOG499A will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, and you must submit a Request for Academic Concession to avoid receiving an ‘N’ grade.***

8. Continue data/evidence collection, analysis, interpretation, and writing.
9. Keep your Supervisor *and your Second Reader* informed of progress throughout the research and writing. Meet with at least your supervisor regularly.
10. Discuss with your Supervisor and Second Reader a schedule for submitting drafts and allowance for revisions leading to your oral exam. Oral exams will be scheduled no later than the last date of final exams in the respective term. Your Supervisor will help you by giving you feedback on your writing as you go. Nevertheless, you should strive to make your drafts as polished as possible before submitting them to your Supervisor for revision. Carefully proofread your thesis. Ask peers to read your thesis for consistency, spelling, and grammar. Do not rely on spellcheck and do not expect your Supervisor to be your copy editor. It is typical to have to do some revisions and maybe submit more than one draft to your Supervisor.

Make sure you give your Supervisor and Second Reader enough time to adequately review your thesis, and give yourself enough time to complete revisions. One preferred strategy, depending on your Supervisor’s preference, is to submit sections of your thesis as you complete them.

### 1.3. Participation in GEOG 499A and 499B

One of the main benefits of undertaking an Honours Program in Geography is that you have the opportunity to explore your interests with a community of other students who are all working on original research projects that inspire them. The group meets regularly over the course of the two terms to brainstorm ideas and support each other's research and future goals. In this way, it is a mini experience of what it is like to be a graduate student in a research community. New students coming in join the group and have opportunities to be mentored by students who are already there. Participation in the group is scheduled as 499A and 499B class meetings.

***Please note: Completion of 499A & 499B are in ADDITION to your other degree requirements. They do NOT satisfy the requirement for 3.0 units of 400-level GEOG courses in Geography degree programs.***

## 2. Procedures for the Honours Thesis Final Oral Examination

1. Discuss potential dates for your oral exam with your Supervisor. Coordinate with your Second Reader and the Honours Advisor for a date and time when everyone is available. Once you have a date, contact the Honours Program Assistant to book a room for your oral exam and then confirm this with everyone. If you have an external second reader who is not on campus, you should arrange for the booking of the videoconferencing facility with the Honours Program Assistant. This must be done early to ensure a room. Be sure to invite other interested parties to your oral presentation and to celebrate your work. This enhances your experience.
2. Submit a copy of your final thesis ***no later than 2 weeks before your oral exam*** to each of the following: Supervisor, Second Reader, and Honours Advisor. ***Extensions to GEOG 499B will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and you must submit a Request for Academic Concession to avoid receiving an 'N' grade for GEOG 499B.***
3. Your oral exam is a public occasion. The Honours Program Assistant will prepare and circulate a general announcement of the date, time, and place of all Honours presentations and oral exams (defenses) for the term. You should plan to attend the oral exams of all your Honours cohort colleagues.
4. Prepare a brief (approximately 20 minutes) presentation. Practice your oral presentation in front of your friends, particularly for timing, clarity, and answering questions. More assistance with this will be provided in 499B.
5. The oral presentation and exam will be chaired by the Honours Advisor. It normally lasts about one and a half hours, but naturally varies from individual to individual and is typically booked for two hours to allow each Honours student to receive the full attention of the committee.

The normal format is as follows:

- i. Honours Advisor introduces the committee and candidate.
- ii. Candidate makes a brief presentation.
- iii. Related comments or questions from the audience.
- iv. First round of questions, usually in the following order: Second Reader, Supervisor, Honours Advisor. Note that questions may relate not only to the thesis research, but also to any aspect of geography in which you have been involved.
- v. A second round of questions may follow.
- vi. Audience and candidate exit the room while the committee deliberates. The grade is awarded on the basis of the thesis, the oral exam, and your performance throughout your Honours program. See Honours Criteria below.
- vii. Candidate is invited back into the room and is informed of the result and any required revisions to the thesis before it will be considered completed. If applicable, an agreed upon timeline for revisions will be established.

#### 6. Honours Criteria

- Relevance and significance – is this an important question that will contribute to new knowledge in some way in the field? Is the case clearly made for its relevance within the field?
- Research design – clearly defined research objectives/questions, set within literature context
- Information gathering – acquired primary or secondary data; the thesis must go well beyond a literature review, e.g., synthesis, theory development, combining knowledge in new and innovative ways.
- Methodology – appropriate and rigorous methods. Note: some projects may contribute significantly in the area of methodological development.
- Analysis/discussion – critical analysis, well-supported interpretation and conclusions; depth of analysis and context within broader literature
- Writing – well-written thesis (coherent, logical, grammatically correct, consistent referencing/citation style appropriate for the sub-discipline)
- Images and illustrations (graphs, tables, photos etc.) appropriate and relevant, of sufficient quality, and appropriately cited/referenced.
- Oral defense – effective presentation that tells the research story and ability to respond critically and confidently to questions
- Independence – degree to which thesis is student-led

#### 7. An Honours degree requires:

- i. a grade of at least B+ in GEOG 499B
- ii. a graduating GPA of at least 6.0 (B+)
- iii. a GPA of at least 6.0 in 300- and 400-level Geography courses.

Students who do not meet these requirements may opt to receive the Major degree.

8. You are responsible for clearing up all typographical and other minor errors in the written thesis, as well as changes required by your committee after your oral exam. **You must submit it to your committee by the agreed upon date. The Honours Advisor will not submit your grade until the Supervisor has signed off on agreed upon revisions.**
9. Submit a final copy of your thesis to the Honours Program Assistant, your Supervisor, and the Honours Advisor. It is also courtesy to send one to your Second Reader. Consult your committee regarding whether electronic copies are acceptable to them.

### 3. Honours Thesis: Document Formatting

1. Print on good quality 8½ x 11 inch white paper
2. Margins should be no less than 1 inch on three sides, with not less than 1½ inches on the left
3. **12 point** is an appropriate font size. Use your favourite legible and professional-looking font.
4. Double-space throughout, except for longer quotations, tables, footnotes, bibliographies (but the latter should be double-spaced between items).
5. Pagination: use small Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, etc.) for all "preliminary" pages following the Title Page (which is not numbered). Arabic numerals are used for the main text and endpapers, e.g., Appendices.
6. Format includes some or all of:
  - Title Page (see example)
  - Abstract (1-2 page summary of your thesis including results and conclusion. List your Supervisor and Second Reader at the end of your Abstract. Starts page i.)
  - Table of Contents
  - List of Tables (with page numbers)
  - List of Figures (with page numbers)
  - List of Appendices
  - Acknowledgements (do not include Acknowledgements until after your oral exam)
  - Dedication (if included)
  - Main text (starts page 1)
  - Appendices
  - Bibliography (or Footnotes, or Literature Cited)
7. The main text is generally organized into sections and subsections (check with your Supervisor), for example:

1.0 Introduction (rationale/motivation/problem statement and research objectives)  
2.0 Literature Review  
2.1 Topic heading  
2.2 Another topic heading  
2.3 etc.  
3.0 Methods  
4.0 Data/Results  
5.0 Discussion  
6.0 Conclusion  
7.0 References Appendix A Appendix B  
*Etc.*

8. Thesis Length: 50-100 pages of text, including maps, diagrams, bibliography, and appendices. Note: Quality is far more important than length. If you intend to publish your work, check with your Supervisor for the relevant journal guidelines for publication.





**(Sample Thesis Title Page)**

RECENT TRENDS IN GEOGRAPHIC PHENOMENA  
by  
I.M.A. Student

A graduating thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Honours degree of

Bachelor of \_\_\_\_\_

in the Department of Geography

University of Victoria

20XX





**Department of Geography  
Honours Program Registration Request**

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student number: V00\_\_\_\_\_ Program year: \_\_\_\_\_

Student preferred e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

COURSE ABBREVIATION	COURSE NUMBER	COURSE TITLE	UNIT VALUE
<u>Geog</u>	<u>499A</u>	<u>Honours thesis</u>	<u>1.5</u>
<u>Geog</u>	<u>499B</u>	<u>Honours thesis</u>	<u>1.5</u>

TOPIC TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

Will this project require ethics approval?  YES  NO

PROPOSED HONOURS RESEARCH PROJECT:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**These courses will be started during one of the following semesters with the understanding that all coursework will be completed by the end of that semester and grades submitted accordingly.**

**An Honours program running September to April is strongly recommended.**

- |                                    |             |                               |                               |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sep – Dec | Year: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> 499A | <input type="checkbox"/> 499B |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jan – Apr | Year: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> 499A | <input type="checkbox"/> 499B |
| <input type="checkbox"/> May – Aug | Year: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> 499A | <input type="checkbox"/> 499B |

Supervisor's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Honours Advisor's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date approved: \_\_\_\_\_

**I have read the Honours Program Guidelines, and, by signing this form, I agree to the conditions therein. I agree that I will be available for the scheduled in-person weekly meetings for these courses.**

Student's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

