

# Graduation with Distinction

Graduation with distinction recognizes those undergraduate students who have truly distinguished themselves academically. All graduating students are considered for Distinction and High Distinction based on GPA and academic record. In addition, students may submit a thesis project to be considered for Distinction, High Distinction, or Highest Distinction. Recommendations are made by the College Academic Distinctions and Awards Committee.

## Distinction Categories and Requirements

Distinction level	Minimum GPA without thesis project	Minimum GPA with thesis project
Distinction	3.8	3.5
High Distinction	3.9	3.8
Highest Distinction	N/A	3.9

GPA is determined from cumulative GPA as of the semester preceding graduation. Thesis projects must be deemed acceptable by the Academic Distinctions and Awards Committee.

In addition to minimum GPA, the Committee also considers:

- the general quality and breadth of the program
- the quality of any transfer credit hours
- the number of 300/400-level courses
- the number of courses taken P/N
- the number of courses retaken to remove D grades
- the amount of graded course work taken while registered in the College, normally expected to be at least the last 48 credit hours

It is possible for a student to exceed the minimum GPA and still not receive a recommendation for distinction. Students must remove all incompletes by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> week of classes in the term preceding graduation in order to be considered for recognition.

## Thesis Projects

### Thesis Scope and Content

- The thesis project should be substantially more extensive than a term paper. Final projects for ACE 10 or capstone courses do not in themselves constitute a thesis; they may serve as a foundation for further work pursued under the direction of thesis advisors.

- The thesis must be the result of independent, sustained thought, and intellectual curiosity. A survey of the literature about a particular topic is not sufficient.
- All of the following elements are required:
  - a clear formulation of a problem, question, or project;
  - a scholarly study which illuminates it; and
  - a conclusion supported by evidence.
- The thesis should be well written, carefully proofread, and well presented.
- A one-page abstract must be included at the front of the thesis.
- A bibliography and citations of existing literature in the field should be included where appropriate.
- Although thesis projects may be highly specialized, they should be written so that they can be understood by a non-specialist in the field – or, at the very least, define the discipline-specific terms used – since the review committee consists of faculty and students from different disciplines.
- Students in the UNL Honors Program may submit the same thesis project to the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts and to the Honors Program.

### Creative Activity in Thesis Projects

Many of the students in the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts are more engaged in creative activity than in traditional research scholarship. Thesis projects that are centered on creative activity are possible, but must have a significant written component that is closely connected to the creative component. Some examples of past thesis projects are:

- the arrangement of a particular symphony and a detailed description of the process of composing arrangements with literary references
- the creation of a portfolio of photographic works accompanied by a lengthy historical analysis
- a complete set of costume designs with detailed information about the design, research and garment building process and photographs of the realized costumes

Because graduation with distinction recognizes academic achievement, it is important that the written component of the project demonstrate the student's academic strengths.

### Thesis Timeline

Because of Registrar's Office deadlines, thesis projects must be submitted to the College well before graduation. The expected scope of thesis projects means that students should begin formulating the project during their junior year. The following deadlines are established:

Expected graduation	Thesis contract due	Thesis and reviews due
December 2020	December 2, 2019	September 14, 2020
May 2021	May 8, 2020	January 29, 2021
August 2021	September 4, 2020	June 14, 2021
December 2021	December 4, 2020	September 17, 2021
May 2022	April 16, 2021	January 28, 2022
August 2022	September 9, 2021	June 10, 2022
December 2022	December 3, 2021	September 16, 2022

The Academic Distinction and Awards Committee will not consider materials submitted after the stated deadlines.

### Procedure for Students

- Year prior to graduation:
  - Identify faculty advisor and second reader
  - Submit Thesis Proposal Form with required signatures and abstract to Dean's Office by stated deadline
  - Begin research. Research and creative projects take a great deal of time, so start early!
- Semester prior to graduation:
  - Register for 499 or 499H in major area
  - Continue research or creative activity
  - Write thesis with input from advisor
- Semester of graduation:
  - Complete thesis project
  - Submit thesis to advisor and second reader **at least two weeks before** thesis submission deadline
  - Submit thesis to Dean's Office and ensure that advisor and second reader submit reviews to the Dean's Office by thesis submission deadline

### Thesis Supervisor and Second Reader

Students should make arrangements with a faculty member to supervise the thesis project and find a second reader who will offer guidance and a review. The responsibilities of the thesis supervisor are:

- Offer guidance to the student throughout the duration of the project
- Encourage students to conduct research and writing in a timely manner
- Ensure that students meet the required deadlines
- Provide written comments on the completed thesis and submit to the Academic Distinctions and Awards Committee, addressing specifically the extent to which the thesis project meets the requirements listed above.

Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts

# Thesis Project Proposal

This form must be completed and submitted to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs (Jackie Mattingly, [jmattingly@unl.edu](mailto:jmattingly@unl.edu)) by the thesis proposal deadline. A one-page abstract of the proposed thesis project **must** be included with this form.

Title of thesis project:

\_\_\_\_\_

Student name (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Student email address: \_\_\_\_\_@huskers.unl.edu

Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Expected graduation date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor name (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_

By signing, the thesis supervisor indicates approval of the thesis project, agrees to supervise the student in the project, and agrees to provide a written evaluation of the completed thesis by the thesis submission deadline.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Second reader name (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_

By signing, the second reader agrees to provide a written evaluation of the completed thesis by the thesis submission deadline.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts

Thesis Project Evaluation Form

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Graduation date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis title:

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Please attach a **written evaluation** to this form, based on the following expectations:

- The thesis project should be substantially more extensive than a term paper. Final projects for ACE 10 or capstone courses do not in themselves constitute a thesis; they may serve as a foundation for further work pursued under the direction of thesis advisors.
- The thesis must be the result of independent, sustained thought, and intellectual curiosity. A survey of the literature about a particular topic is not sufficient.
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Many of the students in the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts are more engaged in creative activity than in traditional research scholarship. Thesis projects that are centered on creative activity are possible, but must have a significant written component that is closely connected to the creative component. Because graduation with distinction recognizes academic achievement, it is important that the written component of the project demonstrate the student's academic strengths.

Please return this form and your written evaluation to the Dean's Office in 102 Woods Art Building by the appropriate thesis submission deadline.

Overall Rating (circle one):

**Excellent**

**Very Good**

**Good**

**Fair**

**Poor**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Check one:     Thesis Supervisor                       Second Reader

Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Check one:     Thesis Supervisor                       Second Reader