

1. DEFINITION

- 1.01 Academic Distinction is an individualized learning experience available to all qualified undergraduate students at Sam Houston State University. Qualifications for academic distinction are described in Section 2.
- 1.02 An Academic Distinction project provides qualified students with an introduction to a comprehensive and enhanced research experience under the guidance of a designated faculty member, resulting in a scholarly project (e.g., a paper, a presentation, a video, etc.).
- 1.03 For the purpose of this policy, the term “department” represents an academic department or school.
- 1.04 For the purpose of this policy, the term “chair” represents a department chair or a school director.

2. QUALIFICATIONS FOR ACADEMIC DISTINCTION

- 2.01 To begin an Academic Distinction project a student must have:
 - a. Junior standing (60 semester credit hours or more).
 - b. An SHSU grade point average of not less than 3.25.
 - c. A cumulative grade point average of not less than 3.5 on all courses completed in the major field.
 - d. Completed an Academic Distinction Project Proposal form, obtained signatures from the department chair and academic dean, and sent a copy of the form to the dean of the Honors College.
- 2.02 Exceptions (e.g., transfers/classification) may be made with the approval of both the department chair and the appropriate academic dean.

3. ENROLLMENT IN ACADEMIC DISTINCTION

- 3.01 A qualified student should first contact a full-time faculty member who is willing to serve as the student’s faculty advisor and discuss the feasibility of accepting an Academic Distinction project.

- 3.02 If the faculty member agrees to direct the student's project, the student will then complete the Academic Distinction Project Proposal form that must be approved by the supervising faculty member, the department chair, and the appropriate academic dean. A copy of the signed form must be submitted to the Honors College prior to registration.
- 3.03 Once the chair and dean have approved the project, the student must register for two zero-credit hour academic distinction courses. If, however, the student fails to attain credit (CR) in the designated academic distinction course for the first semester, permission to enroll in a subsequent academic distinction course may be denied by the department chair.
- 3.04 In lieu of the academic distinction courses, a student may enroll in MCNR 4301, HONR 4398, or HONR 4399, as appropriate, for which a grade of "B" or higher must be earned. A student may substitute department-specific thesis courses for the academic distinction courses with approval from the dean of the Honors College. A grade of "B" or higher must be earned in the department-specific thesis courses.
- 3.05 The Academic Distinction project should be, as a general rule, completed in the student's major field. Interdisciplinary projects, however, may be undertaken with approval of the major department and the written agreement of any other department involved.
- 3.06 Academic Distinction coursework. cannot be taken concurrently. If approved by the supervising professor and the appropriate department chair, the coursework need not be continuous.
- 3.07 Earning credit for Academic Distinction coursework must include (but is not limited to) the satisfactory completion of the scholarly project as outlined in the Academic Distinction Project Proposal form. Any scholarly product acceptable to and within a department and college may be deemed correct and proper.

4. GRADUATION WITH ACADEMIC DISTINCTION

- 4.01 To graduate with Academic Distinction in a specified academic discipline, the student must complete both Academic Distinction courses, fulfill the requirements of the project, maintain an SHSU grade point average of not

less than 3.25 and a cumulative grade point average of not less than 3.5 in the major field or in the discipline in which academic distinction is sought.

4.02 Students who have successfully completed an Academic Distinction project will be recognized as follows:

- a. The student's official University transcript will carry a designation of "With Academic Distinction" in a field of specialization.
- b. The student's diploma will designate that the degree has been conferred "With Academic Distinction" in a field of specialization.
- c. Special recognition will be provided at commencement exercises.
 - (1) A gold honor cord will be awarded to and worn by the student.
 - (2) The official commencement program will identify the appropriate department Academic Distinction earned by the student.
 - (3) Recognition will be given to the student as the student's name is announced during commencement.

5. NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES

The student must notify the department chair to initiate the process by which the student is recognized for graduating with Academic Distinction. The department chair will complete the Academic Distinction—Graduation Honor form and submit it to the appropriate academic dean for approval. The form must then be sent to the dean of the Honors College for final approval before the census day during the semester in which the student applies for graduation. The dean of the Honors College will then notify the Office of the Registrar of the student's successful completion of all requirements appertaining to the Academic Distinction project.

APPROVED: <signed>
Alisa White, Ph.D., President

DATE: 4/26/2024

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

This academic policy statement (APS) has been approved by the reviewer(s) listed below and represents SHSU's Division of Academic Affairs' policy from the date of this document until superseded.

Original: May 21, 1980
Reviewer(s): Academic Affairs Council

Review Cycle: Five years*
Review Date: Fall 2027

Approved: <signed>
Michael T. Stephenson, Ph.D.,
Provost and Sr. Vice President
for Academic Affairs

Date: 4/23/2024

*Effective January 2018, Academic Policy Statements will be reviewed on a rotating 5-year schedule. To transition to a distributed review load, some policies may be reviewed prior to the 5-year timeframe, with subsequent reviews transitioning to the 5-year schedule.