

Department of Physics Policy on Graduation with Honors

Fall 2006

The decision to recommend a student for graduation with high or highest honors will follow from an evaluation of the full record of performance in the physics major. Please see the appropriate pages of the UC Davis catalog for the official description of the L&S Honors program. A significant project extending over two quarters and culminating in an honors thesis is specifically required. In our case, this means at least two quarters of 194H with a total of at least six units. There are also rather stiff GPA requirements described in the catalog.

Department guidelines for the project:

The purpose of the 194H course is to gain experience in performing and describing physics research. There should be initiative on the part of the student in the proposal and execution of the project. There should be more sophisticated intellectual participation on the part of the student than is usually called for in a regular course. In particular, the project should not consist simply of working through the material in a single source such as a text. Nor should it be merely a routine measurement that is “mechanical” in its execution.

Each project should center around a physics research question; however, the project need not deal with a forefront topic in physics nor need it include work that is original by the standard of journal publication. If the project consists mainly of reading on a particular subject, then the readings should come from several sources with different points of view, and the student should develop his or her own opinion and assessment of the sources. The thesis should include the student’s critical evaluation of the ideas drawn from the different sources. Some synthesis should be included and some conclusions should be drawn.

To sign up for Physics 194H the student, in consultation with the faculty supervisor, must first submit a one-page project proposal to the UGCC chair for approval. This proposal should describe the project and the way in which it incorporates the requirements in the preceding paragraphs.

At the end of the project, the student must write a thesis, which the advisor should read and comment on, recommending changes as appropriate. The student must submit to the department a final version signed by the advisor to indicate his or her approval. The UGCC will evaluate the thesis, and will also ask the advisor to describe the student’s work on the project. The student’s grades and other performance in the major will be additional considerations in deciding on a recommendation of high or highest honors.