

Honors Capstone

The goal of the Capstone project is to engage you in a hands-on, participatory learning experience that allows you to see a scholarly project from inception through public defense. The Capstone can range widely from a traditional research project, a creative work, or a service-oriented exercise with a clear scholarly component. The projects may be within any discipline or interdisciplinary. Combining the Honors capstone with another project requirement is allowed, though modification must be clearly articulated in the Capstone proposal. Team projects are also acceptable, but each student's role must be clearly defined and go above and beyond the other, non-honors group members. Capstone projects can seem daunting, but upon completion, many see their projects as high points of their undergraduate experience.

Steps to begin an Honors Capstone Project

1. Develop a project idea.
2. Identify a project advisor and discuss your project idea.
 - a. The student is responsible for selecting the professor who will supervise the Honors Capstone Project. The professor's research specialties should be connected to the student's area of interest and potential Honors Capstone topic. It is advisable to choose a person for whom the student has performed successfully in more than one course.
 - b. The student should have a specific topic in mind before conferring with the professor. Since the Honors Thesis is basically an independent study, the student will need to convince the potential supervising professor that he/she understands the major field and has done sufficient preliminary research on the topic.
3. Write your initial capstone proposal.

Proposal content and focus will vary from one discipline to another. You should discuss the protocols of proposal writing in your field with faculty members in that discipline. The proposal needs to contain a clear delineation of a research topic and a concise outline of the research methodology or approach. It should be evident in the proposal that the research goal is an original one. Other research or scholarship that relates to your project focus should be cited in the proposal as well. Proposals should be clearly written in acceptable, grammatical English and accessible to literate non-specialists.

Although the format of the proposal will vary from one discipline to another, all proposals should contain the following items:

- a. Introduction, including relevant background information and your reason for choosing this research project.
- b. Detailed statement of the problem you propose to investigate. (It is often helpful to formulate this in terms of a question)
- c. Review of literature. Discuss the results of previous research in this area and how your research will contribute to knowledge in this area.
- d. Statement of hypothesis (if relevant). State the research hypothesis or the research questions and objectives of the thesis.
- e. Explanation of the research methodology or procedure you propose to follow in your research. This might also include a brief explanation of the sources you intend to use. If your project includes experimental or statistical research, give a detailed description of your proposed research strategy, or include examples of any data-collection instruments you plan to use.

- f. A statement of the significance of your research. This statement should make it clear why your research will result in an original contribution.
 - g. A preliminary bibliography.
4. Secure proposal approvals and signatures from the supervising professor and the Honors Director.
5. Enroll in HNR 289 the semester in which the Honors Capstone is written.

Creative Arts and Performance Projects

The Honors Program encourages student writers and artists to develop Honors Capstone projects. Proposals for creative arts and performance projects will, naturally, be somewhat different from proposals in scholarly and scientific fields. Nevertheless, like other proposals, arts proposals should contain a clear statement of the project, a plan for its development, and a tentative plan for the exhibition, reading, or performance of the project. Creative arts students will be given an opportunity to present their work at the STEM EXPO Undergraduate Research Symposium. In the case of visual or performance arts projects, a written report explaining the project and a photographic record/portfolio will be submitted.

Although the format of the proposal will vary depending on the medium involved, all creative arts proposals should contain the following:

- A description of the project and the concept(s) underlying it.
- A description of the significance of the project; i.e., what is the artist trying to accomplish?
- A statement of the methodology or the significance of the medium (if appropriate).
- A preliminary bibliography (if appropriate).

Honors Capstone FAQs

So is a capstone project like a senior thesis? What is it?

It could be, but it could be more creative or experiential. ALL capstone projects must emphasize a broader, interdisciplinary view of a topic or more in-depth study of a topic, as might be expected in 300- or 400-level college coursework. ALL capstone projects promote active learning and are assessed with rigorous standards. And ALL capstone Projects must involve work typically done by a professional in that discipline. A scholarly paper might satisfy that criterion, but so might creation of a professional portfolio and website for an art student or a business plan for a business student. A social science student might conduct a study and write an article for potential publication. A drama student might write a play. You get the idea.

Do I get credit for this project?

Absolutely. The capstone project contract you write with your advisor will specify how many semesters the project will take (1 or 2) and how many credits the project will encompass. The student enrolls in the HNR 289 course in the final semester of the project. A student can get credit for the work completed, even if the project is not completed in its entirety and even if that student does not ultimately meet the criteria necessary to graduate with Honors. But only Honors Program students in good standing can get the credit.

Honors Capstone Project Contract

Student _____ S# _____

Student admitted to Honors program? _____ Current RRCC GPA: _____

Instructor: _____ Date: _____

Discipline (e.g. PHY) in which project is to be carried out: _____

Capstone projects can be fulfilled over 1 or 2 Semesters and can total between 1.0-4.0 credits. A credit hour should reflect approximately 20-30 hours of work by the student.

The student and instructor engaging in the Honors capstone project contract need to discuss and agree on elements of the project outlined below before submitting this application. They should both participate in answering questions below. Expand answer boxes as necessary.

Please describe the student's Honors capstone project in terms of subject, scope, and work product.

Specify stages of student's work and instructor's assessment. If the project is to span 1 or 2 semesters, please specify in which semester each stage of work and its assessment is to be completed. Assessment rubric is requested in a separate question, below.

Explain how the instructor and student will ensure that each stage of the work and its assessment is carried out on the schedule planned and what is their backup plan if any stage of the work is not timely or does not meet assessment criteria outlined below.

Please specify the rubric by which the project will be assessed each semester and upon completion. Please be specific (or attach rubrics document to this contract.)

1. Describe how the project emphasizes breadth (interdisciplinary view of subject) and/or depth (in the chosen discipline)—beyond what is typically expected in this department's coursework and commensurate with 300-400-level college coursework.

2. Describe how the project promotes active/experiential learning.

3. Describe how the project (and its assessment) reflect high academic rigor.

4. Describe how the project requires work typically done by a professional in this field/discipline.

This contract must be submitted to Honors Program Director by the end of the semester before enrollment in HNR 289. Work should not be started until the project is approved.

Notice of whether the student satisfactorily completed the requirements of the project along with written assessments and meeting dates for each semester must be submitted to Honors Program Director by the 1st week of the semester following the proposal.

In signing below, the student agrees to complete the work specified on the schedule shown according to the assessment standards described above. The instructor agrees to oversee that work, advise and mentor the student during the semester(s) spanned by the project and assess the work submitted by the student at the stages specified and using rigorous assessment criteria specified in this contract. Both instructor and student agree that the project will give the student a legitimate, rigorous Honors experience.

Student (sign): _____ Date: _____

Instructor (sign): _____ Date: _____