



## Guidelines for Instructors of Blended Honors Courses

Occasionally the Honors College offers courses whereby several seats in an otherwise non-Honors class be set aside as a separate Honors section. This is referred to as a “blended section” when Honors and non-Honors students are learning side-by-side in the classroom setting. We structure this in BBLearn as a crosslisted group and permits students in the Honors section of the crosslist to receive Honors credit for the class.

Although such “blended” sections fall short of our ideal Honors experience, it can still offer a vital and exciting learning opportunity for some of our students. The Honors College agrees to such sections when an outstanding faculty member is teaching an intriguing special topics course or when we have several students in a particular major who would benefit from an upper-division offering in that major.

Teaching a blended Honors/non-Honors class presents challenges beyond those of teaching a homogenous all-Honors or non-Honors section. The goal is to engage Honors students in a deeper, more focused learning that reaches somewhat beyond the experience of their non-Honors peers in the same classroom. It is impossible, of course, to set fixed guidelines for the Honors learning experience in blended Honors/non-Honors courses; however, we hope that what follows will provide some measure of guidance for you, if you are interested in teaching such a course or have accepted such a course assignment. It will be most useful if it stimulates your thinking about teaching so that you devise your own creative solutions to this very complex classroom environment. All Honors teaching should be innovative and dynamic, and the blended sections simply offer a different avenue for innovation.

One way to conceptualize how to deepen the learning experience for Honors Program students would be to “move up” the Bloom’s taxonomy for the kind of educational goals for the course. For example, if the course were designed with a focus on evaluation of information, you might incorporate a component of creation for Honors Program students. Honors students do not receive additional credit hours for these courses, so you need to be careful not to simply assign additional work. Students should not feel penalized for their Honors standing. As is true with all Honors coursework, we encourage emphasis on the quality of the work assigned rather than on the quantity of assignments.

In the past, some instructors have worked with the whole group on one project, assigned several smaller group projects, or had students work independently on research appropriate to their individual interests. Other instructors have used service learning as a way to enhance the Honors experience in these classrooms. For instance, some examples of work Honors students have completed in these sections in the past have included website construction, class presentations, interdisciplinary demonstrations, group projects, and more extensive research papers. ***These models are simply examples of some of the most common ways instructors approach the blended Honors/non-Honors classroom. They are not meant to limit the possibilities.***

Instructors teaching these blended classes accept the responsibility and the time commitment inherent in such an unusual circumstance. Along with that responsibility, however, comes the opportunity for innovation as instructors experiment with pedagogical methods unsuited for a larger, more traditional class section. Rewarding, too, is the mentor relationship with bright, highly motivated students.

We encourage you to consult with colleagues in your department who may have experience teaching these classes for additional insights into what may work well in a particular discipline. Also, all Honors faculty members should have a copy of the National Collegiate Honors Council's publication Teaching and Learning in Honors, which is a valuable resource for pedagogical techniques specific to Honors. Please request a digital copy from the Honors College if you do not already have one.

Dr. Kevin Egan, the Director of Academic Programs in the Pennoni Honors College, is happy to meet with faculty members to discuss course descriptions and to offer suggestions.

Whatever method is finally used, it is important that your expectations are made clear at the very beginning of the semester. A description of the course, including the expectations of Honors students, should be included in the course syllabus as well as communicated directly to Honors students so that they can make an informed choices during pre-registration advising and prior to add/drop.

#### IMPORTANT REGISTRATION LOGISTICS

- Honors students **MUST** be enrolled in the Honors section of the course in order to receive Honors credit.
  - o Honors students **should not** enroll in the non-Honors section and just “follow along” with the Honors requirements. Doing this would not accurately reflect the work performed within the student’s DegreeWorks and, as such, subsequently would not count for Honors credit on their student transcript.
  - o If a student needs assistance with enrolling in a course, they may reach out to [HonorsProgram@drexel.edu](mailto:HonorsProgram@drexel.edu) and their Honors advisor will connect with them directly to troubleshoot.
- If an Honors student wishes move from the Honors section to the non-Honors section of a blended course (i.e., remain in the class but not complete for Honors credit), the student **MUST** make this change officially by swapping the courses in Banner BEFORE to the Add/Drop deadline at the beginning of the term. If the student fails to drop the Honors section and does not complete the Honors assignments for the course, they should be graded accordingly for the work they performed.

*These guidelines have been adapted from the document “Guidelines for Instructors of Blended Sections” published by the Honors College at Kent State.*