Honours in Government and International Relations

Honours in Government and International Relations is a challenging, one-year program designed for students seeking to develop and apply their skills in Political Science/Studies and International Relations at an advanced level. In specialised seminars, Honours students learn applied research methods and engage with contemporary theoretical debates in their discipline. The thesis component allows students to pursue their interest in focused topic and produce a substantial piece of independent research. Throughout the year, Honours students work closely with a supervisor who provides feedback and guidance on their research.

The Honours experience develops a range of highly sought-after skills that are applicable in a wide variety of careers.

Program Structure

The Honours year involves the completion of:

- a 3,000 word bibliographic essay, submitted in semester one;
- two Honours seminars, both undertaken during semester one and each with 6,000 words of assessable work; and
- an 18,000 word thesis which is due in October.

These components are outlined in more detail below.

Honours is a single unified program. While you receive marks for all pieces of assessment, your academic transcript will record only your final, overall Honours mark. The thesis (including the preliminary bibliographic essay) is worth 60% of the final mark, and the two seminars are worth 20% each.
Honours Entry Requirement

To enter Fourth Year Honours, students must have completed a bachelors degree, with at least 36 senior credit points in Government and International Relations (i.e. 6 senior units of study), and have obtained a grade of credit or above in those 6 units of study. Cross-listed units may be credited towards the 36 credit points.

*Please note: the minimum requirement for entry into Honours is an average of 70% or above across 36 senior credit points in the intended subject area/s.*

Frequently Asked Questions

**I have a Pass in one or more of my Government units, but am really keen. Can I still do Honours?**
Possibly. Admission to and retention in the Government Honours Program is at the discretion of the Department. If in doubt discuss the situation with the Government Honours Coordinator. We want students who show they have the commitment and ability to do Government Honours. But we also want to make sure students are ready for the challenges it offers.

**Can I enter the Government and International Relations Honours program if I have not studied at the University of Sydney?**
Yes. Students whose bachelors degree was undertaken at another university will need to demonstrate they have broadly equivalent units of study to those that would be taught at the University of Sydney’s Department of Government and International Relations, and attained grades at their own university that are equivalent to the Government and International Relations Honours prerequisites. To determine equivalence, contact the Honours Coordinator.

**Can I do ‘joint’ Honours in Government and International Relations and another Department.**
Yes, however this is not common. Students may do joint Honours in Government and International Relations and another department, provided that there is
sufficient justification for the combined program. If you are considering doing joint Honours, it is advisable to consult the Honours Coordinators from both departments early to discuss this.

**Can I do Honours part time?**
No. Honours in Government and International Relations is only offered as a full-time program.

**Fourth Year Honours Program**
Completing your Government major and six senior units at a Credit standard or better will have left you well positioned to begin your Honours Year. In consultation with your supervisor, you may want to do some additional preparation for your thesis over the Summer break before Semester 1 begins.

Students must develop a thesis topic, write a brief proposal and secure a supervisor by early February at the latest. However, students are encouraged to obtain a supervisor prior to application in November the years before the course begins. Contact the honours coordinator about the process, they can also help identify available and relevant supervisors for your thesis.

The fourth-year Honours program in Government and International Relations consists of: two seminars, undertaken in the first semester; a bibliographic essay, due in late March; and an 18,000 word thesis, which is due in October.

**Summary of Important Dates**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday 25 February 2019</td>
<td>Seminars Begin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday 20 March, 2019</td>
<td>Bibliographic Essay due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 23 August, 2019</td>
<td>Draft of thesis due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday 9 October, 2019</td>
<td>Thesis due</td>
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Bibliographic Essay

Students write a bibliographic essay of 3,000 words and submit it by 5pm on Wednesday 20 March 2019. The bibliographic essay contributes to your final thesis grade and is assessed by your supervisor.

The bibliographic essay is a focused review of the literature surrounding your thesis topic. The process of writing is intended to help you refine your thesis topic and locate it within the context of existing literature. One way to conceptualise the task of writing the bibliographic essay is to think about the thesis as an intervention in a scholarly debate. In order to make a sensible contribution to the debate, you need to know what other people have said and what questions are currently being debated. The bibliographic essay demonstrates your awareness of the literature in a particular sub-field and its relevance to your topic. In a revised form the bibliographic essay may constitute a chapter of the thesis.

The literature you discuss will depend upon the nature of your thesis. Bear in mind that you are not expected to read absolutely everything in the field; your supervisor will provide guidance. Also, although you should make a scholarly appraisal of the literature, there is no need to attack all that has gone before. Include a bibliography of the material discussed and, if appropriate, an annotated bibliography of material which has been consulted. Ask your supervisor about this. Do not pad the essay out with a long list of books and journal articles that you have not read.

It is advisable to consult recent Government Honours theses in order to gain a clearer idea of what is expected. Ask your supervisor to recommend one or two good ones in your general area of research interest.

Honours Seminars
Honours students undertake two seminars during the first semester. The format of these seminars varies, but may include a combination of group discussions, individual and group-presentations. Each seminar counts toward 20% of the overall Honours mark and involves about 6,000 words of written assessment. One seminar will focus on methods, the other seminar will be assigned depending on your topic of study (either general politics or international relations).

Specifics of the seminars held in semester 1 will be confirmed in January.

**Honours Thesis**

Each student writes an 18,000 word thesis under the supervision of a member of the Government Department staff. The thesis is expected to make some original contribution to the study of politics and will count for 60 percent of the student’s fourth year grade.

Ideally, students will have identified a specific thesis topic and a supervisor before the commencement of the Honours year.

While Honours students do seminars in semester 1, substantive work on the thesis will begin early in this semester. Students need to work consistently on the thesis throughout the year if they hope to successfully complete the task.

For projects with specific technical needs, discuss these early with your supervisor or the Honours Coordinator.

Students whose research involves human intervention (interviews, questionnaires, etc) must have their projects approved by the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). If you are considering doing primary research involving people, it is important to discuss this early with your supervisor. The Honours Coordinator will also hold a special seminar on conducting interviews and submitting an ethics application early in Semester 1.
Once the honours year has begun, you are advised not to make any major change to your thesis topic, particularly after you have submitted your bibliographic essay. You can make minor changes to your thesis topic in consultation with your supervisor but may only make a substantial change with the agreement of your supervisor and after discussion with the Honours Coordinator. Agreement for such a change will be given in writing.

You are expected to submit a draft of your thesis to your supervisor in August. The draft will give you and your supervisor the chance to iron out problems in the thesis and produce a better final piece of work. If the draft is not submitted on time, the supervisor may decline to comment on it or may read only part of it. Students who do not submit a full draft for comment reduce their chances of completing a good thesis.

Government and International Relations Honours students must remain in Sydney (other than for approved field work or approved leave of absence) until their thesis is submitted.

Two hard copies of the thesis plus a pdf version are to be submitted to the Honours Coordinator on **Wednesday 9 October, 2019**. This deadline is absolute. No individual arrangements between thesis supervisors and students are permitted concerning this deadline. Exceptions will be made by the Honours Coordinator only on the grounds of serious and documented illness and misadventure. 'Misadventure' is defined as accident without negligence. Requests for extensions on the grounds of illness or misadventure should be made to the Honours Coordinator as soon as possible. In accordance with Faculty rules, work submitted after the due date (or date of extension) will be penalised at the rate of 5% of the possible mark for each calendar day that the work is late.

**Honours Thesis Preparation Guidelines**
The requirement that the thesis be 18,000 words long imposes a common discipline on all students. A variation of 10 percent in either direction is acceptable but theses which are outside this 'tolerance' will be penalised. Students need to include a word count at the start of their thesis. The word count includes all text, references and footnotes but excludes any appendices and the bibliography.

Students need to include the following declaration at the start of the thesis: "This work is substantially my own, and where any part of this work is not my own, I have indicated this by acknowledging the source of that part or those parts of the work."

The thesis needs to start with an abstract which is a very brief summary of what you set out to achieve in your thesis, your major findings and conclusions. It should be approximately 150 words and should be on a separate page. The purpose of the abstract is to provide a 'snapshot' of what is to come.

The thesis should be on A4 paper, word-processed with double-spacing. It should be in some kind of firm cover/binding. Text should appear only on one side of each page. Leave a left-hand margin of 3cm and a right-hand margin of approximately 1.5cm. Pages should be numbered. Each chapter should commence on a new page.

**Examples of Past Honours Theses**

Honours theses in Government and International Relations focus on a wide range of topics. In recent years, for example, Honours students have examined party candidate selection, national identity in ex-Soviet states, law and liberalisation in China, public policy think tanks, drug policy in Bolivia, private military firms, microcredit in developing countries, the EU and Turkey, just war theory, Australian immigration policy, targeted assassinations, women in Afghanistan, failed states, and disaster policy.
In order to gain a clearer understanding of what an Honours thesis involves, students are encouraged to read a few theses completed by past students. Recent Honours theses can be accessed online through the University of Sydney Library’s eScholarship Repository. Copies of past honours theses can also be borrowed from the Department Office.

**Thesis Supervision**

You will all be allocated a supervisor from the fulltime staff in Government and International Relations. They are an indispensable resource for your Honours year.

Ideally, the supervisor will be the member of staff whose knowledge and expertise is the most relevant and useful to the honours thesis. Finding a supervisor therefore involves locating a member of staff whose research interests and/or methodological approaches relate to your own thesis topic, no matter how vague it may initially be. A good place to start is by looking at staff members' profiles on the Government and International Relations website. When looking for a potential supervisor, students should not confine their attention only to those staff members who have taught them previously. Students are advised to consult with the Honours Coordinator who will help them identify an appropriate supervisor, the Coordinator makes the final choice of allocating a supervisor. Due to a variety of factors such as leave and competition you may not get your first choice of supervisor. Once a supervisor is allocated, it is important to make contact with them as soon as possible at the beginning of the Honours year.

The frequency of contact between supervisors and students is a matter for negotiation. As a general guide, however, you should expect to have contact with your thesis supervisor at least once a month during the first semester and weekly or fortnightly towards the completion of the thesis. The role of your supervisor will change throughout the year. In the early stages, your supervisor will help clarify and refine the topic and help identify appropriate literature. Later, the supervisor will read and advise on chapter drafts, structure, presentation and style. The
supervisor will not correct all spelling and grammar mistakes, although s/he may point to problem areas that need to be addressed.

Keep in mind that the policy of this Department is that:

- regular consultation occur between Honours students and their supervisors concerning the structure, scope, focus, sources and methodology of the thesis.
- extended consultation with the supervisor should take place following the submission of the draft, provided that the draft is submitted by the due date. At this point the supervisor will make clear his or her views concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the work completed, and offer suggestions to improve the scholarly and literary quality of the work.

The golden rule is to stay in touch. Do not wait till the end of the year to tell the supervisor that there are problems with the thesis. Remember, too, that your thesis is your work and your responsibility. You alone are responsible for its merits. The supervisor cannot guarantee a particular result.

Academic staff are happy to discuss issues with Honours students they are supervising or who are in their seminars. They do, however, have important duties to fulfil beyond conducting seminars and supervision. They need time for preparation, marking, carrying out research and writing. Honours students are encouraged, therefore, to contact academic staff during consultation hours, or by making appointments. Students who have problems with their supervision should advise the Honours Coordinator, who will attempt to resolve the issue.

**Marking the Thesis**

The Honours Coordinator in consultation with the supervisor will appoint two thesis examiners from within Government and International Relations for each thesis. Supervisors normally do not act as examiners for theses written under their supervision. Final decisions regarding examiners will be made by the
Honours Coordinator.

Your thesis will be marked independently by the two examiners. Each will mark the thesis without knowing what the other marker thinks of it. Each submits a suggested mark and a report justifying the mark to the Honours Coordinator. The reports of the thesis examiners will be made available to the student after the examination process is finished. The marks and reports are read by the Honours Coordinator. If there is a disagreement between the two marks of at least a grade or ten marks (out of 100), and this cannot be resolved by the two examiners, the Honours Coordinator may approach the supervisor to act as a third marker. In such cases the median mark of the three shall be the mark submitted to the honours examiners' meeting.

The Government and International Relations Honours Examiners' Meeting occurs in November, after all the theses have been read and provisional thesis marks suggested by examiners. The Examiners' Meeting reviews all marks awarded for each Honours student during the year, including the mark suggested for each thesis. It reviews the examiners' reports where necessary to aid its decisions.

Guidelines for Assessment of Honours Theses and all Honours year work

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<th>Honours II (ii)</th>
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evidence of ability to think theoretically as well as empirically, and to conceptualise and problematise issues. Weaknesses include gaps in research, important unresolved problems and inconsistencies within the argument, deficiencies in clarity, and stylistic lapses.

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<th>Honours II (i)</th>
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<td><strong>Note:</strong> The award of Honours at this level (and above) suggests that a student has the capacity to pursue postgraduate research work.</td>
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| 75-77 | Sound grasp of the subject area, with extensive reading and research, ability to use methodology and theory, evidence of careful and thorough discovery and original use of appropriate sources, competent analysis and evaluation of material, ability to present material clearly and succinctly with a well-thought out argument. |
| 78-79 | Demonstrates breadth and initiative in research and reading, complex understanding and some original analysis. Makes a good attempt to ‘get behind’ the evidence and engage with its underlying assumptions, and takes a critical, interrogative stance in relation to political argument and interpretation. Properly documented, with writing characterised by style, clarity, and some creativity. |

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| 80 to 84 | Demonstrates general excellence in the subject area without major error or naiveté, breadth of knowledge, clear familiarity with and ability to use appropriate methodologies and theories, and clear evidence of some independence of thought in the subject area. Superior written style, clarity and creativity. |
| 85 to 89 | First Class quality (as defined above) but with greater evidence of intellectual independence and more originality of thought. A mark in the upper range of this band demonstrates a command of the |
field both broad and deep, with independent intellectual argument and a significant degree of original thought.

*(A mark in the high 80s is around the mark required for an Australian Postgraduate Award at this University.)*

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<th>90 and above.</th>
<th>Outstanding First Class quality of Medal standard, demonstrating independent thought throughout, a flair for the subject, and research achievement of a kind that produces at least some work of PhD standard or of potentially publishable standard in a serious academic journal.</th>
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<td><em>(A mark of 90+ is necessary but not sufficient for the award of a Medal.)</em></td>
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**Deadlines and Penalties**

Students must adhere to the deadlines for all written work (see schedule of dates). Work submitted after the due date (or date of extension) will be penalised at the rate of 5% of the possible mark for each calendar day the work is late. The deadlines set by seminar coordinators for seminar work must be met.

**Plagiarism and Academic Honesty**

Students must (re)familiarise themselves with the University’s policy on Academic Honesty. The full policy can be found on the University policy online web site. It states, in part:

Academic honesty is a core value of the University of Sydney. The University is committed to the basic academic right that students receive due credit for work submitted for assessment. Integral to this is the notion that it is clearly unfair for students to submit work for assessment that dishonestly represents the work of others as their own. Such activity represents a form of fraud.
Plagiarism can be broadly defined as presenting another person’s ideas, findings or work as one’s own by copying or reproducing the work without due acknowledgment of the source. Plagiarism can take many forms. The most common form of plagiarism is where a student presents written work, including sentences, paragraphs or longer extracts from published work without attribution of its source. Work submitted for assessment may also be regarded as plagiarised where significant portions of an assignment have been reproduced from the work of another student, since this exceeds the bounds of legitimate cooperation.

Please note listing sources at the end of your assessment does not absolve you from plagiarism.

Failure to comply with the University’s standards for academic honesty may lead to failure in the work submitted for assessment or failure overall in the unit of study. In the most serious cases, the misconduct procedures of the University By-laws concerning Student Discipline (Chapter 8) may be invoked.

Non-Discriminatory Language

Government and International Relations supports the University policy on non-discriminatory language and students are required to comply with the policy. This states that the University community regards as offensive, under all circumstances, the use of written or spoken language which makes personal or irrelevant reference to sex, pregnancy, race (including colour, ethnic background, nationality or national identity), marital status, transgender status, disability, sexual preference, political or religious belief, carer’s responsibility and age.

For detailed guidance, students should consult the full policy which can be found on the University policy online web site.

Applying for Honours
All students who plan to undertake Honours in Arts must submit an application to the University. As soon as you decide you may want to do Honours in a subject area of your choice, you should confirm with the Honours Coordinator in the department in which you wish to study exactly what the specific requirements will be for that subject area and plan your degree structure accordingly.

The closing date for Honours 2019 applications is 30 November, and you submit these to the Student Information Office.

**Part Time & Mid-Year Entry**
The Government and International Relations Honours program does not offer the options of part-time study or mid-year entry.

**Acceptance and Enrolment**
The Department forms an Honours Committee, chaired by the Honours Coordinator, to decide on which students qualify to be offered an Honours place for the following year. All students will be notified of their success (or otherwise) after the release of Semester 2 results, so usually in the week before we break for Christmas. This letter will be sent by the Honours Coordinator and will include information about enrolling and the Honours year.

**Scholarships**
The University of Sydney offers scholarships specifically for Honours students. These are awarded on the basis of academic merit and personal attributes such as leadership and creativity. Students currently enrolled at the University of Sydney or other universities intending to undertake an additional Honours year at the University of Sydney are eligible to apply. Application forms can be obtained from the Scholarships Unit, Mackie Building K01, University of Sydney NSW 2006.

Contacts

Honours Coordinator

Dr Peter John Chen
Email: gir.honours@sydney.edu.au
Office: Room 462, School of Social and Political Sciences, Social Sciences Building (A02)
Phone: 61 2 9036 9079

The coordinator approves students’ entry into the program, maintains student records, liaises with supervisors and the staff teaching seminars, and chairs the committee that oversees the marking of theses. Students having any difficulties with the program at any time should see the coordinator.

- Honours Information Page
- Government and International Relations Staff Index
- Scholarships and Prizes Office
- University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee
  Honours Students will need to obtain ethics approval for any primary research involving humans.
- University of Sydney Library eScholarship Repository
  Download recent Honours theses in Government and International Relations.
- Sydney University Politics Society
  The Politics Society is the official student association affiliated with the Department of Government and International Relations. They hold regular events throughout the year, including an annual joint-Honours social event for past, present and future Honours students.