



HONORS COLLEGE

AVE MARIA UNIVERSITY

Handbook

2026–2027 Academic Year

I. Honors College Mission

The Honors College at Ave Maria University combines Catholic fidelity with exceptional academic quality. The Honors College educates a highly selective group of the nation's top undergraduates who desire academic excellence at a faithful Catholic university. As the oldest and most prestigious curricular program at AMU, it is devoted to the intellectual, cultural, professional, and spiritual formation of its students. The Honors College fosters a rigorous and supportive academic environment in which conversations flow naturally in and outside the classroom in the pursuit of wisdom and authentic friendships.

II. Learning Goals and Outcomes

Outcome 1: Honors students will demonstrate advanced proficiency in the Core Curriculum through advanced readings, projects, and assignments in Honors courses in the Core Curriculum.

Outcome 2: Honors students will acquire and apply analytical and critical thinking skills as well as advanced research methods within their discipline.

Outcome 3: Honors students will demonstrate an ability to articulate the integration of the interdisciplinary Core Curriculum with their major field of study.

Outcome 4: Honors students will demonstrate leadership and communication skills in social and academic contexts.

Outcome 5: Students will cultivate a life of virtue.

Outcome 6: Students will deepen their engagement in the university community through participating in an Honors community marked by friendships and a shared pursuit of wisdom.

III. Admissions and Matriculation Requirements

1. Admissions

The Honors College welcomes applications from incoming freshmen, transfer students, current AMU students, and dual-enrollment students.

To be considered for admission, applicants must have:

- Minimum unweighted cumulative GPA of 3.70 from the student's previous high school or university; and
- Minimum 1360 SAT score or 30 ACT score or 92 CLT score

Students who meet these criteria may be invited to submit an Honors College application. Transfer students and current AMU students must have sufficient time remaining before graduation to complete all Honors College curriculum and colloquia requirements. Current AMU students who do not have a qualifying standardized test score may be considered through an interview with the Dean of the Honors College. All dual-enrollment applicants are required to interview with the Dean of the Honors College.

Admission decisions are made by the Honors College Admissions Committee using a holistic review of each applicant's academic record, Honors College application, and other relevant academic and extracurricular achievements. Admission decisions are final for the applicable admission cycle; applicants who are not admitted may reapply in a subsequent year.

2. Transfer Credit

The courses listed below are accepted toward Honors College curricular requirements. Courses designated as **automatic** require no additional approval. Courses designated as **approval required** must be approved by the Dean of the Honors College in consultation with the appropriate department chair.

(a) Honors Courses Automatically Accepted for Honors Credit

- LATN 101 Elementary Latin
- LATN 102 Intermediate Latin
- GREK 103 Elementary Greek
- GREK 104 Intermediate Greek
- CHEM 125 General Chemistry I
- CHEM 126 General Chemistry II
- PHYS 221 University Physics: Mechanics with laboratory
- PHYS 222 University Physics: Materials with laboratory
- PHYS 223 University Physics: Electricity and Magnetism with laboratory

(b) Honors Courses Requiring Approval

The following Honors courses may be applied toward Honors College requirements upon approval by the Dean of the Honors College in consultation with the appropriate department chair. Approved courses will be recorded as transfer credit and applied toward the corresponding Honors College requirement.

- HIST 101H Western Civilization I Honors
- HIST 102H Western Civilization II Honors
- PHIL 205H Nature and Person Honors
- PHIL 206H Ethics Honors
- PHIL 300H Metaphysics Honors
- POLT 203H American Civilization Honors
- RETP 101H Rhetoric and Poetics I Honors
- RETP 102H Rhetoric and Poetics II Honors
- THEO 105H Sacred Scripture Honors
- THEO 205H Sacred Doctrine Honors
- THEO 400H Living in Christ Honors

(c) Non-Transferable Honors Credit

The following course must be completed at Ave Maria University and is not eligible for transfer credit toward Honors College requirements:

- HONS 401 Honors Senior Capstone

(d) AP and IB Credit

Credit earned through the College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Program or the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme may be awarded university credit in accordance with University policy; however, such credit does not satisfy Honors College curricular requirements.

IV. Requirements

1. Curriculum Requirements

All Honors students are required to complete seven (7) or more Honors courses (HONS or H-courses). These include:

(a) The two (2) required Honors courses:

- FRES 101H Gaudium in Veritate Honors
- HONS 401 Honors Capstone

(b) Five (5) or more courses from any of the following twenty (20) courses:

No more than two (2) courses per semester may count toward this requirement:

- HIST 101H Western Civilization I Honors
- HIST 102H Western Civilization II Honors
- PHIL 205H Nature and Person Honors
- PHIL 206H Ethics Honors
- PHIL 300H Metaphysics Honors
- POLT 203H American Civilization Honors
- RETP 101H Rhetoric and Poetics I Honors
- RETP 102H Rhetoric and Poetics II Honors
- THEO 105H Sacred Scripture Honors
- THEO 205H Sacred Doctrine Honors
- THEO 400H Living in Christ Honors

No more than two (2) courses may count toward this requirement:

- LATN 101 Elementary Latin
- LATN 102 Intermediate Latin
- GREK 103 Elementary Greek
- GREK 104 Intermediate Greek

No more than two (2) courses may count toward this requirement:

- CHEM 125 General Chemistry I
- CHEM 126 General Chemistry II
- PHYS 221 University Physics: Mechanics with laboratory
- PHYS 222 University Physics: Materials with laboratory
- PHYS 223 University Physics: Electricity and Magnetism with laboratory

2. Honors Curriculum Further Specifications

Honors courses (HONS or H-courses) are designated for Honors student enrollment only.

If pursuing an Honors major, students may enroll in Honors sections of two Core Curriculum courses in addition to enrolling in any H-courses offered by their Honors major.

Honors students may take any language or science courses in the academic catalog to fulfill the University's language requirement.

3. Honors Colloquia Requirement

Honors Colloquia are academic lectures, discussions, debates, and other events that complement the Honors Core Curriculum. These interdisciplinary gatherings engage Honors students, faculty, and guest speakers in the exploration of ideas central to the Catholic liberal arts tradition, contemporary issues, and the mission of the Honors College. Honors Colloquia foster intellectual community and the practice of thoughtful, civil discourse outside the classroom.

Honors students must attend a total of ten (10) Honors Colloquia before graduation, including at least two colloquia per academic year until the requirement is met.

Those Honors students on an approved leave of absence or participating in an approved study abroad program are exempt from the annual colloquia attendance requirement during the affected semester(s). Nevertheless, all Honors students must complete their total of ten (10) Honors colloquia before graduation.

4. Cumulative GPA Requirement

Honors students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.40 at the end of each academic year, and at graduation, to remain in and graduate from the Honors College.

5. Graduating in the Honors College

Students who satisfy all Honors College curriculum, colloquia, and GPA requirements are eligible to graduate from the Honors College. Graduation from the Honors College is noted on the student's official transcript and diploma.

V. Academic Policies

1. Standards and Guidelines for Honors Courses

(a) Honors Syllabus Standards

Honors courses feature advanced and more challenging readings, assignments, and assessments. These higher expectations are articulated in the Honors course syllabus, assignments, and grading criteria/rubrics.

Readings: Honors courses offer advanced coursework. A meaningful proportion of the course readings and/or problem sets must be deeper and more challenging. In some disciplines, fewer pages with more in-depth discussion might be better. In other disciplines, more reading can add nuance and depth to the subject matter. In all cases, reading and/or problem set expectations should be at a more advanced level that elevates the subject matter and the discussions in class.

Assignments: The number of assignments for an Honors class may be the same as a regular section of the same course. However, there must be something distinctive about each assignment in an Honors class. Distinctiveness can be based on the rigor of the assignment, the type of assignment, the weighted grade of an assignment, or some combination thereof. Some examples of distinctiveness include but are not limited to:

- *Rigor of assignments:* An Honors course assignment could have more advanced requirements (e.g., longer page length and/or problem sets) or higher grading expectations than the same assignment in a regular section.
- *Types of assignments:* An Honors course could replace a regular-section assignment (e.g., a take-home essay based on primary sources) with an alternative type of assignment, such

as a rigorous research paper, substantive book review, significant in-class debate, formal oral presentation, professor-guided class role playing, advanced modeling, and so on.

- *Differences in weighting assignments:* An Honors course could count participation as a higher percentage of the final grade (to reflect the greater importance on class discussion) and/or count quizzes as a lower percentage in final grade (assuming that the reason for quizzes is to motivate reading, an incentive which Honors students may not need in the same proportion).

Assessments/Grading: Honors classes will have higher expectations for A-level work and higher support to meet those expectations. This may be done with an Honors rubric, where professors detail the higher standards for, say, a paper, and then show the ways in which they will be supported in meeting those standards (office hours, course tutor, special tutorial, etc.).

Artificial intelligence: Generative artificial intelligence (AI) refers to the use of artificial intelligence to create original content based on patterns it has learned. It is the responsibility of Honors professors to consult with the Dean of the Honors College if they wish to allow for students' use of generative AI in their Honors course. Otherwise, students' use of any program that incorporates generative AI—including, but not limited to, ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Copilot, Perplexity, Quillbot, and Grammarly—in any aspect, or at any stage of completing an assignment, is strictly prohibited in an Honors class. Honors professors should include in their syllabi the Honors course's AI policy as agreed by the professor and the Dean of the Honors College. All suspected violations of that policy will be adjudicated under the University's Academic Honor Code process.

Technology: The use of phones or laptops in Honors classrooms should be limited to educational purposes only and are discouraged generally unless required by the professor or the discipline.

(b) Honors Course Guidance

Faith and reason: Committed to imparting the Catholic intellectual tradition, Honors professors teach Honors classes based on a genuine academic and apostolic initiative. They demonstrate the integration of faith and reason in a way that challenges and supports high-achieving Honors students and aligns with *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*.

Community building: Honors courses are cornerstones to the Honors community, where Honors professors and students discuss ideas and grow in virtue in the context of mentorship friendship. If one or more Honors professors are teaching at least two sections of the same Honors course, they should encourage each section to have unique identity and strive to create camaraderie and friendly competition among those Honors sections through, for example, inter-section debates, review competitions, or an all-section end-of-the-year review.

Elevated conversations: Honors courses uniquely foster higher levels of participation and conversation with engaged Honors students. Conversations about course topics and material naturally flow throughout Honors classrooms, colloquia, and the Honors Residential College. Honors professors facilitate these discussions in the classroom through, for example, the Socratic method or asking each student to lead a discussion for part of a class.

Human formation and personalized mentorship: Teaching high caliber Honors students in smaller class sizes offers Honors professors a unique opportunity to educate and form them. Honors professors foster special mentor relationships with one-on-one advising, occasional extra Honors Office Hours, and special invitations to academic events and opportunities.

Interdisciplinary integration: Honors core classes are uniquely suited for interdisciplinary integration. In the spirit of St. John Henry Newman’s concept of the unity of knowledge at a Catholic university, Honors professors integrate course topics, ideas, and discussions with other disciplines and Honors courses. They may also connect their Honors courses with Honors colloquia and other academic programming to reinforce and augment concepts in their Honors courses.

(c) Honors Course Changes

In the case of curricular matters that materially affect the Academic Catalog, the Dean of the Honors College will submit a proposal to the Honors Faculty Board. The Honors Faculty Board or its relevant committee will deliberate on the proposal, ask any questions or engage in fact-finding pertaining to the proposal, and then vote on the proposal. The Honors Faculty Board’s approval is required in lieu of Core Curriculum Committee’s review for Honors-specific modifications of Honors core curriculum courses. Any new Honors curriculum will articulate a list of all courses that will draw on departmental courses, if applicable, and will require the approval by the chair(s) of the department(s) that offer such course(s). The Dean of the Honors College will then submit the proposal to the Vice President of Academic Affairs, who will in turn submit the proposal to the Academic Affairs Committee for vetting. For significant curricular changes, such as the proposal of a new major in the Honors College, a whole faculty vote may be required for final approval.

2. Study Abroad

Honors students who satisfy the criteria to study abroad are eligible to participate in the University’s study abroad programs.

3. Review, Probation, Removal, and Appeal

(a) Annual Review

The Honors College reviews each student’s cumulative GPA and colloquia attendance at the end of each academic year.

(b) Academic Probation

Honors students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.40 at the end of each academic year and must attend at least two colloquia per academic year.

Students whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.40 at the end of an academic year, and/or who do not attend at least two colloquia per academic year (unless on approved leave of absence, an approved study abroad program, or have already fulfilled the required ten colloquia), will be

placed on Honors College academic probation for one semester. Honors College academic probation is separate from University academic probation.

If the student's cumulative GPA remains below 3.40 at the end of the probationary semester, and/or the student does not attend at least two colloquia by the end of the probationary semester, the student will be removed from the Honors College. Students whose cumulative GPA returns to 3.40 or higher at the end of the probationary semester and/or who attend at least two colloquia by the end of the probationary semester will be removed from probation and remain in good standing in the Honors College.

Attendance of two of colloquia during the probationary semester does not count for the purposes of the minimum two colloquia per academic year. Students on Honors College academic probation remain eligible to participate in approved study abroad programs.

(c) Removal from the Honors College

Students may also be removed from the Honors College for honor code violations, disciplinary infractions, or disruptive behavior at the discretion of the Dean of the Honors College and in consultation with the Dean of Faculty.

(d) Appeals

Students may appeal removal from the Honors College by submitting a written appeal to the Dean of the Honors College within fourteen (14) days of notification. Appeals are reviewed by the Honors Faculty Board.

If an appeal is granted, the student must satisfy any conditions established by the Honors Faculty Board. Failure to meet those conditions may result in removal from the Honors College at the end of the subsequent semester.

Academic probation is not subject to appeal.

(e) Reinstatement

Students removed from the Honors College may apply for reinstatement after at least one semester has elapsed. Applications for reinstatement must include the current Honors College application and a written petition addressed to the Dean of the Honors College and will be reviewed by the Honors College Admissions Committee.

Students who are reinstated return on Honors College academic probation and remain subject to all Honors College requirements. Students who have been removed from the Honors College twice are ineligible for reinstatement.

VI. Honors Scholarship

Students admitted to and maintaining good standing in the Honors College are eligible for Honors College scholarship support.

To remain eligible for an Honors College scholarship, students must:

- Maintain membership in the Honors College;
- Satisfy all Honors College progression requirements;
- Maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.40;
- Meet institutional standards of conduct; and
- Comply with all applicable financial aid requirements.

Students whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.40 are subject to the Honors College probation process. Scholarship eligibility during a probationary semester and scholarship renewal standards are governed by the Honors College Scholarship Policy administered jointly by the Honors College and the Office of Financial Aid.

Students removed from the Honors College are no longer eligible for Honors College scholarship support.

Students in their final semester who are enrolled less than full-time solely because they have fewer remaining degree requirements may be eligible for prorated Honors College scholarship funding as provided in institutional financial aid policies.

The Office of Financial Aid administers Honors College scholarship awards and can provide information concerning award amounts, scholarship renewal, interaction with other forms of aid, and applicable financial aid regulations.

VII. Honors Housing

Honors Housing is a dedicated residential community designed to support academic life while remaining fully integrated into the broader campus community. Incoming Honors freshmen who apply by March 15 and are admitted to the Honors College are placed in Honors Housing. Incoming Honors freshmen who apply to the Honors College after March 15 may live in Honors Housing based on availability. All returning Honors students benefit from the option of early housing room selection for Honors Housing. In all cases, students must submit their housing application form by the university deadline to be guaranteed housing.

Honors students may request to create a roommate group of up to four Honors students. Incoming freshmen may submit their roommate request to the Office of Residence Life. Returning Honors students may submit their roommate request during the early housing room selection process. For returning Honors students, priority will be given to requests for roommate groups of four returning Honors students in a room. Depending on availability, roommate groups of two or three Honors students may also be accommodated. In some cases, we may consider requests to live with a friend who is not an Honors student either in Honors Housing or another residence hall. Any requests by incoming Honors students must be made by April 30 and

are subject to availability. Requests should be sent to the Honors College. Options to commute or live off campus are available for those who qualify. Students seeking ADA housing accommodations should work directly with the Office of Residence Life.

VIII. Honors College Benefits

- Forming friendships with other talented and impressive Catholic students
- Learning the Great Books in stimulating Honors seminars with smaller class sizes
- Working one-on-one with accomplished Honors professors on academic research
- Competing for an internal nomination for a full-ride scholarship to study at the University of Oxford, one of the top 5 universities in the world
- Studying abroad in Ireland at Mount Melleray, AMU's international campus of outstanding natural beauty and culture
- Gaining best-in-class formation for admission to top-tier graduate programs
- Developing professional skills and prepare for careers through our unique collaboration with the Institute at Ave Maria University
- Receiving an Honors Scholarship to help defray the cost of tuition
- Participating in special academic gatherings that foster community and conversation in the Catholic liberal arts and sciences
- Studying in the Honors Lounge, a dedicated space for Honors students
- Traveling with fellow Honors students to musical concerts, theater productions, museums, and other cultural excursions
- Living in Honors Housing with dedicated common rooms in premium residence halls
- Gaining spiritual formation on the integration of faith, work, and study
- Registering early for all classes each semester
- Gaining leadership skills on the Honors Student Board
- Graduating with Honors on their official transcript and diploma
- Being fully integrated into campus social life

IX. Governance Structure

1. Overall Structure

The Honors College is housed within Academic Affairs and is a constitutive and integral part of the University as a whole. The governance structure of the Honors College consists of the Dean of the Honors College, the Honors Faculty Board and its committees, and the Honors Student Board.

2. Dean of the Honors College

The Dean of the Honors College oversees and manages the operations, curriculum, strategy, budget, colloquia, events, admissions, residential hall options, marketing, and overall administration of the curricular and non-curricular components of the Honors College. The Dean works with the Honors Faculty Board and Honors Student Board on curricular and non-curricular matters, as applicable, concerning the Honors College and reports to the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

3. Honors Faculty Board

The Honors Faculty Board is part of the shared governance of the Honors College. The Honors Faculty Board is responsible for deliberating and voting on curricular matters related to the Honors College that materially affect the Academic Catalog and is responsible for advising the Dean of the Honors College on policies, standards, and procedures related to the Honors College.

The Honors Faculty Board has committees and ad hoc committees as needed. These committees do not reduplicate the committee work at the University but pertain to the specific needs of the Honors College, which include, but is not limited to, an Honors Admissions Committee, Honors Curriculum Committee, and Honors Graduate Scholarship Committee.

The Vice President of Academic Affairs will appoint members to the Honors Faculty Board annually.

4. Honors Student Board

The Honors Student Board consists of elected student positions that help to plan and execute Honors College events and that relay questions and concerns from the Honors student body to the Dean of the Honors College.

X. Honors Faculty

1. Honors Faculty Members

(a) Role

Honors Faculty Members are full members of the Honors College. They are scholars with a record of accomplished research and teaching excellence. They actively engage with and help to shape their fields through peer-reviewed and other publications as well as service to the discipline and the wider community. They serve the Honors College through undergraduate Honors teaching, thesis supervisions, mentorship and formation activities, and participation in Honors events, among other activities. They are also eligible to serve by appointment on the Honors Faculty Board, which is part of the shared governance of the Honors College. They foster a spirit of collegiality, a school of virtue, and interdisciplinary learning in the Honors community. Committed to imparting the Catholic intellectual tradition, they desire to teach Honors classes based on a genuine academic and apostolic initiative. They demonstrate the integration of faith and reason in a way that challenges high-achieving students and aligns with *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*.

(b) Eligibility

All Full Professors (as defined in Article 3, §4(g) in the University Faculty Handbook) are eligible to apply to be Honors Faculty Members. Honors Faculty Members demonstrate excellence in mission, teaching, scholarship, and service according to the criteria outlined in the faculty handbook.

(c) Process

For those eligible and willing to serve as Honors Faculty Members, a current curriculum vitae and a letter of application are to be submitted to the Dean of the Honors College, who will then solicit confidential recommendations for the candidate from the respective chair and the Dean of Faculty. The letter of application should detail the candidate's publication record, current research agenda, evidence of teaching excellence, record of service to the university and discipline, and how the candidate intends to serve in the Honors College and contribute to its faith-based academic mission. The full application will be presented to the Honors Faculty Board, which may request additional material from the candidate.

After full consideration of the candidate's application, the Honors Faculty Board will submit a written report determined by majority vote, recommending for or against Honors Faculty membership, for approval by the Dean of the Honors College. All deliberations of the Honors Faculty Board concerning the application will be confidential. The Dean of the Honors College will inform the candidate privately in writing whether the candidate is formally appointed. The appointment as an Honors Faculty Member will also be documented in the candidate's contract renewal letter by the University President. This renewable appointment is subject to annual review by the Dean of the Honors College, with written notice to the faculty member of any change.

If the Honors Faculty Board declines to recommend a candidate to be an Honors Faculty Member, its decision will not affect the candidate's personnel file, annual review, or rank, and the candidate may reapply after one year. A faculty member who believes the review process was not conducted in accordance with these standards may express a concern through the faculty grievance process described in the Faculty Handbook (Appendix VII).

2. Honors Faculty Affiliates

(a) Role

Honors Faculty Affiliates are associated with the Honors College through their mission and teaching excellence in Honors courses. Honors Faculty Affiliates are required to meet the same set of standards, guidelines, and expectations for teaching Honors courses. They demonstrate high quality scholarly activity, an active research agenda, and dedicated service to the university.

(b) Eligibility

All Associate Professors (as defined in Article 3, §4(e) in the University Faculty Handbook) are eligible to be Honors Faculty Affiliates. Honors Faculty Affiliates demonstrate excellence in mission and teaching as well as ongoing scholarship and service according to the criteria outlined in the faculty handbook. Department chairs may request, at the discretion of the Dean of the Honors College, an exception to the eligibility criterion of rank for Affiliate status based on personnel availability in the department or on study abroad campuses. Honors Faculty Affiliates may become Honors Faculty Members once they are eligible.

(c) Process

Honors Faculty Affiliates teach Honors courses based on the teaching needs of the Honors College. Before course assignments are due to the Dean of Faculty, the Dean of the Honors College will communicate with department chairs the Honors teaching needs in their respective

departments. If an Honors Faculty Affiliate is needed for teaching an Honors course, the department chair will recommend to the Dean of the Honors College an eligible professor for the role. The Dean of the Honors College will confer with the department chair and Dean of Faculty concerning the recommendation and, if accepted, will appoint the professor an Honors Faculty Affiliate. The appointment is contingent on the submission of an Honors syllabus that conforms to the standards, guidelines, and expectations for teaching Honors courses. A previous or current Affiliate is eligible for reappointment.

3. Teaching and Departmental Responsibilities

Honors Faculty Members and Honors Faculty Affiliates will retain their primary faculty appointment and remain within their home department to teach classes within their department and, as full members of that department, contribute and share service obligations to it.

Any teaching, research, and service in the Honors College by Honors Faculty Members and Affiliates will count as part of their standard requirements in their home departments and as part of the standard annual review process. In particular, Honors course assignments count as part of a faculty member's standard departmental load, not as an addition to it. Honors course enrollment and faculty compensation are governed according to the policies outlined in the Faculty Handbook (Appendix VIII).

The relevant department chair or Dean of Faculty will retain the responsibility for the Faculty Evaluation Form (FEF) and promotions process.