TU/e Honors Academy Regulations for Master’s Honors Tracks based on Art. 7.9b of the WHW

The Dean of the TU/e Honors Academy of Eindhoven University of Technology hereby establishes these TU/e Honors Academy Regulations for Master’s Honors Tracks, as approved by the Executive Board on 29 November 2018. These TU/e Honors Academy Regulations, which enter into force on 1 September 2018, read as follows:

Art 1 TU/e Honors Academy

1.1 The overall aim of the TU/e Honors Academy is to prepare students for personal leadership as well as scientific, societal and/or industrial leadership in a knowledge-intensive economy and society.

1.2 The TU/e Honors Academy offers cross-departmental, institution-wide honors programs (Honors Tracks) for exceptional Master’s students.

1.3 The TU/e Honors Academy has a Dean, who has the overall responsibility for the vision on and policy related to contents, offer and set-up of Honors Tracks, the assessments included, and for the quality assurance system (see Art. 9 and Appendix 1). The Dean is advised by the Scientific Council, which is chaired by the Rector Magnificus.

1.4 The TU/e Honors Academy consults the students who participate in the Honors Academy during the Master’s at various contact points in the academic year. The role of these consultation meetings is to assess the execution and quality of the Honors Tracks from the perspective of the student (see Art. 9 and Appendix 1).

Art 2 Honors components

2.1 The honors program in the Master’s consists of two components that together comprise 20 credits.

2.2 The first component is Personal Leadership and comprises 5 credits. Students attend eight group sessions for Personal Leadership, in which personal leadership is reinforced through training and exercises. In these training sessions work is done on the personal development plan for the second component of the honors program.

2.3 The second component is Professional Development and comprises 15 credits. In this part, students demonstrate that they are developing professionally and personally by designing and executing their own track. To this purpose they consult their supervisor. The students are free to determine the shape of their own project. It is of importance that the selected project offers a realistic opportunity for the student to attain the predicate “honors student”; it is for example insufficient to complete additional honors program subjects.
Art 3 Study workload

3.1 Students participating in an Honors Track have a workload equivalent to 20 credits. This honors workload is on top of the students’ workload of 120 credits in their regular Master’s program.

3.2 Participation in the honors program takes place during the Master’s program. The student starts the program within two months of the start of the Master’s program and must complete the honors program within 18 months.

Art 4 Application, selection and admission to the honors program

4.1 In the summer period of the final year of the Bachelor’s program, Bachelor’s students who have obtained at least 165 will be invited to consider participating in an honors program.

4.2 Students who have not received such an invitation but are of the opinion they qualify for participation in an honors program are also allowed to apply for a position.

4.3 In order to apply for a program, the student is required to e-mail a letter of motivation, a proof of excellence and a draft version of the professional development plan (PDP) to the Graduate Program director (GPD) of the Master’s program the student is enrolled in.

4.4 If the letter of motivation, proof of excellence and draft version of PDP are convincing, the GPD will invite the student for an application interview. During the application interview use is made of the selection rubric of the Honors Academy.

4.5 The GPD decides which students are conditionally accepted based on the letter of motivation, the proof of excellence, the draft PDP and the application interview. The GPD sends the completed rubric and the decision to the secretariat of the Honors Academy. The Honors Academy communicates this to the students.

4.6 Students who have obtained their Bachelor’s degree certificate and have been conditionally accepted may start with the Personal Leadership Experience.

4.7 Students are definitively admitted once the PDP is approved by the supervisor and the GPD, and the supervisor has agreed to take on the guidance and assessment of the student.
Art 5 Supervision within the honors program

5.1 Students are personally responsible for finding a supervisor for Professional Development component but may request advice from their GPD.
5.2 This supervisor is an employee at the TU/e who is appointed as an examiner at Master’s level and has experience with the supervision of graduation projects.
5.3 The Honors Academy informs the supervisor of the role as supervisor and assessor. The same information is provided to students so they understand the role of the supervisor.
5.4 The supervisor coaches the student during the execution of the project belonging to the Professional Development component. The student and supervisor shall have regular contact, at least every month, to discuss the execution of the PDP and the project progress. The supervisor considers the content of the PDP of the student and communicates findings to the GPD. Upon approval of the PDP, the supervisor indicates supervision of the student during the track, including the assessment of the Professional Development component and the final assessment.
5.5 The Honors Academy shall contact the students several times a year concerning progress. At least one such meeting must be in the shape of a PDP Peer Review Event.

Art 6 Testing and assessment

6.1 Students are assessed once, at the end of the honors program. For this assessment the process and procedure are laid down in a common assessment framework, as established by the Dean of the TU/e Honors Academy. All supervisors and students receive a copy of this assessment framework.
6.2 The student has 18 months to complete the two components of the honors program. After that period the assessment procedure takes place. The assessment concerns personal leadership, and professional and project-related development of the student.
6.3 The assessment consists of both a written and oral component.
6.4 For the Professional Development component, the student provides the agreed deliverables to the supervisor. These are suitable deliverables to prove that the honors level has been achieved for the Professional Development component (these can be matters such as a report, design, scientific article, or prototype). In addition, the student gives a content presentation and answers the supervisor’s questions. The supervisor assesses the quality of the student’s work and whether it is honors level.
6.5 The assessment can be graded as ‘Insufficient’, ‘Sufficient’, ‘Good’ or ‘Excellent’.
6.6 The supervisor shall comment on the assessment and communicates this to the Honors Academy. If the student attains a sufficient or higher, the 15 credits are allocated for Professional Development.
6.7 Once the Professional Development component has been successfully completed, final assessment can take place.
6.8 The student submits a written reflection of the process undergone for the final assessment and proof of achievement of the goals stated in the PDP. This is submitted to the assessment panel, which minimally includes the supervisor and the Personal Leadership coach.
6.9 Next a final assessment interview takes place between the student and the assessment panel. The panel must at least consist of the supervisor, Personal Leadership Coach and the Graduate Program Director.
6.10 The assessment panel reaches a judgement on the basis of the written reflection and the
interview, in which use is made of a rubric. The students receive a copy of their assessment form.

6.11 If the assessment panel decides that the student has met the requirements for the Personal Leadership component, and has reached the honors level for both Personal Leadership and Professional Development, 5 credits are allocated to the Personal Leadership component and the student will receive the predicate ‘Honors’ on the Master’s degree certificate.

6.12 The Honors Academy shall record the student as successful in Osiris, after which ‘Honors’ shall be stated on the degree certificate and the results achieved (assessment result and credits obtained) for Personal Leadership and Professional Development will be included in the transcript.

Art 7 Completion and statement on Master’s degree certificate

7.1 For students who only successfully complete the Professional Development component, the results will be included in the transcript.

7.2 Students who also successfully complete the Personal Leadership component and of whom it has been determined that they have satisfied both the Professional Development component and Personal Leadership component criteria for the predicate “Honors”, shall receive the predicate “Honors” on the Master’s degree certificate.

Art 8 Right to appeal

8.1 Students who disagree with the decision by of their examiners have a right to appeal.

8.2 The student must lodge this appeal in writing to the Examination Appeals Board (Art. 7.61, paragraph 1, under e, of the WHW).

Art 9 Quality assurance

9.1 The quality assurance system comprises the following components:
- accountability to the Scientific Board of the TU/e Honors Academy,
- external benchmarking with peers,
- on-going monitoring,
- an evaluation cycle and
- professionalization activities for the staff members involved in the Honors Tracks.
The quality assurance system is described in more detail in Appendix 1.
Appendix 1: Quality Assurance system TU/e Honors Academy

The quality assurance system of the Honors Academy comprises several components: accountability to the Scientific Board of the Honors Academy, external benchmarking with peers, on-going monitoring, an evaluation cycle and professionalization activities for the staff members involved in the honors tracks.

Accountability to the Scientific Board
Once or twice a year a meeting with the Scientific Board is organized to discuss developments in the Honors Academy and developments TU/e wide. Recurring topics include progress with respect to the set-up of the Bachelor’s tracks and the Master’s personal leadership & professional development program, student intake, students’ learning outcomes and budget. Outcomes are translated into measures to be taken at the tactical and operational level.

External benchmarking with peers
Benchmarking with peers occurs at two levels. The Deans of the honors programs of Dutch universities participate in the Honors Deans Network. Experiences at the strategic level are exchanged. In addition, the Honors Academy participates in a network for policy officers involved in honors programs at Dutch universities, and in a network for all honors programs in Dutch higher education, which is a follow-up of the Sirius network. As part of this network study days on specific topics are organized. Once a year the TU/e Honors Academy also participates in a 4.TU meeting with staff members and students involved in the honors programs. These meetings focus on topics for which input from peers may provide new insights and improvements. Finally, the Honors Academy intends to continue the formal peer feedback process initiated by Sirius.

On-going monitoring
During the academic year the Honors Academy monitors progress with the supervisors and with the honors students. The goal of the supervisor meetings is to evaluate if there are any issues that require immediate action and to create a common frame of reference for the guidance of students in the Master’s. At the student level similar meetings are organized during the contact points between the Honors Academy and the Master’s students. Several times a year various parts of the program are considered.

Evaluation cycle
The evaluation cycle focuses on the extent to which the overall goals of the TU/e Honors Academy are accomplished. The main input consists of the outcomes of the student questionnaire for the total group of honors students as well as per year group and per track. These outcomes are shared with the track coordinators. Their reflections and points for improvement are discussed in the one-on-one evaluation interviews between the coordinators and the director of the Honors Academy. The outcomes of the student survey are also discussed in the first evaluation meeting with the students.

Professionalization activities
During the year, various meetings are organized for the supervisors, in which topical themes are discussed. During the meetings information is provided and there is an opportunity to exchange experiences.
Appendix 2: Academic competences for TU/e Honors students

For TU/e Bachelor’s and Master’s graduates a set of seven academic competences have been defined. For Honors students an eighth competence has been added:

A TU/e Honors student

1. is competent in one or more scientific disciplines
   A university graduate is familiar with existing scientific knowledge, and has the competence to increase and develop this through study.
   --- Has a thorough mastery of parts of the relevant fields extending to the forefront of knowledge (latest theories, methods, techniques and topical questions).
   --- Is able to reflect on standard methods and their presuppositions; is able to question these; is able to propose adjustments, and to estimate their implications.
   --- Is able to independently spot gaps in his / her own knowledge, and to revise and extend it through study.

2. is competent in doing research
   A university graduate has the competence to acquire new scientific knowledge through research. For this purpose, research means: the development of new knowledge and new insights in a purposeful and methodical way.
   --- Is able to reformulate ill-structured, more complex research problems. Also takes account of the system boundaries in this. Is able to defend this new interpretation against involved parties.
   --- Is able to produce and execute a research plan independently.
   --- Is able, and has the attitude to, where necessary, draw upon other disciplines in his or her own research.

3. is competent in designing
   As well as carrying out research, many university graduates will also design. Designing is a synthetic activity aimed at the realization of new or modified artefacts or systems with the intention of creating value in accordance with predefined requirements and desires (e.g. mobility, health).
   --- Is able to reformulate ill-structured, more complex design problems. Also takes account of the system boundaries in this. Is able to defend this new interpretation against the parties involved.
   --- Is able to produce and execute a design plan independently.
   --- Is able, and has the attitude to, where necessary, draw upon other disciplines in his or her own design.

4. has a scientific approach
   A university graduate has a systematic approach characterized by the development and use of theories, models and coherent interpretations, has a critical attitude, and has insight into the nature of science and technology.
   --- Has great skill in, and affinity with the use, development and validation of models; is able to consciously choose from various modelling techniques.
   --- Is able to document adequately the results of research and design with a view to contributing to the development of knowledge in the field and beyond; is able to publish these results.
5. possesses basic intellectual skills
A university graduate is competent in reasoning, reflecting, and forming a judgment. These are skills which are learned or sharpened in the context of a discipline, and which are generically applicable from then on.
--- Is able to critically reflect on his or her own thinking, decision making, and acting and to adjust these on the basis of this reflection independently.
--- Is able to ask adequate questions, and has a critical yet constructive attitude towards analyzing and solving more complex, real-life problems in the field.

6. is competent in co-operating and communicating
A university graduate has the competence of being able to work with and for others. This requires not only adequate interaction, a sense of responsibility, and leadership, but also good communication with colleagues and non-colleagues. He or she is also able to participate in a scientific or public debate.
- Is able to perform project-based work, also for more complex projects: is pragmatic and has a sense of responsibility; is able to deal with limited sources; is able to deal with risks; is able to compromise.
- Is able to work within an interdisciplinary team, also in teams with great disciplinary diversity; has insight into and is able to deal with, team roles and social dynamics.
- Is able to communicate about the process and results of learning, thinking and decision making with colleagues and non-colleagues in his or her own mother tongue as well as in a second language.

7. takes account of the temporal and the social context
Science and technology are not isolated, and always have a temporal and social context. Beliefs and methods have their origins; decisions have social consequences in time. A university graduate is aware of this, and has the competence to integrate these insights into his or her scientific work.
--- Is able to analyze and to discuss the ethical and normative aspects of the implications and assumptions of scientific thinking and acting with colleagues and non-colleagues (both in research and in designing); integrates these implications in scientific work.

8. is competent in self-directed and continuous learning
Developments in society are characterized by an enormous increase in complexity on the one hand and available knowledge and information on the other hand. This requires the ability to decide for yourself which knowledge, skills and attitude you need to acquire, select and use in a specific context. This, in turn, requires an attitude of openness, adaptability, self-reflection and curiosity as well as an understanding of what learning actually is.
--- Takes responsibility for his or her own learning process and professional development.
--- Gives direction to and designs his or her own learning process and professional development.
--- Has an open attitude towards herself or himself, towards others and towards (future) developments in society, technology and science.