



INDIANA UNIVERSITY

PAUL H. O'NEILL SCHOOL OF PUBLIC
AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

O'Neill Honors Thesis Rubric and Expectations

2022-2023

The capstone of the O'Neill Honors Program is writing a thesis. Students work with faculty mentors and Honors Workshop instructors to research a questions that has important implications for academic scholarship and/or best practices in real-world settings.

Recommendations regarding the substance of O'Neill honors thesis projects are provided below. Students and faculty mentors are encouraged to use these guidelines as a rubric for assessing the progress and quality of an individual thesis.

With rare exceptions, every good thesis will include the following structural elements:

- Introduction with one or more research questions and explanation of why the research is needed
- Discussion of prior research that is relevant to the research question (i.e., a literature review)
- A hypothesis or expected findings
- Description of data and methods as well as an explanation of why these data and methods are appropriate to answer the research question.
- Description of the results of the analysis
- Discussion of the implications of the results
- Conclusion to summarize key points of the thesis
- References
- Tables, figures, and appendices, as needed

Additionally, well-developed thesis projects should adhere to the following expectations:

- A completed thesis should be approximately 7,000-10,000 words in length. This does not include references, appendices, or other supplemental sections.
- A thesis is required to present an original analysis of data that has been systematically collected (by the student or by other researchers).
- A thesis can but does not need to include regression analysis. Data may assume a variety of qualitative and quantitative forms.
- A thesis may, but is not required to, test hypotheses and make causal claims. However, a thesis should at least identify expected findings.
- A thesis is expected to be informed by scholarly conversations, but it is not required to create new pathways in theory. For example, a thesis may use academic scholarship to appropriately test a research question that has important implications for practitioners.
- A thesis may be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal for publication but is not expected to meet the bar of a "publishable paper." If a student wants to submit their paper for publication, their advisor is responsible to serve as the PI for research requiring IRB approval. Students who do not aim to publish their papers do not need to seek IRB approval.