



Earning Honors Credits

Honors students at WCU have a great amount of flexibility when it comes to earning honors credits. Earning Honors at the University affords the student the opportunity to work with a group of Honors students in the classroom and/or to work independently with a faculty member. Honors credits provide the student with a chance to go deeper into a subject of interest or to explore new areas of interest in the subject that may not be covered in the regular course. Honors students frequently connect their studies to career interests, research, leadership, and service. Honors students at Western Carolina University can earn honors credits in a variety of ways:

Honors Courses

Each semester the departments and programs across the University will offer courses that are designated as Honors sections. These courses provide Honors students with the opportunity to study with a group of academically focused peers and to be challenged appropriately by a faculty member who has been selected for the course. Honors sections are typically limited to a fewer number of students than regular sections. Honors sections are restricted to Honors students but may occasionally be opened to students with high academic standing with the professor's recommendation and permission. Upon completion of the Honors section of the course, the student earns honors-designated credits and the student's transcript reflects the honors-level work accomplished. Students register for Honors Courses via the regular online registration process.

Honors Contracts

The contract is a mutual agreement between the Brinson Honors College student and a faculty member on a project or activity in a regular course (not an Honors section) that will allow the course to be custom designated as honors on the student's transcript. The Honors Contract can be pursued for any course at WCU, including credit-bearing internships and distance/online courses. Whether or not a particular course is amenable to honors modification is ultimately the decision of the instructor. A student must be a member of Brinson Honors College to take advantage of Honors Contracts. Honors credit is attached to the course, and the credit hours earned are equal to the credit hours for the course. The professor will determine whether the contract has been fulfilled at the end of the semester. Students submit their Honors Contracts online in collaboration with the course instructor. The deadline for submitting Honors Contracts is the end of the fourth week of classes each semester. All Honors Contracts are subject to approval by the Dean of Brinson Honors College. For more information, please visit our Honors Contract webpage at go.wcu.edu/honorscontracts.

Study Abroad

Honors students who are enrolled in credit-bearing courses through accredited programs abroad may earn Honors credits. Specific attachment of credits to a course is flexible. The maximum number of Honors credits a student can earn while studying abroad is 12. This assumes a full-year study abroad program. The limit usually placed on a student is 6 hours of Honors credit per semester. An Honors Contract describing the work to be accomplished while away must be submitted by the deadline for the semester during which travel is to take place.

Western Carolina University DegreePlus Program

The DegreePlus Program at WCU is a unique opportunity for student engagement outside of the classroom. It is a 3-level voluntary experiential program which uses extracurricular activities to help student learn the important, transferable skills that boost engaged learning and career-readiness. Honors students will enjoy participating in DegreePlus because it is well aligned with The Honors Path (i.e., Community Engagement and Service, Undergraduate Research, Leadership, Career Development, and Study Abroad) and affords the student additional opportunities to engage with other students, faculty, administrators, and campus guests in meaningful ways that support their education.



Skill Areas

There are four DegreePlus skill areas: Leadership, Cultural Responsiveness, Teamwork, and Professionalism. Research has shown that each of these different skill areas are important to transitioning successfully to the workforce and to achieving post-graduate goals. Students elect to participate and can choose one or more of these important skill areas for focus. In addition to helping involved students acquire and strengthen these transferable skills, DegreePlus activities also help students enhance their own self-awareness and interpersonal relationships for a lifetime.

Level Up!

As a 3-level program, students can choose to participate at the introductory (Level 1), intermediate (Level 2), or advanced (Level 3) point of achievement. At the start, students participate by attending DegreePlus tagged events related to the skill area of their choice. A student can participate or earn Level 1 achievement by completing at least five programs in a skill area. Students can choose to do one or more skill areas, either concurrently or consecutively. At the intermediate level, students engage in a group discussion with other students and a mentor who helps students reflect on what they have learned in this skill area so far. Level 2 culminates in a reflection paper about that experience. When a student chooses to complete Level 3, the student works on a project that helps them integrate what they have learned in the skill area. At Level 3 there can be integration with work that a student is doing for academic credit, such as an internship or research. Final projects are presented at a special DegreePlus Day.

Recognition

Students' participation in DegreePlus is documented in a "co-curricular transcript." Like an academic transcript, this is documentation of the valuable experiences completed at WCU outside of the formal classroom, including experiences such as internships, service, athletic, club, and Greek leadership. This can become an important document for you to include in your professional portfolio as you seek new opportunities beyond WCU.

DegreePlus for Honors students

What we have found with DegreePlus is that this program is especially appealing to our highly motivated and engaged students. It provides them with additional stimulating activities outside of the classroom which extends their networks and their skill sets. We encourage our Honors students to be engaged with DegreePlus because of the peer-to-peer support that the Honors community provides. Incorporating DegreePlus events into honors contracts is also highly encouraged. Many Brinson Honors College events are tagged as DegreePlus events to help Honors students maintain a high level of engagement on campus. Lastly, Honors students have the option of completing Level 3 in any one DegreePlus skill area to drop their required number of honors credits needed to graduate from 27 to 24 total honors credits.