

**The ACES James Scholar Honors Program  
Fostering a Legacy of Scholastic Achievement since 1959**



[http://students.aces.illinois.edu/james\\_scholars](http://students.aces.illinois.edu/james_scholars)

**Honors Credit Learning Agreements (HCLAs)  
A Reference Guide for ACES James Scholars and Their Instructors**

**GENERAL OVERVIEW**

The Honors Credit Learning Agreement (HCLA) is a form that James Scholars use to describe a special assignment with which they propose to earn honors credit. A special creative assignment, when added to a regularly offered class, enables James Scholars to complete their annual “honors activity” requirement without enrolling in special courses or sections. The HCLA form is reviewed by the course instructor and is the starting point for the honors assignment.

Successful completion of the HCLA assignment will be noted on the student’s transcript, with an “H” appearing beside the letter grade for the course. **All ACES James Scholars, in all four years of the Honors Program, are required to complete one HCLA (or another approved honors activity) per academic year.**

**HCLA GUIDELINES**

James Scholars may choose to undertake an HCLA assignment in any graded course offered on the Urbana campus at the 100, 200, 300, or 400 levels. As students, you are responsible for initiating a discussion with the course instructor about undertaking an HCLA assignment. Take the following steps to ensure that all HCLAs are approved and recorded:

- 1. On the HCLA form, describe the proposed assignment with clarity and precision such that the instructor and Honors Program staff receive an accurate impression of what you are proposing.**
- 2. Submit the HCLA form to the instructor for approval and signature.**
- 3. Before the end of the seventh week of the semester, deliver the signed, completed HCLA form to the ACES Academic Programs Office for processing.**

The approval and acceptance of HCLAs are at the discretion of the course instructor. Topics or areas of investigation may also be specified by the instructor.

The proposed HCLA assignment should be an additional creative exercise in the context of the course in which the student is enrolled.

**The HCLA assignment must be completed by the end of the semester in which the course is taken. The instructor and the student should meet every so often to discuss the student’s progress.** A student should expect to devote approximately fifteen additional hours of work time to the HCLA assignment throughout the semester.

The shape of the HCLA assignment is limited only by the student’s imagination (subject to the professional standards of the discipline) and the approval of the instructor. Possible types of HCLA assignments may include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Research papers (8-10 or more pages in length)**
- Essays**
- Research for preparing new course units or segments**
- Special laboratory experiments**
- Stratified opinion surveys**
- Course or course unit evaluations**
- Research for developing new courses and/or new teaching methods**

If you wish to modify or cancel an HCLA assignment already in progress, then you must notify the instructor of the course and the ACES Honors Secretary via email at least one week before the last meeting of the course.

#### DISCLAIMER AND RESTRICTIONS

The outcome of each HCLA assignment will be assessed by the instructor according to professional standards. **The instructor is the sole judge of whether honors credit is to be granted.**

- Successful completion of a 500 or 600 level course cannot be substituted for an HCLA.
- HCLA assignments may only be completed in graded courses (i.e., with no CR/NC or S-U grades).

#### GRADING PROCEDURES

At the end of the semester, the instructor will inform the student whether the HCLA assignment has been completed successfully and will determine if honors credit is to be granted for the course. Honors credit will be granted if:

1. An "H" grade is chosen in *Web for Faculty*.
2. The student earns a letter grade of at least B-. (For this reason, scholars are encouraged to undertake HCLA assignments in courses that genuinely interest them and in which they can reasonably expect to do well.)
3. The student was enrolled in the ACES James Scholar Honors Program during the term in which the course was taken.

For more information about HCLA policies and procedures, please refer to the *ACES Honors Handbook* ([http://students.aces.illinois.edu/james\\_scholars/honors\\_handbook](http://students.aces.illinois.edu/james_scholars/honors_handbook)).

Questions may be addressed to:

- Dr. Bill Simmons ([fsimmons@illinois.edu](mailto:fsimmons@illinois.edu)), the ACES Honors Dean
- Rob Chappell ([rchappel@illinois.edu](mailto:rchappel@illinois.edu)), the ACES Honors Secretary