

# RIT Honors Program Student Policy Handbook

## Table of Contents

<b>Statement of Values</b> .....	- 1 -
<b>Academic Requirements (Students Entering in AY 2021-22)</b> .....	- 2 -
<i>Earning Honors Points</i> .....	- 2 -
<i>Honors Achievement in the Discipline</i> .....	- 5 -
<i>Examples of Honors in the Discipline</i> .....	- 7 -
<b>Updates of Academic Requirements</b> .....	- 8 -
<b>Double-Major</b> .....	- 8 -
<b>Undergraduate v. Graduate Status (Including Dual Degree Programs)</b> .....	- 8 -
<b>Internal Admission (IA)</b> .....	- 9 -
<b>Complementary Learning</b> .....	- 9 -
<i>Leave of Absence (LOA)</i> .....	- 9 -
<i>Co-op and Study Abroad</i> .....	- 9 -
<b>Honors Grants</b> .....	- 9 -
<b>Standing, Continuation, and Withdrawal</b> .....	- 10 -
<i>Table 1: Requirements and GPA Standards to Maintain Good Standing</i> .....	- 10 -
<i>Conditional Status</i> .....	- 10 -
<i>Conduct-Related Disciplinary Action</i> .....	- 11 -
<i>Appeals</i> .....	- 11 -

## Statement of Values

The Honors Program recognizes academic excellence, service to the community, and exercise of leadership skills as core elements of a university experience that prepares students to play positive roles in society, and make meaningful contributions to solving problems of national and global significance. Toward maintaining a climate conducive to such growth, the Honors Program is dedicated to the principles outlined in the university’s Core Values, Honor Code, Diversity Statements, Compliance Policy, and Code of Ethical Conduct. And as a community of creative, intellectually active people who act ethically with personal and professional integrity,

the Honors Program is committed to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment that fosters human dignity, provides equitable opportunity, and celebrates the contributions of all students and employees.

## Academic Requirements (Students Entering in AY 2021-22)

In order to be recognized as alumni of the RIT Honors Program, students must complete the equivalent of 15 credits of honors work by the time they receive their undergraduate degrees.

We use the word “points” instead of using the word “credits” because we recognize that students can strive above and beyond a typical academic program in co-curricular ways. Generally speaking, one *point* is equivalent to one credit for an academic course. For example, completing any 3-credit honors course earns 3-points. Alternatively, a student might fulfill a 3-point requirement by completing two 1-credit honors seminars and engaging in a short-term study abroad experience. (More information on study abroad is included below.)

In summary, the academic requirements are these:

- Honors in General Education<sup>1</sup> (3 points)
- Honors in your Discipline (3 points)
- Other Honors Achievements (9 points)

Additionally, in order to remain in good standing students must meet the **GPA standard** specified for their year level and **complete at least 1 honors point per year until achieving 15 points** ([click here](#) for information about maintaining good standing in the program).

### Earning Honors Points

The honors achievement in general education is fulfilled by taking a designated Honors First Year Seminar in the first year. Each of these courses fit into a student’s program as a general education elective. Other honors achievements can be completed in a variety of ways:

- **Honors Courses and Seminars**  
Honors courses are identified by the honors attribute in the bulletin, and often by name (*e.g.*, MATH-241H Honors Linear Algebra).
  - At most one honors course may be completed at another university. Such a course must be named as an honors course, and transfer credit must be accepted by RIT.
  - Successful completion of an *n*-credit honors course counts as *n* points.
- **Honors Options**  
An honors option is something that you do to have some fun in a standard course. It is typically a project that extends your learning above and beyond the usual expectations of the course. An honors option is supervised by the instructor and approved in advance

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<sup>1</sup> This requirement is waived for students who enter the Honors Program through the internal admission process.

by the Honors office. Application forms and examples of approved proposals are at the Honors Program web site.

- All students may apply honors options to courses at the 200-level or higher, but only first-year students may apply honors options to 100-level courses.
  - You must give a public presentation of your work (*e.g.*, presenting your work at a symposium, show, club meeting, or to faculty in your department, *etc.*).
  - You must earn a grade of at least B– in the course in order for the honors option to count toward completion of your academic points.
  - Successful completion of an honors option in a *n*-credit course counts as *n* points.
  - Applications for Honors Options will not be accepted for courses that are offered as Honors in the same academic term.
  - Your honors option must be completed in the same semester that you propose it. In *rare* cases, a short extension may be granted, but your request for an extension must be received (via email) before the final exam period is over.
- **Faculty Mentored Independent Study or Special Topics (at most 3 points)**

Is there a topic that piques your interest but it's not in a course? Make one! Many professors are amenable to helping you develop a plan of study, being available for questions, and guiding you toward new ideas and skills. Make an agreement with a professor (and perhaps some of your peer colleagues) and sign up for the appropriate independent study course.

    - The course must be 200-level or higher.
    - You must submit an honors option for that course (in the first week of the semester) in order to earn honors points.
- **Graduate Coursework (at most 3 points)**

You may count one graduate-level course (600 or above), provided that it is not named on your Program Worksheet and is not found on the list of exceptions.<sup>2</sup>

    - A 3-credit course in your discipline can fulfill the disciplinary facet of the Honors Program (see below).
    - A graduate course that is not in your discipline still counts.
    - The graduate course may be completed at another university, but transfer credit must be accepted by RIT.
- **Faculty-Mentored Research Experiences (at most 3 points per semester)**

Research is understood broadly to include investigative, exploratory, creative, and innovative works. Research does not have to be in your discipline, but you can count it as an Honors Achievement in the Discipline if it is!

    - This work cannot be part of an activity that is required by your home program (*e.g.*, part of a required research course) but it can be an extension of such an activity. In

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<sup>2</sup> The list of exceptions is overseen by the Honors Curriculum Committee of the Academic Senate, which is a body of faculty with representatives from each college.

that case, your faculty mentor must send correspondence to the Honors Program providing a brief description of the extension and confirming your successful completion.

- Your work may be part of a larger, on-going research effort. It does not need to start and stop with you.
- You must (1) give a public presentation or exhibition of your work, (2) produce a written report about it, approved by your faculty mentor as demonstrating the substance and quality expected of undergraduate, honors-level work, and (3) submit your report to the Honors Office.
- Research may extend across semesters. Points are awarded based on the time that you commit to the project:
  - 60 hours earns 1 point
  - 120 hours earns 2 points
  - 180 hours earns 3 points
- What matters to the Honors Program is that you have a faculty mentor who is engaged with you, guiding your work.
  - It is okay if you are paid a stipend.
  - It is okay if you are earning academic credit.
  - It is okay if you are working on a project simply because you are intrigued by it.
- This work may be done at another university (*e.g.*, NSF REU programs). In this case, your faculty mentor must send correspondence to the Honors Program describing the research experience, and confirming your successful completion.
- **Competitive Fellowships and Awards (at most 1 point)**

One point is earned by completing an application for an eligible international fellowship through RIT Global; eligible programs include the Marshall, Mitchell, Rhodes, Schwarzman, Churchill, and Fulbright (full, not summer). If you have questions, please check with RIT Global.
- **Faculty-Mentored/Coached Entrepreneurship Experiences (at most 3 points)**

Points are determined by a Coach from the RIT Simone Center, based on entrepreneurial waypoints (progress toward creation of a company) and participation in designated experiences that foster entrepreneurship such as the Simone Center Idealab.
- **Non-required Co-op or Internship (at most 3 points)**

Points are earned for co-op or internship experiences undertaken in addition to the experiential learning requirements of a degree program.

- This activity must be recognized and recorded by RIT in an official capacity, either using a departmental form (which you must route to the Honors Program office, also) or through the Office of Career Services and Co-op.
- If you are completing a double-major (e.g., Applied Mathematics *and* Computer Science), one major is designated as *primary* in the RIT computer system, and your fulfillment of the experiential learning requirement for that major is used to determine whether the co-op or internship is *additional* (non-required).
- Points are earned as follows:
  - 3–5 weeks (105–192 hours) earns 1 point
  - 6–10 weeks (193–367 hours) earns 2 points
  - 11 weeks or more (at least 368 hours) earns 3 points
- **Non-required Study Abroad or Work Abroad (at most 3 points)**  
Points are awarded for successful completion of international academic experiences affiliated with a university, based on the duration of the experience.
  - This activity must be recognized and recorded by RIT, either through RIT Global (the Study Abroad office) or the Office of Career Services and Co-op.
  - If you are completing a double-major (e.g., Mechanical Engineering *and* Applied Modern Language and Culture), one major is designated as *primary* in the RIT computer system, and that major is used to determine whether international work and/or study is required.
  - Points are earned as follows:
    - 1–3 weeks earns 1 point (*e.g.* as part of a travel-enriched course)
    - 4–9 weeks earns 2 points
    - 10 weeks or more earns 3 points
  - If the international travel is part of an honors course, you will earn the larger of the available points (*e.g.*, the honors points associated with the course, or the honors points listed here, but not both).

### Honors Achievement in the Discipline

Students in the Honors Program develop an extra layer of depth in their chosen fields by doing honors-level work that accelerates them toward the frontiers of knowledge, culture, and technology while engaging in positive, collegial relationships with faculty mentors. Students can fulfill this requirement by successfully completing **any** of the experiences listed below.

If you are completing a double major (e.g., ASL-English Interpretation *and* Motion Picture Science), you are expected to complete this facet of your honors work for only one of your two majors.

***We strongly recommend that you contact the office at [honors@rit.edu](mailto:honors@rit.edu) if you have questions, doubts, or think that getting advice from people who care about you might be a good idea.***

- **Research in your discipline, supervised by a faculty mentor (max 3 points/semester)**  
Research is understood broadly to include investigative, exploratory, creative, and innovative works.
  - How do you know if a research project is “in your discipline”? Talk to people. Ask a professor in your home program, or your college Honors Advocate. Here are some surefire ways to make sure that your work is in your discipline:
    - Work with a faculty mentor *from your home department*. You might have more than one faculty mentor, perhaps from different departments. That’s okay.
    - Have the Head (or Associate Head) of your home program write an email to the Honors Program telling us that the research is in your discipline.
  - Other details about research activity were discussed previously. In particular, note that you are required to give a presentation of your work and to produce a written report. That report must be submitted to the Honors Program office before points can be awarded.
- **Complete an honors option in an upper-division course in your home program**
  - Such a course must carry at least 3 credits, and must be at the 300-level or above.
  - The course may be either required or a program elective.
- **Complete a graduate course in your discipline**
  - Please check with the Honors Program Office!
  - Such a course must carry at least 3 credits.
  - Such a course cannot be required (named) as part of your academic program.
  - Such a course cannot be on the list of exceptions.<sup>3</sup>
  - Only one graduate course (total) can be applied to fulfilling honors requirements.
- **Complete an upper-division honors course in your program**
  - Such a course must carry at least 3 credits, and must be at the 300-level or above.
  - Some programs do not have honors courses at 300-level or above. ☹ They are much more likely to make such a course if you ask for it!

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<sup>3</sup> The list of exceptions is overseen by the Honors Curriculum Committee of the Academic Senate, which is body of faculty with representatives from each college.

## Examples of Honors in the Discipline

There are too many variations to list them all. What you do to fulfill this requirement will be informed by your interests and career path. Get advice from your professors.

1. (Research in Mechanical Engineering) Alex suggests to Dr. Po Seidon that recent advances in battery technology could make industrial-strength electric leaf blowers a cost-effective alternative to current modes of underwater propulsion. Alex engages the Simone Center to help prepare a market analysis, and Dr. Seidon helps Alex with the engineering side of the project, including a redesign of the leaf blower housing using a CAD program, after which Alex uses a 3D printer to produce a small model. Alex writes a report outlining the engineering aspects of the work, the market analysis, and the potential environmental impacts associated with large-scale production efforts. After Alex revises some technical aspects of the report, and takes it to the Writing Center for help with the final stages of polishing the writing, Dr. Seidon approves both the technical content and the professional quality of the report. Alex presents the most interesting parts of the work in a 15-minute contributed talk during the Honors Research and Creativity Symposium.

*Notes: Alex works closely with a professor, there are multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary features in the work, and the project leads Alex to develop new skills. The advice from the Writing Center is not formally required, but it helps Alex to produce a high-quality report that can be shared with pride. The 3D print is not necessary, but it's fun, and Alex made a connection with a faculty member in the Mechanical Engineering department.*

2. (Honors Option) Morgan is majoring in Applied Mathematics, and takes MATH-341 Advanced Linear Algebra as a program elective. Early in the semester, Morgan expresses interest in diving deeper into the subject and the professor suggests that Morgan investigate the way that probability and multivariable calculus are brought to bear on the problem of multiplying immense matrices, as one might encounter in machine learning. With the guidance of the professor, Morgan writes a proposal for an honors option that is approved. As part of the option, Morgan writes a report that includes a thorough examination of the central mathematical principles. Morgan also produces a computer code that demonstrates the techniques, and presents a 15-minute overview of the work to the campus math club,  $\pi$ RIT, after which Morgan receives feedback on the presentation from the club's faculty advisor.

*Notes: Advanced Linear Algebra is an upper-division program elective in Morgan's major, and Morgan goes above and beyond the standard course requirements by investigating a topic that is closely related to the course content, but not addressed in other undergraduate courses offered by the program. Morgan's presentation is not given to a general audience but it is public speaking, and Morgan receives feedback that helps develop that skill. Moreover, Morgan had fun with the project and made a*

*connection with a faculty member in the School of Mathematical Sciences.*

3. (Graduate Course) Bailey is majoring in Computer Science, and decides to take the graduate course in computer vision as an elective.

*Notes: The graduate course in computer vision is not required by Bailey's program, and is not on the list of excluded courses, so successful completion of the course constitutes an Honors Achievement in the Discipline.*

## Updates of Academic Requirements

If it happens that the academic requirements are revised during your time in the Honors Program, you may choose to move into the new curriculum rather than meeting the standards of the curriculum that was in place when you entered the program. For example, if you are a student who entered the program last year but you prefer this year's requirements, you can tell the Honors Office that you want to join this year's cohort. However, you cannot turn back time. A student who entered this year cannot choose to meet last year's requirements instead. If you intend to change your cohort, you must notify the Honors Program office.

## Double-Major

When students choose to pursue a double-major (yay!), questions about requirements are answered relative to the major that has been declared as primary. (For example, is the co-op a required part of the program?)

## Undergraduate v. Graduate Status (Including Dual Degree Programs)

Some students are enrolled in programs during which the registrar changes their matriculation status from undergraduate to graduate (*e.g.*, a BS/MS program, and the PA program in CHST).

- In order to remain in the Honors Program, students are required to continue with Complementary Learning even after that change in status.
- The GPA standard listed in Table 1 is evaluated based on the last semester during which the student held undergraduate status.
- Undergraduate students in the Honors Program enjoy the benefit of enrolling beyond the standard block of credits at no additional cost. That benefit terminates when status changes from undergraduate to graduate.



## Internal Admission (IA)

Students who join the RIT Honors Program through the spring Internal Admission process are treated as members of the cohort that will enter RIT in the fall, and with the exception of the Honors First Year Seminar, they are expected to meet the academic requirements specified for that cohort.

For example, a student who is accepted to the Honors Program in the spring of 2021 is part of the cohort that enters in the fall of 2021, and is expected to meet the academic requirements specified for that cohort.

## Complementary Learning

Some kinds of learning are best accomplished outside the classroom, so an important part of the Honors Program is participation in activities that complement traditional academic work. Students in the Honors Program are expected to complete at least 15 hours of complementary learning in the first year, and 20 hours each year thereafter. These hours typically involve service to the community, and participating in events that expose students to new cultures or challenge their ways of thinking about their relationship to the larger society. *Refer to the Complementary Learning Handbook for more information.*

## Leave of Absence (LOA)

An official leave of absence (LOA) from the university is understood as a pause in a student's pursuit of a degree from RIT. This pause extends to all aspects of education. For this reason, the complementary learning requirement will be prorated according to when a student takes the LOA and for how long. For example, a student who takes a half-year LOA is responsible for half of the year's complementary learning hours. A student who takes a year-long LOA is exempted from that year's complementary learning requirement. If you are considering a LOA, contact the Honors Office in order to confirm the specifics of your complementary learning requirement.

## Co-op and Study Abroad

Students who are on co-op, or who are engaging in an extended study abroad experience are understood to be actively pursuing a degree from RIT. They are responsible for completing the standard complementary learning requirement.

## Honors Grants

Each student in the RIT Honors Program is eligible for up to \$500 in grant funding to support faculty-mentored projects, professional travel, and study abroad (whether as a one-time expense, or as multiple smaller expenses).

- Honors Grant money may be used to purchase supplies for faculty-mentored research and honors options, but any items that are not consumed by the research become the

property of RIT if they were purchased (in whole or in part) with Honors Grant money. Therefore, any student who applies to use grant money in this way will be required to provide a letter of support from a faculty member in which the faculty member agrees to assume responsibility for any unused supplies that are purchased (in part or in full) with Honors Grant money.

- Honors Grants are paid out as reimbursements once students have presented the Honors Program office with eligible receipts.
- The use of Honors Grant money must be approved in advance of the expense for which it is intended.

### Standing, Continuation, and Withdrawal

Progress toward completion is measured at the end of the fall and spring semesters. Students are in **good standing** (we also say **continued** in the program) provided that they have

- completed at least one honors point each year (until reaching 15 points);
- a GPA that meets or exceeds the minimum shown in Table 1;
- completed the annual complementary learning requirement;
- no conduct-related complaints or findings.

Students who are in good standing may continue as part of the RIT Honors Program. Students who are not in good standing may be withdrawn from the Honors Program or placed on conditional status (see below). Students can check their status at the honors web site.

Table 1: Requirements and GPA Standards to Maintain Good Standing

Year-Level (Matriculated)	Overall GPA Required for Continuation	Minimum Points Required Per Year	Hours of Complementary Learning Per Year
1	3.2	3	≥ 15 hours
2	3.3	1	≥ 20 hours
3	3.4	1	≥ 20 hours
4	3.5	1	≥ 20 hours
5	3.5	1	≥ 20 hours

### Conditional Status

As deemed appropriate by the director of the Honors Program, students who are not in good standing may be moved to a **conditional status** rather than being withdrawn from the program.

Conditional status may be appropriate when a student's GPA has fallen below Honors Program standards (particularly in cases of unforeseen events that interfere with academic success, such as a global pandemic), but the student has enough time remaining at RIT to remedy the issue.

Conditional status may also be appropriate when students fail to complete complementary learning requirements but are enacting plans to remedy the situation. Such cases are addressed on an individual basis in consultation with the Honors Program staff and other advisors as deemed appropriate.

A student's conditional status may be maintained for at most two semesters, after which the student is expected to have demonstrated progress sufficient to be deemed in good standing. Students who do not meet this requirement will be withdrawn from the program.

### Conduct-Related Disciplinary Action

The RIT Honors Program takes seriously students' impact on the community, and their role as representatives of the university and the Honors Program. Students who accept the invitation to become part of the RIT Honors Program agree to conduct themselves with integrity, in a manner that maintains our university and society as a safe place for creativity, curiosity, constructive change, and free expression.

Students may be subject to disciplinary action **for conduct** if found responsible for a breach of RIT policy by the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. Students may also face conduct-related disciplinary action for academic or personal behavior contrary to the values expressed in this document. This includes actions generally classified as bullying (including hazing), harassment, intimidation, or discrimination. Also included are behaviors classified broadly as *dishonest* such as (but not limited to) academic dishonesty, and the submission of fraudulent forms to any part of the university (*e.g.*, proof of vaccination status, complementary learning submissions, forms related to honors options, study abroad, inappropriate use of Honors Grant money *et cetera*).

Disciplinary action may include forfeiture of points, complementary learning hours, leadership roles (*e.g.*, if seated as a member of the Honors Council), or standing. And if said conduct is judged to be egregious, a student may be withdrawn from the RIT Honors Program. In particular, any student who is suspended due to conduct-related issues forfeits their place in the RIT Honors Program.

### Appeals

Assignment of conditional status, and conduct-related disciplinary action (short of withdrawal) may not be appealed.

A student may appeal a withdrawal due to insufficient progress toward completion (see Table 1) or withdraw due to conduct. The appeal must arrive within one academic term of the decision (*e.g.*, a withdrawal decision that is communicated during the spring semester may be appealed during the summer, but the window of appeal closes when the fall semester begins), and should clearly and concisely explain why the decision should be reversed.

- **Appeal of Withdrawal Due to Insufficient-Progress**

Reversal of withdrawal due to insufficient progress is at the discretion of the director of the program, and will be made in consultation with the Associate Director of the Honors Program, the student's academic advisor, the Honors Advocate of the student's home college, and others as deemed appropriate. Reinstatement, if deemed appropriate, may be tied to completion of certain activities and meeting specified academic standards.

- **Appeal of Withdrawal Due to Conduct**

If a student appeals a conduct-related withdrawal, a Review Committee shall be convened by the director of the Honors Program no later than the following fall or spring semester. The Review Committee should include at least three members drawn from the Honors Curriculum Committee and the board of college Advocates. The Review Committee may rely on written testimony and interviews when adjudicating the decision. Overturning the withdrawal decision requires a majority vote (at least 51%) of the Review Committee members.