



Honors Program: 10 Questions (with Answers)

1. *What is the HP? (It's more than an academic program: it's a community of learners.)*

The Honors Program, most importantly, is a community of learners with a common educational purpose: to pursue life and learning to the fullest, to become better people and career professionals through better thinking.

It's also an exceptional complementary academic program that will enhance students' educational and life experience and further develop their academic abilities in relation to all degrees at Oregon Tech. Fundamentally, it is an applied critical thinking program focusing on three core concepts and their interrelation and application in society: ideas, questions, and answers.

The HP is not a club nor an honor society, but there are fine honor societies at OT.

The HP enables students to achieve a more focused, challenging education to better prepare them for life and their professions than students pursuing a standard degree program: HP students learn together and independently, they learn how to think more carefully and critically, they learn how they can accomplish more in the world, and HP students will be better prepared for what comes next in life. They learn how to apply these critical thinking skills in many ways to solve many problems: the result is better living through better thinking. Our slogan says it best:

“Fostering the person in the future professional.”

2. *Does it cost extra to participate in the Honors Program? (No.)*

No: there are no additional costs to participate in the HP beyond the costs associated with tuition, books, and fees required for taking classes and attending Oregon Tech. In other words, there are no extra or hidden fees tacked on anywhere to be in the HP. However, students will pay the standard per-credit cost for any class at OT including Honors Program classes, like the HP Core Seminar Sequence or all Honors Option classes, but these classes meet General Education requirements and/or degree requirements, respectively, and participating in the HP should not add additional credits to a student's overall credits required for graduation.

For extracurricular and cocurricular activities, there are typically no additional costs (transportation is usually provided, event fees covered, materials supplied). Some costs will be optional or at a reduced rate for HP students (for example, to purchase a souvenir at an event, or to offset cost of attending an especially special event).

3. How do I “join”? (There’s an application!)

After applying to OT, or even before applying to OT if it helps you to decide you’d like to be a Hustlin’ Owl, prospective students must apply for admission to the Honors Program. Admission is open to any eligible student on the Klamath Falls campus (in-person only). Regarding eligibility, we look for students who are up for an academic challenge, and so we have a “preferred” GPA of 3.75, or higher; however, if you are “around” a 3.5 GPA, you are motivated, and up for just such a challenge, then you are welcome and encouraged to apply. Unsure? Just ask the Assistant or Executive Director or ask another HP student. To be clear, there is a free application process that determines acceptance via an admission decision, admission is competitive, and spaces are limited (i.e., students can’t simply sign up to participate and there are only so many spaces).

We create a cohort each year of about 25 students, and the cohort is created on a first come, first served basis. Fall is the only time to start the HP. (We do not offer lateral admission to the HP. Although we are currently working on a lateral admission approach. Check back.)

The applications, once received, are reviewed and an “Honors Program Admission Decision” will then be made and shared with the student via email, along with a formal letter outlining expectations, responsibilities, and requirements. Please send any questions to the Executive Director of the Honors Program, Dr. Christopher J. Syrnyk (Christopher.Syrnyk@oit.edu).

4. Is it too late to apply? (Usually not, but it depends on when you apply!)

No, typically: we open the application cycle January 1 each year, and it goes to September 30 (*Students hear about the HP late, or they can be slow to warm up to this opportunity! Or they don’t read email over the summer! Imagine!*). It is a rolling admission cycle. We also offer early consideration to a select group of students for a brief period before January. As stated, applications are reviewed and admission decisions are made on a first come, first served basis. Applying sooner is better, but students should plan to do their best work on the application. When in doubt, apply!

5. *What are the benefits of participating in the Honors Program? (We knew you'd ask.)*

Intangible benefits:

- HP students report feeling a greater sense of community among fellow HP students and an overall stronger connection to the university. This sense of belonging is particularly valuable these days when students also report struggling with isolation and loneliness: a community of welcoming peers from across their majors is a significant benefit. Yearly this community aspect ranks as the number one reason for HP student satisfaction.
- HP students tend to graduate better prepared, more confident, than their peers, to face a challenging or uncertain future, to risk trying and failing, or to try something new in life. Change is a given; being ready for change and being prepared to thrive in changing times provides an invaluable knowledge basis and skill set for HP students.
- We say that HP students go from being “permission seekers” to “problem solvers.” HP students learn how to think for themselves, they learn how to decide what needs to be done, and what’s right, and how to achieve the goals, the results, and, yes, the answers.
- Whereas their peers will tend to “get a job” upon graduation, HP students tend not only “to start a meaningful career,” but are promoted sooner, and they advance more readily in their careers because they are able to act on their curiosity, pivot as required, they can tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty better, and they are able to recognize and pursue more diverse opportunities. They are more willing to appreciate unseen career possibilities.
- In the HP, students receive another level of college guidance and mentoring, often through working personally with the Executive Director, the Assistant Director, and the Core Faculty.
- Robust participation in the HP contributes to a student persisting to graduation.

Tangible benefits:

- If HP students are in good academic and degree program standing, then they are eligible for early registration each term (before most other students).
- Upon successful completion of the HP and their degree program, HP students receive an Oregon Institute of Technology diploma with the official designation (of the words) “Honors Program” on their diploma. Outside of the major, Oregon Tech allows for no other academic distinction on a student’s diploma (so, yeah, also special!).
- Yes, the HP does look good on a resume, on a scholarship application, on an internship or externship application, ok, but you probably already knew this. Then again, this is more than just a line on a resume: it’s also the skills and knowledge, it’s a readable symbol of your hard work and dedication, and it lets people know they can expect more from you, and you can deliver more for them.
- Also, for the student who successfully completes the HP, the Executive Director of the HP will be able to write an exceptional letter for employment applications and references, internships, scholarships, graduate or medical school, with more insights and examples of how an HP student has grown and developed over their time at Oregon Tech, and how they could contribute more to their endeavors. *And this means long after you graduate!* At Oregon Tech, which of course includes the Honors Program, we believe in students and student success, and we will help you long after you graduate.

6. How long does it take to complete the Honors Program? (It's a three-year program.)

It is a three-year, in-person program on the KF campus, with an optional fourth year: the fourth year strives to provide leadership opportunities for advanced HP students, as well as opportunities to help develop the Honors Program for future generations of great HP students. The fourth year is about giving back. Students should only apply to the HP if they have at least three years left to the completion of their degree and if they know they can seriously commit to the HP in its entirety.

If a student drops out mid-program, a space in the HP can't be filled by someone else: it's a real loss for the HP and the other students, and it's a space and a chance that another student will have missed out on. The third year can be completed while on externship, on MECOP, or even a study abroad year.

It's better when you're with us here, but we'll work with you if you're there.

7. Will student athletes, students involved in other programs and campus clubs, as well as those variously employed, be able to participate in the HP? (Certainly.)

Yes: we have great student athletes in the HP who have played golf, volleyball, track & field, XC, rugby, and baseball. If you like, we can connect you to them personally to ask your questions. HP students participate in ASOIT, labs, clubs, and many research projects with our excellent faculty. HP students often work as Resident Advisors for Housing, or as Admissions Ambassadors, they volunteer, work off-campus, and most are active and involved students around campus.

8. How much work is involved? What kind of time commitment is required? (The workload is reasonable: not more, just different. It's a fair amount of time.)

This is the big question. Most students understandably want to know how much work is involved. The HP is a classic example of how we can value our work: what you put into it determines what you get out of it. That said, there is the weekly one-hour, credit-bearing seminar class: the Honors Program **Core Seminar Sequence** classes all meet one day a week, each term, for the whole year, for three years. Like any classes, there are regular readings and assignments for these seminar classes, and various activities each term for students. Thus, we try to offer a selection of co-curricular activities each term so that students have a choice: we ask them to choose some of them.

Some activities are required, many are optional. But for motivated students, there will usually be ways for them to gain more from their HP experience, often by giving more of themselves and donating more of their time to the HP and their cohort members.

9. Should I apply my first year at Oregon Tech? Or can I wait to apply to the HP during my second year? (My suggestion is to apply in your first year!)

I appreciate this question: see number 1 at the top of this list. Some students express, “I’m worried about the transition to college or taking on too many activities and responsibilities.” I understand this concern. However, students tend to benefit most when they start the HP during their first year at Oregon Tech. Why? It’s all about being accepted from day one into a special community of HP students who are committed and connected to life and learning at Oregon Tech.

This new educational stage in life is when students are truly at the start of their higher education journey, an important time of transition to develop friendships and community connections, effective intellectual and practical habits, and the HP can be there at the start of this journey and guide and instruct students in specific, impactful ways. Think of the value of such a community.

It’s a great time for further guidance about the experience and purpose of college, supplemental teaching if needed or desired, and additional support from a special community of like-minded students who would like to accomplish more during their time while they are at Oregon Tech. In other words, the Honors Program offers more instruction and support to a student, a sense of connection, and a way to belong to a great community, in addition to all the other wonderful opportunities, and practical advantages, that await them at Oregon Tech. However, yes, you may apply to start in your second year, but you still need three years to complete the Honors Program.

It should also be noted that there is no guarantee of admission or special consideration during an Oregon Tech student’s second year should they choose to wait and apply to the Honors Program during their second year. Unless there are unusual circumstances, we do not delay acceptance.

**10. What if I have more questions?
(Is the HP for me? YES! Will I fit in and be welcome? YES!)**

Please feel free to reach out to the Executive Director at any time, with any questions. He can be contacted by email (Christopher.Syrnyk@oit.edu), text, cellphone. We can arrange a special campus visit with the Executive Director and with whomever else you would like to meet at Oregon Tech, perhaps the current Assistant Director. If an online meeting is more feasible, we can connect over Zoom. ***Students can also meet or Zoom with current HP students!***

For campus visits, prospective HP students may invite their families and friends, whoever is in their support group. We’d love to show you all around. You can hang out with current HP students. You can even attend an Honors Program seminar class or activity to see what it’s all about. And now, prospective students can meet up with some HP students in “The Burrow,” our new Honors Program meeting room and gathering space: 122 Boivin Hall, to get the *real* answers to all their questions.

All questions are welcome: all (qualified) students are welcome to apply to be in the Honors Program.