The Phoenix College Honors Program is committed to five Honors course objectives, as defined by the National Collegiate Honors Council. Please take this opportunity to first understand the objectives in full by studying the detailed descriptions (see attached). Then, reflect on and communicate to us how your course meets the objectives. Ideally, you meet at least three of them. Optional: If you are not currently meeting a given objective, consider and provide details on how you can incorporate it in a future semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Specific assignments and/or pedagogical strategies I use to meet this objective</th>
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<td>Develop effective written communication skills</td>
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<td>Develop effective oral communication skills</td>
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<td>Develop an ability to analyze and synthesize a broad range of material.</td>
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<td>Understand how scholars and artists think about problems</td>
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<td>Become independent and critical thinkers</td>
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Here are detailed descriptions of the objectives, from www.nchhonors.org→Faculty & Directors link at the top→Honors Course Design.

**Objective 1 – Developing written communication skills**
Discussion and writing are the hallmarks of Honors classes. Students become better writers by using writing, both in class and out, as a means to express their ideas. Therefore, Honors courses should emphasize papers and essays, not multiple-choice exams, and emphasize ideas and active learning over information and lectures.

How Honors faculty choose to help students develop written communication skills will depend on the discipline and on the instructor’s individual views about teaching and learning. Instructors can help students develop written skills through traditional writing assignments or through other methods such as journals, creative writing, reports, critiques, reviews, in-class writing, or the use of writing as a preliminary to discussion of issues. (In fact, the latter works extremely well to stimulate discussion. Students who have written something ahead of time are more willing to share their ideas and are less likely to talk off the top their heads in class.)

**Objective 2 – Developing oral communication skills**
Students become better speakers by participating in class discussion and, where appropriate, by leading class discussion. Therefore, Honors program courses should be discussion-oriented rather than lectures. Students benefit most from discussion when they are given the topic several days in advance and are asked to prepare their responses in writing ahead of time. The instructor might wish to provide some background to inform the discussion, which can then be used as a springboard to other ideas.

(Phoenix College addition) Oral presentations are another way to develop oral communication skills. The Oral Presentation Assessment committee has several documents that can help you facilitate an effective oral assignment. Go to the PC home page→Faculty and Staff→Committees→Academic Committees→Assessment→Oral Presentation→Resources.

**Objectives 3 & 4 – Developing the ability to analyze, to synthesize, and to understand scholarly work**
Students develop the ability to think about a broad range of ideas (Objective 3) and come to understand how scholars and artists work (Objective 4) by reading and responding to primary source material, by exploring issues and problems in depth rather than quickly and superficially, and by being carefully exposed to and guided through the methods of many disciplines. Therefore, Honors courses should try to explore with students the questions and methods common to all intellectual endeavors and those that differentiate the disciplines, to give students real-world, hands-on problems to explore, and to help them understand the place of intellectual pursuit in the greater society.

The use of primary sources allows students to develop their own interpretations instead of relying on someone else’s. Cross-disciplinary readings are especially valuable, in that they give students the opportunity to synthesize ideas. But primary sources are not necessarily limited to published texts or original documents. They can, for example, be the students’ own experiences, the results of surveys or questionnaires, works of art or music, films, videos, and the like. What is important is that students have an opportunity to be engaged by primary material.

Exploring issues and problems in depth may mean that the course covers less material than conventional courses. In many courses, the amount of material covered is less important than the way the material is handled. Students need to learn to see the broad implications of
each issue, as well as learning to analyze and synthesize the material. In this way, students will be able to apply what they have learned to other situations.

**Objective 5 – Helping students become independent and critical thinkers**

Students become independent thinkers and critical thinkers by working independently, yet under the guidance of responsive teachers. Therefore, an Honors course should give students a great deal of opportunity to think, write, and produce on their own (and in collaboration with their classmates) - as with papers and projects - and should give their work on-going feedback and encouragement. Honors courses should help students learn how to utilize their ideas in a broader social context - by helping them understand the origins, consequences, and principles underlying their ideas.

Honors courses should also create a classroom environment that is open to many perspectives and points of view, where students are encouraged to take intellectual risks and feel safe doing so, where they learn to respect each other (although not necessarily each others’ ideas), and where they are taught to consider both the immediate and long term consequences of their own ideas.

When students become active learners through direct involvement with an issue, they develop attitudes and habits which may make them more active in the intellectual and cultural life of the community. It also makes them more aware of the political and social realities of that community.

But for students to become truly active participants in their learning, they must become intellectual risk-takers. Therefore, Honors instructors themselves should be willing to take risks – to teach in a different manner, to be open to challenges from students, to be willing to let the classroom discussion roam freely yet fruitfully.

While Honors courses need to help students develop intellectually, instructors also need to hold them responsible for meeting the course requirements. Honors students may be brighter than the average student - more intellectually skeptical and (usually) highly motivated - but they are not necessarily better organized, better informed, or better prepared for their classes. Just like other students, they need to learn good work habits. Still, it would be unfair to hold them to a higher standard in this regard. Also, when designing an Honors course, it is important to remember that Honors courses are not meant to have more work for the sake of more work or harder work for the sake of harder work. The amount of work and its difficulty should serve a legitimate pedagogical purpose.