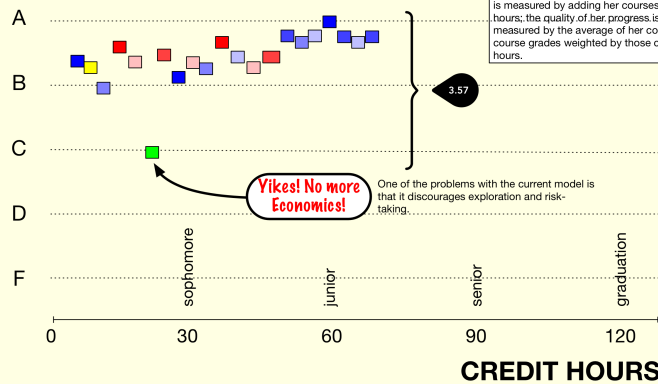


WHEN YOU'RE READY...

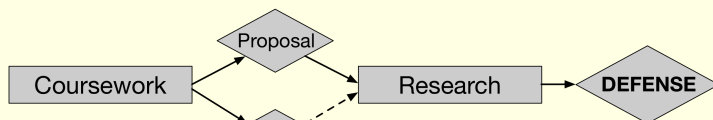
Project- and defense-based assessment of undergraduate learning

CONVENTIONAL UNDERGRADUATE ASSESSMENT

GRADES



CONVENTIONAL DOCTORAL ASSESSMENT



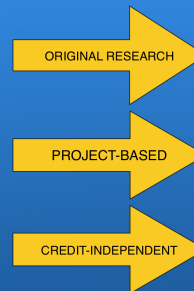
Although students' coursework might be evaluated with grades, the grades serve a more **diagnostic** purpose than at the undergraduate level.

The two most common assessment milestones are **qualification** or **general** or **preliminary exams**, which are often seen as indicating a student's ability to do research and teach.

The **dissertation proposal** or **prospectus** demonstrates the viability and feasibility of the student's specific project.

In most doctoral programs, the primary goal is to **prepare the student to produce an independent piece of original research** (or its equivalent) and, at least conventionally, to enter an academic profession able to **teach**.

The student graduates when she has completed the research and successfully defends it.

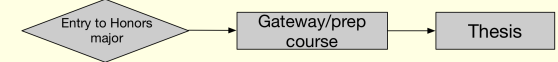


EXISTING LSA HONORS MODELS

Historically, the honors thesis has been one of the few ways for a liberal arts undergraduate to escape the conventional model of undergraduate assessment. It is almost invariably **project-based**, and at least partly independent of course grades. It is generally constrained by the undergraduate four-year timeline, but nevertheless also largely independent of the credit hour straitjacket.

The models below show some of the variety of ways students are able to graduate with Honors in LSA. Most such models involve an honors thesis. In some departments, the theses require an oral defense while in others they do not.

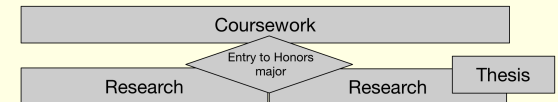
The most common honors model in LSA social sciences and humanities departments is a model where students apply to the departmental honors major, with a proposal or GPA (or both), then take some kind of thesis preparation course.



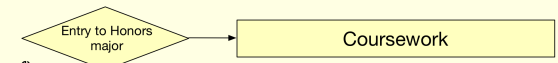
In some LSA departments (e.g., Political Science), students first take a research-orienting course and then apply to the honors major, usually with the work product from the course and grades.



In most LSA STEM departments, honors theses tend to be relatively independent of a student's coursework. They are usually an outgrowth of the student's research activity in a lab and part of the lab's research project.



In some LSA departments — currently only Mathematics — the honors major simply involves demanding coursework.

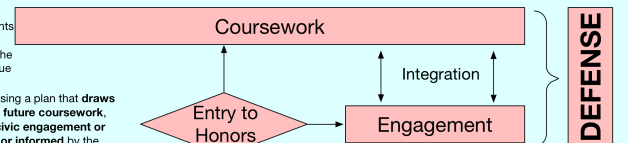


PROPOSED ENGAGED HONORS MODEL

The LSA Honors Program is creating a new model for graduating with Honors. The purpose of the model is to recognize students who **integrate civic engagement or leadership with their academic work**. In the proposed model, a student wishing to pursue the standard will

- enter the Honors Program by proposing a plan that **draws from some prior coursework, lists future coursework**, and, most importantly, proposed a **civic engagement or leadership project** that is **fostered or informed** by the coursework and which, in turn, **enriches** the coursework,
- demonstrate** his or her having met the standard via a **reflective defense** that enumerates the way the proposed goals were met.

The standard does not require a specific number of courses, and whether the student has met the standard is largely independent of grades, just like a doctoral dissertation is independent of the student's grades.



“Honors,” that is, opportunities for ambitious and high-achieving students have historically been the few ways undergraduates can pursue alternatives to the most common assessment schemes. The LSA Honors Program is hoping to capitalize on these alternatives and create new ones for students beyond the conventional measures of “high achievement.”