



Honors Program Manual - Information Science 2023-2024

This manual describes the content and organization of the Honors program of the Bachelor's program in Information Science at Utrecht University (UU). The intended readers are:

- The honors students,
- 1st year students who would like to join the Honors Program
- Teachers involved with the Honors Program

Index	Page
I. <u>General objectives and scope</u> The Honors Program offers a selected number of students extra challenges, and opportunities to broaden and deepen the boundaries of their academic discipline. The size of the Honors Program consists of 15 EC for extracurricular activities and 30 EC of regular courses that are accomplished at honors level by means of extra assignments, participation to an (interdisciplinary) honors course and writing an honors thesis.	2
II. <u>II. Admission and Transfer to subsequent years</u> Admission of new students to the Honors Program takes place in year 1 (period 3). Continuation to years 2 and 3 takes place after selection procedures.	4
III. <u>Science Honours Academy</u> The Science Honors Academy is the interdisciplinary honors community of the Bèta faculty, comprising all Honors students from the relevant study programs. Active participation in the symposia, workshops and excursions organized by and for honors students is mandatory. In case of unforeseen difficulties to complete one or more modules of SHA, there is the possibility to transfer a maximum of 3.5ECs from the interdisciplinary (SHA) part to the disciplinary (INKU) part of the honors program.	5
IV. <u>The Honors Program within Regular Courses</u> All honors students follow at least one regular course at honors level during their bachelor's program.	6
V. <u>Study year 1</u> In year 1, period 4, the Introduction project will be performed at honors level, and the students also participate in the interdisciplinary part of the honors program. Also, during the first year the student can broaden their knowledge by participating in one or more non-information science courses.	8
VI. <u>Study year 2</u> In year 2, the students carry out their Honors Research projects and Seminars assignment. This can be an interdisciplinary group project (e.g. collaboration with computer science students, as well as with students from other disciplines from the Honors program) or an individual one. This project also involves organizing and participating in a series of seminars and/or excursions organized with the participation of students from both Computer and Information Science. Apart from their Honors Research projects and Seminars assignment, during the second year, students can participate in one or more non-information science courses (especially if they have not done so during their first year). They also participate in the interdisciplinary part of the honors program. Finally, an excursion is organized to a science park, institution or company by SHA.	9

VII. <u>Study year 3</u> In year 3, the students work towards their final bachelor thesis research project (OZP) at honors level. They also participate in the interdisciplinary part of the honors program. Finally, they can participate in one or more non-information science courses (especially if they have not done so during their first or second year).	10
VIII. <u>Distribution of ECTS of the Information Science Honors Program</u>	11
VIII. <u>Contact details</u> Honors coordinators, Science Honors Academy coordinator, Education director INKU/INCA bachelor program	12

I. General Objectives and Scope

General Objectives of the Honors Program

At Utrecht University (UU) the Honors Programs are being developed at the level of the different faculties and departments. The following objectives of the Utrecht honors education are mentioned in the policy memorandum "Honors Colleges at the UU" (16 May 2012, M. Bok, A Koster and R. van der Vaart):

- Provide the best students with extra challenges
- Provide a better starting position for further education and the labor market
- Be a growth center for excellent teachers, researchers and academic professionals
- Be an experimental space for education, so that new ideas can penetrate existing education
- Strengthen the position of UU as a leading research university, which can attract talent (teachers and students) from the Netherlands and abroad

As soon as the honors program has been successfully completed, a separate certificate will be issued on which this achievement is stated.

Size of the Information Science Honors Program

The regular Bachelor's degree in Information Science is 180 EC (points according to the European Credit Transfer System)¹. The Information Science Honors Program comprises 45 EC: 15 EC extracurricular and 30 EC within the bachelor.

- 7.5 extracurricular EC are awarded on the basis of successful participation in the various interdisciplinary honors activities, including the Science Honors Academy.
- 7.5 extracurricular EC are awarded by following an Honors Research Projects and Seminars assignment, for example in the form of a scientific internship with a lecturer or professor, and writing a report as a result of this internship. The Honors Research Projects and Seminars work can be performed in groups (comprising students from the Information Science, as well as from Computer Science and potentially students from other disciplines), or individually. In the context of the Honors Research Projects and Seminars assignment, students meet regularly not only with their group (in case of a group project), but also with the rest of the Honors students from the Information Science and Computer Science disciplines, to discuss their ongoing projects, exchange ideas, and organize educational excursions. Students are expected to be pro-active in regards to

¹ 1 EC corresponds to 28 hours of study time, including contact hours.

the organization and attendance of the regular meetings described above.

- 7.5 EC are awarded by choosing and following, as part of their elective courses within the bachelor, one course outside Information Science.
- 7.5 EC are awarded for completing the Introductory project course (Introductieproject) of the first year at honors level.
- 15 EC are awarded for completing the bachelor thesis of Information Science (onderzoeksproject-OZP) of the third year at honors level.

For the last two elements (introductory project and OZP thesis), completing them at honors level, means that the student has to provide more input and perform more research than what would typically be required.

The above program EC distribution is the standard program that is supported by the Science Honors Academy and Information Science. However, students can, in consultation with the coordinator, fill in components in other ways, e.g. through interdisciplinary projects with other faculties, honors components for other subjects or personal interpretation (summer schools, etc.).

II. Admission and Transfer to subsequent years

The rules of the Honors Program are laid down in the Course Examination Regulations (OER 2022-2023).

Entry to the Honors Program is possible in study year 1, before period 4.

Admission to the Honors Program and transfer to it is based on a selection of a student by the honors coordinators. The student can show his or her interest at any time.

Admission to the Honors Program

- At any time in year 1 (before period 4), the student can apply for admission to the Honors Program by sending a short motivation letter to the respective coordinator.
- Students who are in the top 10% of their class or have an average grade of 7.5 after period 2 are approached to apply for a place in the Honors Program during period 3.
- Students can also be contacted to apply based on the tutor's recommendation.
- The honors coordinators decide upon the admission of the student to the Honors Program.

Transfer to years 2 and 3 within the Honors Program

Students who still meet the requirements of the Honors Program after the end of academic year 1 are invited for the subsequent part program of the Honors Program.

Students can be removed from the Honors Program after an academic year if they:

- have not obtained more than one subject in the relevant academic year, or
- have not achieved an average grade of at least 7.0, or
- have not actively participated in the (extra-) curricular activities.

The education director decides on the removal, following consultation with the Honors coordinator, and in his/her opinion includes any special personal circumstances that the student has reported to him as soon as can be reasonably expected.

Individual conversation

Students have a personal conversation with one or both the honors coordinators every six months regarding the student's current progress as well as regarding the topics that the student will pay extra attention in the coming six months.

III. Science Honours Academy

All honors students from the Science Faculty together form the Science Honors Academy. This is the interdisciplinary community of honors students from the departments of Biology, Pharmacy, Computing and Information Science, Physics and Astronomy, Chemistry and Mathematics.

The Science Honors Academy is coordinated by Dr. ing. Jacco Bikker (J.Bikker@uu.nl). The coordinators of the Honors Program of Information Science inform Dr. Bikker about which students are participants. There is a minimum obligation of active participation that must be agreed with Dr. Bikker. See also: <http://sciencehonours.sites.uu.nl/>

The activities consist of interdisciplinary symposia, projects, workshops and excursions. The topics that are covered are outside the regular curriculum. The language of instruction is English.

Every year an educational trip abroad is organized. Participation in one such trip during the bachelor's program is compulsory. Only one trip abroad per student is subsidized by the Honors Academy. The student must consult with the coordinators of the courses the education of which he/she will miss during the trip's week. The dean will indicate in a letter that he/she will support this trip.

At the beginning of the academic year, the program of the Science Honors Academy is not yet fixed, since it is the students who organize the activities themselves. For and by the participants of the Science Honors Academy, a website with up-to-date information is kept.

Outside the Honors Program there are of course even more opportunities for those students who are looking to further broaden their knowledge or to obtain more information about Information Science developments in the Netherlands or abroad.

IV. The Honors Program within Regular Courses

The Introduction project course must be accomplished at honors level. This means that one (or more) honors groups are formed for this regular project course. For these groups, assignments are formulated with extra challenge for the students.

The bachelor thesis (OZP) and the elective, non-Information Science course, must also be performed at honors level. These courses are accomplished at honors level individually per Honors student.

It is also possible for students themselves to propose an honors component that is attached to other regular courses. This is done in consultation with the coordinator and the lecturer of the relevant course. The honors student who wishes to perform an honors assignment in one of these courses is responsible for the assignment that is considered as an honors level. The coordinator, course lecturer and the students jointly determine the exact content of the assignment and indicate the criteria explaining why this will be an honors assignment.

For the courses above, the final grade of the regular course is determined in the same way as for regular students. If the honors assignment has not been carried out to the satisfaction of the course lecturer and the honors coordinator, the honors student will not complete the course with an honors label.

Honors assignment description for courses within the regular program

The lecturers are asked, in consultation with the student, to state the following elements in their description of an honors assignment:

Lecturer(s)	
Course, period, study year	
Title & Description of the assignment	
Intended learning objectives	
Criteria on which the student is assessed	<i>The student him/herself can propose additional criteria according to which he / she wants to be assessed in order to practice certain academic or personal skills.</i>
Student name(s) and student number(s)	

Additional instructions for lecturers

- The Honors assignment described above contains in-depth material for honors students: articles and other information, offered for self-study. The required insight goes beyond what can be expected from the average Information Science student. The assignment deals with a subject that will not be encountered in the same way in the curriculum, not even in later academic years (i.e. only applying a mathematical technique in a project that is also being dealt with in another course is not considered adequate). In other words, there is no room in the regular curriculum for the subject of the assignment.
- The student can come up with an assignment initiative him/herself. On the basis of the assignment, students can indicate, for example, to use additional formal or new techniques, in order to focus on possible interdisciplinary aspects of the assignment.
- The students can be asked, by means of an open assignment, to structure their work themselves and to fill it

in from a creative perspective.

- For more information, see also the note "In-depth honors assignments for a course", Hanne ten Berge, 18 June 2013 and the Report 'Building blocks for a renewed Honors program' by Nora Assendorp et al. (2013).

V. Study year 1

In addition to their participation in the Honors Academy, the following activities are planned for honors students in the 1st year of the Honors Program:

- Introduction project at honors level in period 4 (7.5 EC)
- Learning to maintain a portfolio during the honors years. In this 1st year extra attention is paid to the importance of a portfolio.
- At the end of the first academic year, there is an interview with the honors coordinator(s). At that moment the student can make the following choices:
 - Continue with only the TWIN study
 - Continue with the TWIN study including the honors program
 - Continue with the honors program
 - Stop all honors activities

Portfolio

The portfolio is a (digital) tool that is meant to keep track of progress of the student in regards to their study achievements and (academic) skills. It is meant to help the student and the coordinator: 1) monitor, 2) reflect upon and 3) assess the student's progress.

Keeping a portfolio is useful for every Information Science student, and students are advised to maintain this at the start of the first academic year. However, keeping a portfolio is not compulsory for regular students. Since honors students have to make extra choices compared to regular students, it is important that they keep a portfolio. In the honors program, however, students are given a great deal of freedom with regard to the interpretation of interdisciplinary components and their bachelor project. Maintaining a portfolio creates moments of overall self-reflection, while it also enables the student to reflect upon the honors program.

As a suggestion the following components can be stored in the portfolio:

- The letter of motivation made for registration to the honors program
- Reflections on the progress of the honors program at the end of year 1 and year 2, plus a final reflection report
- Products, ratings and reflections that are part of the honors program
- Short description on the progress per obligatory component of the honors program
- An essay at the end of each academic year that deals with personal developments, goals, possible improvement points and motivation

Furthermore, the students are free to determine what is stored in the portfolio. The Information Guide for students that explains the portfolio can be used by students to gain ideas.

VI. Study Year 2

In addition to the student's participation in the Science Honors Academy and the honors assignments within existing courses, academic year 2 of the Honors Program consists of the following elements:

- In the second or third year a course, which is an optional component from the major or elective courses (profielingsruimte) outside the Information Science curriculum, performed at honors level (7.5EC).
- the performance of a honorsworthy Honors Research Projects and Seminars assignment performed in groups or individually, and the writing of an honors report as a result of this project (7.5 EC). This project can be a scientific internship with one or more lecturers, but it can also be completed in other ways (for example the student following a special project-based honors course, or developing a course him/herself).
- In the context of the Honors Research Projects and Seminars assignment described above (point 2), participation in and organization of a regular seminar or educational excursion for the Information Science and Computer Science honors students.

VII. Study Year 3

In addition to participation in the Science Honors Academy, study year 3 of the Honors Program consists of carrying out the final bachelor thesis project (OZP) at honors level (15 EC), possibly (continuing) carrying out a Honors Research Project (e.x Capita Selecta) (7.5 EC) and/or following a course at honors level (if these have not been done in year 1 or 2), and participation in and organization of a monthly seminar for Computer and Information Science honors students.

VIII. Distribution of ECTS of the Information Science Honors Program

Tabel 1: ECTS distribution

Honors Program part	Description	ECTS	
Interdisciplinary activities Science Honors Academy (SHA)	Symposia, workshops and excursions for 2 years plus interdisciplinary assignment	7,5	Extra- curricular
Individual or group Honors Research Projects and Seminars assignment	Academic internship and seminars/excursions	7,5	Extra- curricular
Course (optional component major or elective)	Performed at Honors Level	7,5	Profiling or Major
Introduction project	Performed at Honors Level	7,5	Major
Final research project (OZP)	Performed at Honors Level	15	Major
	Total	45	

IX. Contact Details

- **Coordinators of the Honors program – Computer Science and Information Science**

Information Science

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