

Capstone Project Handbook

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About the Norbert O. Schedler Honors College

Mission

The Norbert O. Schedler Honors College identifies highly motivated students, immerses them in a learning community where they can examine who they are and practice who they want to become, invites (challenges) them into (with) opportunities for growth, and develops them as conscientious citizen-scholars prepared to make a difference. The College creates a space where the community tries out ideas and practices that contribute to human flourishing.

Vision

The Norbert O. Schedler Honors College strives to equip students from across disciplines with the tools and skills to promote individual growth and to confront the complex challenges of our modern world. We aim to build a community in which every person is valued and included in the conversation. We aspire to be known both locally and nationally for innovation and excellence in higher education.

Values

We live in a world where the nature of the problems we face requires a variety of skills, approaches, experiences, and perspectives. To this end, the Honors College values *interdisciplinarity*: the integration of knowledge that allows us to recognize bias, transcend disciplinary borders, and construct meaningful context. In order to promote human flourishing for all, we seek to create an *inclusive* environment in which we respect the similarities and differences in our community. We value *curiosity*, through which we come alive to ourselves and what is around us; we take up the questions that are in the never-ending *conversation* among people past, present, and future, and shape them carefully so they point to routes of

Self-Authorship

commitments a process that culminates in achieving personal authority.

Scholarship: practicing conversation and interdisciplinary inquiry a process that culminates in academic research, writing, and oral presentation.

Citizenship: addressing real-world problems and finding ethical solutions a process that culminates in reflective civic action.

Leadership: engaging as citizen-scholars exercising informed judgment and an ability to collaborate a process that culminates in the capacity to guide social change for the common good.

Honors Program Students:

Social Responsibility: addressing social and environmental challenges and finding ethical solutions, a process that culminates in individual and collective interventions;

Expertise: practicing communication and inquiry, a process that culminates in academic research, writing, and oral presentation; and

Leadership: engaging as citizen-scholars exercising informed judgment and an ability to collaborate, a process that culminates in the capacity to guide social change for the common good.

Capstone Courses

Oxford Tutorial / Multidisciplinary Research Methods

Oxford Tutorial (HONC 3320) and Multidisciplinary Research Methods (USCH 3320) fulfill the first of two course requirements for completion of the Honors Capstone Project. These courses are reading and writing intensive. Honors college students will take HONC 3320, whereas honors program students will take USCH 3320. These courses are designed to help students look critically at evidence, understand research ethics, develop research questions, try out arguments, and learn processes of scholarly inquiry. Students will gain exposure to qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research approaches; read, analyze, and synthesize scholarly sources; and develop and present a research proposal for their Capstone Projects. The proposal contains a substantial portion of the research and organization for their Capstone Projects, as well as a detailed plan for completing the project in the subsequent 1-3 semesters. By these courses' conclusions, students also will have identified and formalized agreements with Capstone mentors, with whom students will meet regularly until their projects are completed. During these courses,

we recommend that students meet with their mentors on a bi-weekly basis in order to ensure a strong proposal.

Course Objectives

minor departments.

Investigate multidisciplinary research approaches, designs, and methodologies.

Demonstrate understanding of research ethics and requirements for human-subjects research.

Choose research questions for a single-discipline, interdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary project through an investigation of alternatives considering both feasibility and personal significance.

Design and produce a plan for the project in the appropriate disciplinary or multi-disciplinary context based on the chosen research questions.

grade to proposals at this stage (see also Expectations for Mentors and Students below). Failure to meet any of these final proposal.

All students must complete the proposal during the semester that they are enrolled in the HONC 3320/USCH 3320 course. *Final proposals must be submitted through the student portal at <http://www.honors.uca.edu/student> by Monday of the final week of classes for the semester.* Any students

proposal components).
to act as a pedagogue
questions.

HONC 3320/USCH 3320 experience is

As students move into the advanced research and writing stages, they should expect to retain their mentors as the primary advisors for their Capstone Projects. During this time, mentors are students sounding boards and are expected to ask questions, guide students, and push them to do as comprehensive a review of the relevant material as possible.

Mentors need not necessarily be subject-matter experts, but they should have some knowledge of the fields and the kinds of questions and answers that are appropriate. Mentors may encourage students to take research courses in their own departments or apply for undergraduate research and experiential learning grants, as applicable.

Students and mentors should update scheduled meetings and deadlines each semester and should sign a Capstone Project Mentor-Mentee Agreement that specifies these details. Generally, it is expected that students make substantive contact with their mentors each semester. Capstone Project Mentor-Mentee Agreements that give only vague indications of meeting schedules will not be accepted (see examples and explanations in Appendix C and Appendix D). During the HONC 3320/USCH 3320 course semester, when mentorship begins, we recommend bi-weekly meetings. After mentoring three students through the entirety of three capstone projects, mentors are entitled to \$300 in travel funds and should contact the Honors Undergraduate Research Coordinator to arrange a transfer when they are interested in using these funds (see Appendix G for contact information).

Honors Capstone

The Honors Capstone courses (HONC 4320/USCH 4320) fulfill the second of two course requirements for completion of the Honors Capstone Project. These courses support students as they finalize and present their Honors Capstone Projects. Their most important function is to ensure that students contribute new knowledge through completion of their projects. The heart of these courses is

Construct a knowledge base to ask more informed questions and learn more complex concepts.
Utilize appropriate conventions and strategies in written communication for various audiences and purposes.

Develop and communicate ideas logically and effectively in order to enhance communication.

Participate with a community of scholars in the process of writing, reflecting, and revising.

Grading Criteria

Capstone course grades

as the quality of their final projects, which mentors and second readers must officially approve through the student portal. Mentors also offer a rubric-guided evaluation of the final project and a letter grade. Forty percent (40%) of the course grade is based on the quality of the students' written drafts, their practice presentations, attendance and participation in their Capstone courses, and regular attendance at meetings with mentors. Failing to meet these requirements will lower the students' grades, regardless of the quality of the final projects. Sixty percent (60%) of the course grade is based on the final Capstone Project (the letter grade is recommended by mentors) and presentation.

All students must complete their Capstone Projects during the semester that they are enrolled in a Capstone course. *Final Capstone Projects must be submitted through the student portal at <http://www.honors.uca.edu/student> by Study Day, or Friday of the final week of classes for the semester.*
Any project submitted after Study Day will be considered late. *p*

Expectations of Mentors, Second Readers, and Students

Before enrolling in the Honors Capstone course, students should have nearly completed their Capstone Projects. Work will need to be done during the semesters between the Oxford Tutorial/Multidisciplinary Research Methods and Honors Capstone courses in order for students to be prepared to enroll in the Capstone course. During the Honors Capstone semester, students will document the results of their Capstone Project as appropriate for their specific project type.

Within the first month of the Honors Capstone course, students must submit their final Capstone Project titles and choose second readers for their Capstone Projects, who may or may not represent other disciplines. Second readers are to ensure the general scholarly acceptability of projects. They should receive drafts at all the common drafting deadlines for the Honors Capstone semester, just as nBTa/F4 11.07 ~~est~~ a t

The final Capstone presentation takes place on Friday of the final week of regular class sessions for the semester. The Capstone presentation generally lasts thirty minutes, with twenty minutes devoted to the presentation and ten minutes for audience questions. A representative from the Honors College must serve as the presentation moderator. Capstone Project **mentors and second readers must be present at the students' final presentations.**

Assessments of final Capstone Projects (from mentors and second readers) and grade recommendations (from mentors only) will be due the week following the Capstone presentation (see criteria in Appendix F). If Capstone Projects and presentations meet with their approval, mentors and second readers electronically accept Capstone Projects through individualized assessment links received via email.

Completion of their Capstone Projects trigger email dissemination of these assessment links. After mentoring three students through the entirety of three Capstone Projects, mentors are entitled to \$300 in travel funds and should contact the Honors Undergraduate Research Coordinator to arrange a transfer when they are interested in using these funds (see Appendix G for contact information).

Types of Honors Capstone Projects

The Honors Capstone Project may take many different forms and can involve single-discipline, interdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary research. Projects may take the form of a traditional thesis, but they also may be creative writing, fundamental research, an innovative curriculum, a performance, an artistic creation, or a substantive service project. Regardless of the forms, students must provide both written and oral presentations of their projects. The various forms that can satisfy the Honors Capstone Project requirement are categorized into two broad types, which are listed below. *It is imperative that students communicate clearly with their mentors which*

9. Appendices/Figures

Note that the character of some of these elements may vary and some of these elements may be combined depending on the type and disciplinary perspective(s) of the project being completed. However, *each of these elements must be represented in every project.*

Thesis Capstone Project

This type is often called a *traditional* thesis, and it is overarchingly analytical. A thesis of this nature generally consists of five parts: an introduction to the topic; a review of relevant literature; the methodology or design of the project; the results; and the analysis, explanations, and relevance of assertions being made about the topic. Depending on the disciplinary perspective(s) of the project, some of these parts (most often methodology and results) may be replaced by extended argument and conclusions (also see the list of basic project elements above).

Because the traditional Honors College thesis embraces interdisciplinarity, a project of this type should seek to integrate diverse knowledge, perspectives, and skills into its arguments and strategies. Furthermore, many Thesis Capstone Projects include first-hand data collection. These pursuits make organization and planning extremely important.

Experiential/Creative Capstone Project

Experiential/Creative Thesis Projects include producing artistic works, planning and coordinating events or organizations, or planning and providing a service. Experiential Projects may involve developing a business plan, founding a student organization, developing a curriculum, or fulfilling a community need. Creative Projects may involve producing an original literary work, musical work, painting, film, sculpture, or artistic exhibit.

As with Thesis Capstone Projects, long-range planning and careful adherence to deadlines is required. The form or medium of the project must be acceptable to the mentor and the disciplines from which it draws. Experiential/Creative Capstone Projects are almost always more time-intensive than Thesis Capstone Projects, because researchers must first assemble their own laboratories or studios, generate their own resources (i.e., needs assessments, etc.) and/or learn new skills and techniques to accomplish the project.

Although Experiential/Creative Capstone Projects include production of original works, students also are expected to display mastery of existing, applicable scholarship and practice in the field or fields under investigation in a discursive written form. The written component of an Experiential

Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Proposal Cover Page

**Raising the Dead:
A Study of Ethics in Science**

Senior Honors Capstone Project Proposal
submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the Norbert O. Schedler Honors College

by

Eager McLerner

University of Central Arkansas
Conway, Arkansas
Fall 2023

Proposal Committee:

Mentor: **Dr. Victor Frankenstein**
Professor

Instructor: **Dr. Theophrastus von Hohenheim**
Professor

Abstract: *[single spaced and no more than 100 words]*

NOTE: The appendix title shown above should not be included and all red text should be appropriately

Appendix B: Sample Capstone Project Cover Page

**Raising the Dead:
A Study of Ethics in Science**

Senior Honors Capstone Project
submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the Norbert O. Schedler Honors College

by

Eager McLerner

University of Central Arkansas
Conway, Arkansas
Fall 2023

Capstone Project Committee:

Mentor: **Dr. Victor Frankenstein**
Professor

Reader: **Dr. Igor Strausman**
Assistant Professor

Dean: **Dr. Patricia Smith**
Dean of the Honors College

NOTE: The abstract should be listed on the page following the cover page. The appendix title shown above should not be replicated and all red text should be appropriately replaced/removed when this

Appendix D: Capstone Mentor-Mentee Agreement with Explanations

Norbert O. Schedler Honors College

Capstone Project Mentor-Mentee Agreement

(all red text below represents explanation of the information required in each field)

Mentee Name: *Your name*

Mentor Name:

Project Title: *Your project title*

Current Semester: *The semester to which this agreement pertains*

Expected Semester of Capstone Completion: *The semester that you plan to take the Capstone course*

Semester Meeting Schedule: *Be as specific as possible. List the day of the week, the time, and the frequency of your meetings at minimum. If you have scheduled specific dates, then list those dates as well as your agreed upon scheduling procedure.*

Project description: *Give a brief summary of your topic, the kind of research you will undertake, and your goal for the research. Feel free to use the abstract or parts of the introduction from your proposal here.*

Project work goals: *In the space below, explain the project work goals for the semester. Consider using these categories: mentor-mentee expectations, reading and research, and semester goals. Feel free to use the text (in black, normal font) below and simply replace/remove the red, italicized text as necessary.*

Mentor-Mentee expectations: During regular meetings, the mentee will relate understandings, opinions, and elaborations on research. The mentor will question, clarify, and criticize the _____ efforts with the goal of advancing the _____ understanding and helping the project progress.

Reading and research: The student will read works suggested by the mentor and other works that the

bibliography/references list. This semester, specific works include:

source 1,

source

Semester goals: Our goal for the semester will be for the mentee to *[add general list of goals here]*.

Specific deadlines include:

specific deadline 1. (List the specific deadlines for both you and your mentor here. For example, if you are going to turn in drafted material, specify what the material is and the due date. Then, also specify a time frame for your mentor to return feedback.)

specific deadline 2 (i.e., the mentor will provide feedback on the above by

specific deadline 3 (i.e., other deadlines might be related to IRB applications, funding applications, tasks related to lab work, tasks related to producing an artistic artifact, etc.)

Mentee Sig5ications, funding

Appendix E: Troubleshooting Common Problems in the Thesis Process

Students lose interest in topics before their projects are complete.

This may happen for several reasons. Students may find that a topic is too broad or that they grasp basic concepts important to the topic. Students may switch majors or simply find that topics did not yield the results or research possibilities they had hoped. When this happens, students and mentors may need to regroup, finding alternative approaches or refining topics. Most projects will involve some redirecting and adjustment; however, if students and mentors cannot find new approaches to their topics, students may need to find new topics, and possibly new mentors.

Students or mentors fail to attend agreed-upon meetings.

Sometimes schedules conflict for a meeting or two; this often is unavoidable. However, if a mentor or a student misses several meetings in a row, then the research relationship is not working. If mentors find themselves unable to devote sufficient time to a project

Appendix F: Assessment & Grade Recommendation Criteria

Mentors will be asked to indicate the achievement level that best matches student performance on the Honors Capstone Project via a rubric and to recommend a final letter grade from a drop-down box. General descriptions of the assessment criteria are below. Mentors will choose from four achievement levels for each criterion: Mastered, Proficient, Developing, or Beginning. Also see the below image of the assessment screen from the Honors College Information System (HCIS), which mentors will access via emailed assessment links corresponding to individual mentees.

Assessment criteria general descriptions:

Integrative Scholarship. Independently transfers skills, abilities, theories, and/or methodologies acquired in a disciplinary or multidisciplinary instructional situation to new situations to solve complex research

Central message. Central message is compelling, reinforced, and strongly supported.

Organization. Organizational pattern is clear and consistent, polished, and makes the content cohesive.

Supporting Material. Employs timely and relevant material to provide effective support in a way that reflects a thorough understanding of the topic/thesis.

Context & Audience. Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context; uses compelling language appropriate to the audience.

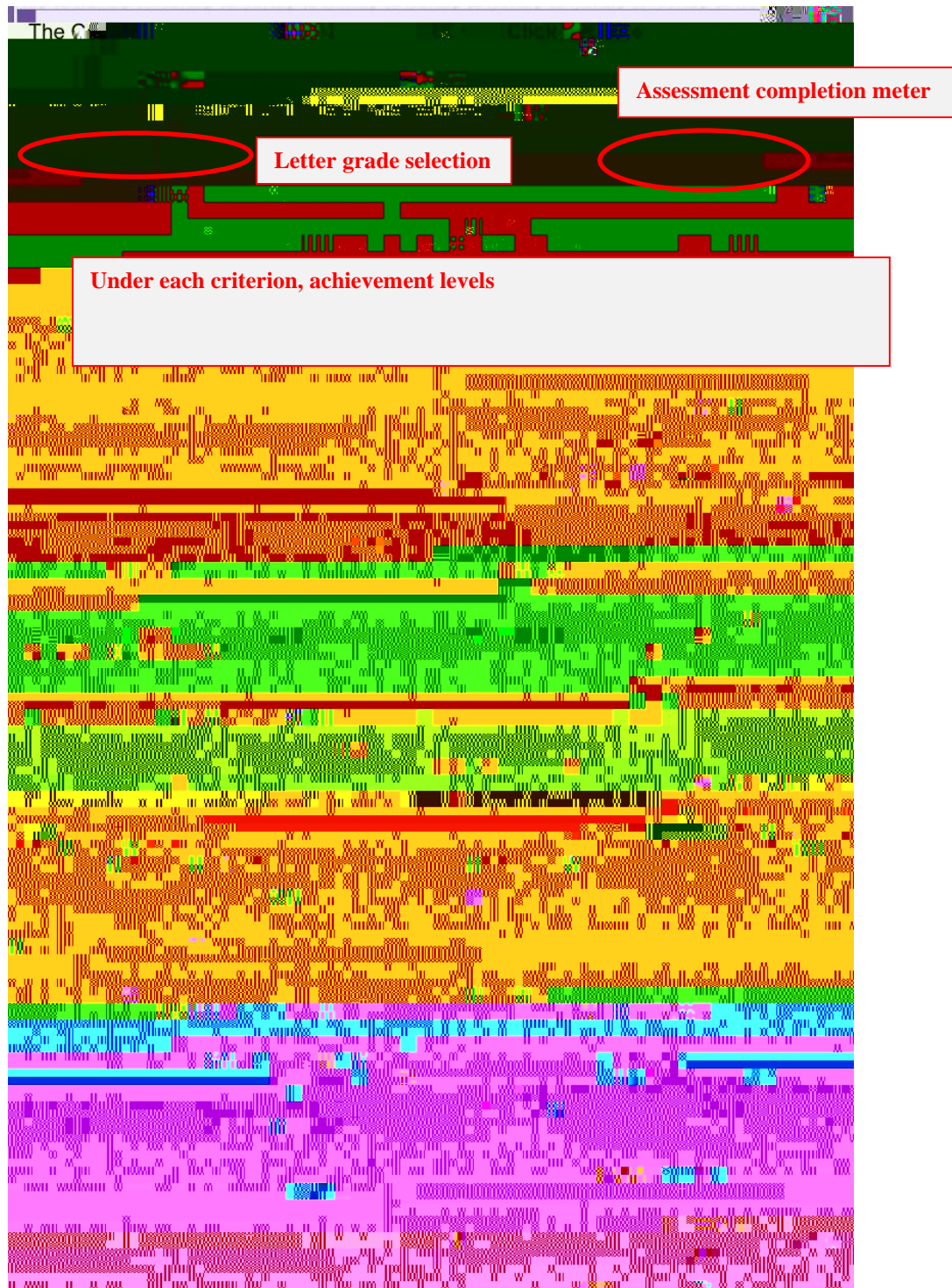
Syntax & Mechanics. Demonstrates clear and fluid control of syntax and mechanics that skillfully communicates meaning to readers and is nearly error-free.

Knowledge. Shows both a broad and deep understanding of the concepts/principles and their relevance to important questions in the discipline.

Information. Selects information from the most relevant and credible sources, without critical omissions of key sources.

Analysis. Justifies a position and/or draws a logical conclusion using appropriate disciplinary analysis on a significant question or problem.

Image of the assessment screen from HCIS:



Appendix G: Contact Information

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