What is an honors course, and how does it differ from a non-honors course?

There is no formula for developing and teaching an honors course. Basically, an honors course delves deeper into the subject matter and challenges students in ways that a non-honors course does not. An honors course does not require students to do more work; it requires students to complete work that is of a higher quality with more academic rigor than work assigned in non-honors courses. An honors course should be different from a non-honors course in some of the following ways:

• More emphasis on written and oral communication of ideas
• Applying theories and principles to real-life problems
• Addressing the material from an interesting thematic perspective
• Incorporating the Socratic discussion as a major instructional method
• Encouraging creativity
• Providing opportunities for public presentations of work
• Providing opportunities for service and/or experiential learning opportunities
• Encouraging teamwork and collaboration
• Using primary texts instead of traditional textbooks
• Exploring connections between disciplines
• Incorporating learning occasions outside of campus

An honors course should include some of the following approaches to learning:

• Teacher as a facilitator, coach, and model
• Student led learning and research
• Student exchange of ideas
• Learning through community service
• Project-based learning (perhaps involving community projects)
• Problem-solving learning (perhaps addressing a community problem)
• Seminar style learning with a concentration of writing across all modalities
• Integration of other content areas with connections to real-world skills and context
• Use of higher level critical thinking skills and creativity for advanced learners

(Approaches adapted from the North Carolina Honors Level Course Implementation Guide)

More information on Honors Programs and honors courses can be found at the [National Collegiate Honors Council website](#)

[Definition of Honors Education](#)