

# Honours English Essay - ENGL 495A/B Information for Prospective Student and Faculty Supervisors

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**Please note:** The Honours Essay is **not** a requirement in any English degree plan.

## The Nature of the Honours Essay

The Honours Essay is a substantial and a relatively complex research project in an area and on a topic of strong interest to the student, which will result in a meritorious paper of perhaps 40-50 pages, showing some originality in conception and execution. As the Honours Essay is accorded the weight of two term courses, the demands agreed to by student and supervising professor (see below) must reflect that weight.

## Deciding to take ENGL 495A/B

Students wishing to enroll in ENGL 495A/B must be Honours English students in Good Standing (meaning there are no outstanding incompletes [INC] and with a cumulative English average of at least 75%). Because the Honours Essay is an independent-study project, students contemplating it should have confidence in their own self-discipline and in their self-starting capacities. Students who elect ENGL 495A/B generally fall into one of the following three categories:

- **Students with a genuine interest in defining and pursuing their own research projects:** For students who, as the culmination of their Honours programs, wish to focus and consolidate their own interests through the identification and completion of a major research project, the ENGL 495A/B opportunity is especially recommended.
- **Student contemplating graduate studies:** The desire to continue on to graduate studies in English may be a good reason to take ENGL 495A/B, but usually only if it coincides with the genuine interest in pursuing an independent research project described above. Check with the graduate advisor of the program for which you think you may be applying to see if a Senior Honours Essay is either recommended or required.
- **Students in Joint Honours Academic Plans:** If an Honours English student is taking a joint honours degree with another discipline, the second discipline may have a Senior Honours Essay or a Senior Thesis requirement. It is possible that the successful completion of ENGL 495A/B may fulfill that requirement. Please check with the advisor in your second discipline.

## First Steps...

Students considering the Honours Essay should discuss their tentative plans with a faculty member with the relevant teaching expertise for the project. Getting a faculty supervisor for ENGL495A/B is an essential first step.

## English 495A/B Authorization Form

The student and the prospective faculty supervisor must come to a mutual agreement on the focus of the project, the work required, and the schedule for submission. No later than the first week or two of the term in which ENGL495A is taken, the student and supervisor should fill out the “**English 495A/B Authorization Form**” and have the project approved by the Undergraduate Associate Chair of English. The form, with the appropriate signatures, will be deposited in the student’s departmental file.

## Further questions?

Ask the English Undergraduate advisor ([englug@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:englug@uwaterloo.ca)).

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## Enrolling in ENGL 495A/B

Students wishing to take ENGL 495A/B will be enrolled in both halves of the course. Upon submission of the completed “**English 495A/B Authorization Form**,” (<http://english.uwaterloo.ca/forms.html>) the Undergraduate Assistant (in HH251) will complete the student’s enrollment in the courses.

## Evaluating and grading the 495A/B project

The faculty supervisor of the ENGL 495A/B project serves as the single reader of the Honours Essay. Because the project continues from one term to the next, ENGL495A is given a grade of IP (“In Progress”) at the end of the first term. When the final draft of the Honours Essay has been submitted and approved, the faculty supervisor will submit the numeric grade for both terms.

Though the student is strongly encouraged to complete the project by the end of the second term, the IP grade should generally also be given at the end of the ENGL495B term if the final draft of the Honours Essay has not yet been approved.

Unlike the INC and NMR indications, which revert to 32 after four months (a single academic term), the IP mark stays in place for eight months (two academic terms) before it reverts to 32. The IP mark, unlike the INC or NMR, also has no effect on the student’s academic standing, or on scholarship qualification, or on qualification for Dean’s Honours List.

When students inordinately delay completion of the project, the IP grade will automatically revert to 32 after the stated period of time.

## ENGL 495A/B and English Degree requirements

ENGL 495A/B count towards English degree requirements as follows:

- for students in **Honours Literature**, the 495A/B courses will fall under the “three other English courses” category;
- for students in **Honours Literature and Rhetoric**, 495A/B will count as “*Rhetoric and Theory electives*” if on topics in rhetoric, and as “two other English courses” if on topics in literature;
- for students in **Honours Rhetoric and Professional Writing**, 495A/B count in the “*RPW elective*” category if devoted to projects in linguistics, rhetoric, professional writing, or communication.

Please note: In order to have ENGL495 A/B count as a “*RPW elective*” or as a “*Rhetoric and Theory elective*,” your supervisor must clearly indicate that the project deals with the prescribed topics on the “**English 495A/B Authorization Form**.”

## Further questions?

Ask the English Undergraduate advisor ([englug@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:englug@uwaterloo.ca)).