



**Honors Credit Learning Agreements (HCLAs):
A Factsheet for ACES James Scholars and Their Instructors
Academic Year 2023-2024**

General Overview of Honors Credit Options

- All ACES James Scholars need to complete **four courses with honors credit** before they graduate. To fulfill this requirement, scholars are expected to earn at least one **H** grade (denoting honors credit) during each academic year until this requirement has been met.
- Scholars can earn honors credit through completing a course with an Honors Credit Learning Agreement (HCLA – please see below for details) or by taking a course or section that is offered for honors credit (for example, **ACES 396**). You can visit the Course Explorer (<https://courses.illinois.edu>) to find specific honors course offerings that would be of interest to you. (There is no need to submit an HCLA to earn honors credit in a course or section that is being offered for honors credit.)
- The Honors Credit Learning Agreement (HCLA) is a web form that enables you to earn honors credit in a regular course without enrolling in specially designated honors courses or honors sections. Successful completion of each HCLA is noted on your transcript, with an **H** appearing beside the letter grade for the course. Honors credit earned in specially designated honors courses or honors sections is also denoted by an **H** next to your letter grade.

HCLA Guidelines

- Before you submit your HCLA form, be sure to inform your instructor that you are an ACES James Scholar and ask them if you could complete an honors assignment in the course. The approval and acceptance of HCLAs are at the discretion of your instructor, who may also specify particular topics or certain areas of investigation.
- The following process will need to be followed for your HCLA to be successfully submitted, approved, and recorded.

1. Submit the HCLA form online at <https://go.aces.illinois.edu/HCLA>.
2. A link to your HCLA will be emailed to your instructor for review and approval.
3. You will then receive an email confirmation once your HCLA has been reviewed and approved by your instructor and the Honors Program.

- With the approval of your instructor, any University of Illinois course taken for a standard letter grade at the **100, 200, 300, or 400** levels may be converted into an honors credit course by using an HCLA. This includes sixteen-week, twelve-week, and eight-week courses offered during the fall and spring semesters and during the summer session. **Honors credit cannot be earned in courses that are being taken with the credit/no-credit (CR/NC) option, and honors credit is also not available in four-week courses offered during the winter or summer sessions.**

HCLA Deadline Dates

- Be sure to discuss your proposed hours assignment with your instructor well in advance of the applicable deadline. **The Honors Program reserves the right to reject any HCLAs that are submitted after the applicable deadline.**

Fall 2023 Submission Deadlines

- For a first half-session (eight week) course: **Friday, September 15th at 5:00 PM**
- For a full-term (sixteen-week) course: **Friday, October 13th at 5:00 PM**
- For a second half-session (eight-week) course: **Friday, November 10th at 5:00 PM**

Spring 2024 Submission Deadlines

- For a first half-session (eight-week) course: **Friday, February 9th at 5:00 PM**
- For a full-term (sixteen-week) course: **Friday, March 8th at 5:00 PM**
- For a second half-session (eight-week) course: **Friday, April 12th at 5:00 PM**

Summer 2024 Submission Deadlines

- For a twelve-week summer session course: **Friday, June 21st at 5:00 PM**
- For an eight-week summer session course: **Friday, July 5th at 5:00 PM**

The Honors Assignment: Scope and Content

- The shape of your honors assignment is limited only by your imagination (subject to academic standards of professionalism) and the approval of your instructor. Possible types of honors assignments may include (but are not limited to) the following:

- ✓ Research papers (8-10 or more pages in length)
- ✓ Essays or literature reviews
- ✓ Research for preparing new course units or segments
- ✓ Special laboratory experiments
- ✓ Stratified opinion surveys
- ✓ Course or course unit evaluations
- ✓ Research for developing new courses or new teaching methods
- ✓ Service learning or community engagement projects
- ✓ Preparation of videos, blogs, PowerPoint presentations, or photo essays
- ✓ Creating and maintaining social media outlets (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) pertaining to a course-related topic
- ✓ Participation in the REACT Program, which is available through selected Chemistry (**CHEM**) courses (<https://www.scs.illinois.edu/~kidsnchem/index.php>)

- Your honors assignment needs to be completed before the end of the academic term. You and your instructor should meet every so often to discuss your progress. You should expect to devote at least fifteen (15) additional hours of work time to your honors assignment throughout the academic term. **If you wish to cancel or modify an honors assignment already in progress, please notify your instructor via email so that your decision can be documented for record-keeping purposes.**
- It is not necessary to submit an HCLA request for a **396** (honors undergraduate research) course to earn honors credit. Please note, however, that although James Scholars are free to enroll in **396** courses (or in **ANSC 398, section B** for Animal Sciences majors) as often as allowed by their respective departments, only one (1) honors undergraduate research course will be counted toward the fulfillment of the “four

courses with honors credit before you graduate” Milestone of Achievement on your Honors Completion Plan (HCP).

- If you plan to earn honors credit in a Chemistry (CHEM) course through the REACT (a/k/a Kids & Chemistry) Program, please be sure to list **Dr. Tina Huang (NetID = thhuang)** as your instructor on your HCLA web form to ensure its accurate and timely approval. **Please Note:** You will need to register for REACT Program honors credit through both the ACES HCLA system (<https://go.aces.illinois.edu/HCLA>) and the REACT Program’s web portal (<https://www.scs.illinois.edu/~kidsnchem/index.php>).

Grading Procedures

- At the end of the academic term, based on your letter grade and the outcome of your honors assignment, your instructor will determine if honors credit will be granted for the course. **Your instructor is the sole judge of whether honors credit will be earned.** As a general rule, honors credit will be granted if:

- ✓ You were enrolled in the ACES James Scholar Honors Program and/or the Campus Honors Program (Chancellor’s Scholars) during the academic term in which you took the course.
- ✓ You have completed the honors assignment successfully.
- ✓ You earned a grade of at least **B-** in the course.
- ✓ An **H** grade is chosen by the instructor in *Web for Faculty*.

PLEASE NOTE: If an anticipated H grade does not show up on your grade report or transcript, it is your responsibility to contact your instructor to seek clarification and/or correction of the grade in question.

Helpful Hints for Earning Honors Credit

- Because a course grade of at least **B-** is needed to earn honors credit, you should do an honors assignment in a course that genuinely interests you and in which you can reasonably expect to do well.
- To ensure that you will have plenty of time to complete an honors assignment, be sure to discuss your proposed HCLA with your instructor well in advance of the due dates listed above.
- **To avoid any possible misunderstandings with your instructor, please be very specific in describing the honors assignment that you are proposing on your HCLA.**
- Consider completing one HCLA per semester so that you can finish off your “four courses with honors credit” before the start of your junior or senior year. Planning ahead will ensure that you have enough time to complete your Capstone Experiential Learning Project (CELP) during your junior and/or senior year.
- **To prevent surprises and disappointments, please be sure to submit your HCLA on time. The Honors Program reserves the right to decline any HCLA that is submitted past the applicable due date.**

Substitutions for Honors Credit Coursework

- Scholars are welcome to complete one or both of the following certificates, which should be listed on the Honors Completion Plan under item #3. Each certificate can be substituted for one course with honors credit.

1. Earning an Illinois Leadership Certificate (<https://leadership.illinois.edu/certificate>) can be substituted for one course with honors credit on the Honors Completion Plan.

2. Earning an Undergraduate Research Certificate (<https://undergradresearch.illinois.edu/students/research-certificate.html>) can be substituted for one course with honors credit on the Honors Completion Plan.

- Please email a PDF copy of your Illinois Leadership Certificate and/or Undergraduate Research Certificate to aces-jshp@illinois.edu upon completion so that the substitution can be added to your James Scholar record.

Transfer Honors Credit Policy

- ACES James Scholars who enter the Honors Program upon transfer from another accredited institution within the United States may use **one** honors credit course from their previous institution to count toward the “four courses with honors credit” requirement. If you would like to explore this option, please contact the Honors Program at aces-jshp@illinois.edu, and be sure to attach a course syllabus and any documentation of the honors credit coursework that you completed (such as graded assignments).
- The Honors Director will determine if the honors coursework will be accepted as counting toward fulfillment of your “four courses with honors credit” requirement. You will then receive a written response from the Honors Program, documenting the decision on your request to transfer honors credit.

Contact Information

- Questions or concerns about HCLA policies and procedures may be directed to the Honors Program at aces-jshp@illinois.edu.