1. **Why do Honours Political Science?**

Many students seeking to enhance their capacity to produce original research during their Political Science program find that the 32 upper division units in the Major provide somewhat limited opportunities. The 48 upper division units in the Honours program allows students to graduate both with a broad, extensive background in most areas of the field, and also with a strong, in-depth concentration in a specialized area of interest. In their later years, Honours students also take more small, upper-level seminars, thus developing more personal relationships with a range of professors in the Department and their student cohort, as well as a more advanced knowledge of core Political Science methodologies and issues. For many students, the Honours Essay is a key attraction. The chance to conceive of an ambitious research project on a special topic of personal interest, design a reading list and research plan for approaching this topic, and then write up the essay in one-on-one consultation with a supervisor is a highlight of their undergraduate career.

2. **What are the differences between the Honours program and the Major?**

The main difference between these two programs is that each Honours student undertakes a 5-unit Honours Seminar in the Fall term, and a 5-unit Honours Essay in the Spring term, working closely with one supervising professor over these two semesters to complete this substantial, specialized research project.

Honours:
- 120 total units
- 60 upper division units
- 48 upper division units in Political Science, including POL 499-5 Honours Essay and POL 490-5 Honours Seminar. An additional 8 of these 48 units must be at the 400-level

Major:
- 120 units
- 45 upper division units
- 32 upper division units in Political Science, of which 8 units must be 400-level

3. **Why would a student reasonably choose not to do Honours?**

An Honours program is intended to give the student advanced knowledge in one field or discipline. Students who are more interested in breadth than in specialization might decide to spread their studies over several departments (with a Major and Minor, for example); whereas students strongly interested in two distinct disciplines might choose a Double Major.

4. **Is an Honours degree necessary for admission to graduate school?**

No, these days an Honours degree is no longer a specific requirement for most graduate programs. But, even if it is not technically required, an Honours program does still offer by far the best preparation for graduate study, and can be a great advantage for those applying to graduate schools. The Honours degree itself is a strong indicator that the student has earned admission to, and completed the requirements of, an advanced, highly selective program of study and research. An Honours Political Science program gives students both broad coverage in their field and a coherent, in-depth training in their area of specialization. A range of smaller seminars in later years also gives Honours students an impressive amount of advanced training—and contact with several professors who have followed the students' work closely and so can
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support them with strong, detailed letters of reference. Successful completion of the research and writing for the yearlong, 8,000 to 10,000 word Honours Essay is an accomplishment valued by graduate schools in many fields, as well as by future employers outside of academia.

5. **Is an Honours degree necessary for admission to Law School?**

No, an Honours degree is not a specific requirement for admission to Law School. Most law schools require a 4-year degree to be eligible, so it is advised to check with your prospective schools on their individual requirements.

6. **When do students apply to do the Honours program?**

Generally once they have completed at least 75 units, and are within three (3) terms of finishing their degree.

7. **Is it possible to combine a semester of Study Abroad or Co-Op with an Honours program?**

Yes, but this will also require especially careful planning of course selections, both at SFU and at the foreign school.

8. **Do I need to have already defined a precise topic for my Honours Essay at the time of applying?**

No. At the time of application all that is required is a brief, 250-word statement outlining a general "field of inquiry" or area of concentration and career plans. It can be further defined in relation to a list of authors, texts, or possible case studies. The professor selected as supervisor at the time of application should have a special expertise in that "field of inquiry," and can help the student refine the definition of the area of concentration before the application is submitted.

9. **If I meet the minimum requirements for CGPA and UDGPA, am I guaranteed admission into the Honours program?**

No. Meeting the grade requirements is a strong start, but the Honours Committee makes admissions decisions on the basis of the complete application package—including the writing sample, the statement defining a "field of inquiry," and so on.

10. **When should I begin preparing my application to the Honours program?**

Although completed applications are not due until the end of exam period in each Spring term, students are encouraged to begin to prepare for the application process as soon as possible because the application process requires a good deal of prior thought, planning, legwork, and consultation with a potential faculty supervisor. The application process is, in fact, quite simple. But getting the support and signature of the faculty sponsor/supervisor, and agreeing on the definition of the "field of inquiry," can take some time.

11. **After I have submitted my application to the Honours program, when can I expect to hear about my decision?**

Normally the Honours Committee meets to make admissions decisions in early June, and students will be contacted about the decision in late June.