



NORBERT O. SCHEDLER
HONORS COLLEGE

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ARKANSAS

Capstone Project Handbook

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	1
Introduction.....	2
About the Norbert O. Schedler Honors College.....	3
Mission.....	3
Vision.....	3
Values Statement.....	3
Goals.....	3
Capstone Courses.....	4
Oxford Tutorial/Multidisciplinary Research Methods.....	4
Course Objectives.....	5
Grading Criteria.....	5
Expectations of Mentors and Students.....	7
Honors Capstone.....	8
Course Objectives.....	8
Grading Criteria.....	9
Expectations of Mentors, Second Readers, and Students.....	10
Types of Honors Capstone Projects.....	11
Thesis Capstone Project.....	12
Experiential/Creative Capstone Project.....	12
Additional Considerations about Honors and Your Major.....	13
Honors in the Major Capstone Project.....	13
Blended Capstone Projects.....	14

Appendices.....	15
Appendix A: Sample Proposal Cover Page.....	15
Appendix B: Sample Capstone Project Cover Page.....	16
Appendix C: Sample Capstone Mentor-Mentee Agreement.....	17
Appendix D: Capstone Mentor-Mentee Agreement with Explanations.....	18
Appendix E: Troubleshooting Common Problems in the Thesis Process.....	19
Appendix F: Assessment & Grade Recommendation Criteria.....	21
Appendix G: Contact Information.....	23

Introduction

This handbook provides instructors, students, and mentors with resources to guide honors students through the successful completion of an Honors Capstone Project. The Capstone Project is a requirement of all honors students—both those who are pursuing the Honors Interdisciplinary Studies minor, referred to below as “honors college students,” and those who are pursuing the Honors Program (previously the University Scholars Program), referred to below as “honors program students.” Two of the required courses for all honors students are dedicated to completion of the Capstone Project—one at the outset, the other at the conclusion.¹ Through the Capstone Project, honors students are challenged to take ownership of their educational experience; communicate logically and effectively; evaluate how content is shaped by the context in which it was created; formulate and develop meaningful claims supported by reason and evidence; and integrate diverse knowledge, perspectives, and skills.

¹ The Honors Capstone Project and the courses dedicated to it should not be confused with other UCA courses using the term “Capstone” that relate to fulfilling the “Z” component of the UCA Upper Division Core. Honors capstone courses are designated “Z,” but that may not fulfill major requirements.

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, and challenges them with opportunities for growth. The Honors College equips students from across disciplines with the tools and skills to lead flourishing lives and develops them as conscientious citizen-scholars prepared to make a difference.

Vision

The Norbert O. Schedler Honors College strives to prepare students to serve as global leaders ready to confront the complex challenges of our modern world. We aim to do this by building a community in which every person is valued, included in the conversation, and prepared for discussions of the salient problems of our time. 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 INQUIRY. This process demands of us persistence and COURAGE to take intellectual risks, to explore our discomfort, and to stay in the conversation. We value EXCELLENCE, striving to be our best selves, individually and collectively. These values nurture a community that encourages informed and responsible action.

Goals

The Norbert O. Schedler Honors College has these developmental goals for students based on their course of study:

Honors College Students:

- **Self-Authorship:** examining and constructing one's own beliefs, values, and internal 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 (HONP 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 HONP 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

- Investigate procedures for engaging in exemplary or honors work in the student's major and/or 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.
- Forge a relationship with a faculty member who can serve as mentor, guide, and sounding board for the project; likewise, identify potential second readers.
- Review pertinent literature or materials that form the scholarly background of the project as selected in consultation with mentors.
- Practice formulating, developing, and assessing claims; also, learn to properly attribute sources.
- Design, write, and present a project proposal with approval of the faculty mentor. Honors program students should demonstrate the influence of their major field on their project.
- Support and provide critical feedback to peers as they pursue these same objectives.

The proposal documents the beginning of the Capstone Project and lays out a plan for the trajectory of that project. Whatever portions of the proposal are still applicable when beginning the Capstone course semester can be used in the final Capstone Project, so long as they are edited to reflect new information, expanded research, and changed plans.

Grading Criteria

The HONC 3320/HONP 3320 course grades reflect students' work across the semester in producing their final proposals as well as the quality of their final proposals, which mentors must officially approve. Forty percent (40%) of the course grade is based on the work that supports the proposal's completion, like timely submission of writing and research exercises, including an annotated bibliography, reading responses, and other short assignments. Also included in this portion of the course grade is a presentation of the final proposal. The remaining 60% of the course grade is based on the final proposal, which requires the mentor's official approval via the student portal. Mentors are not responsible for assigning a

grade to proposals at this stage (see also Expectations for Mentors and Students below). Failure to meet any of these requirements will lower the student's overall course grade, regardless of the quality of the final proposal.

All students must complete the proposal during the semester that they are enrolled in the HONC

3320/HONP 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 submitting proposals after this time may be required to write an exception request for the continuance of their scholarships, complete with a personal statement and two letters of support from faculty. *If revisions to students' proposals are required, they should resubmit their revised proposals through the student portal within 48 hours of receiving feedback. All revisions must be complete no later than Wednesday of Exam Week. Mentors must accept students' proposals no later than Friday of Exam week.*

Capstone Proposals vary in length, but on averages the majority of proposals fall within 10-15 pages in length and include the following components:

1. A cover page matching the sample given in **Appendix A: Sample Proposal Cover Page**. To complete this page, you will need the provisional title of your Capstone Project, your name, your mentor's name, your HONC 3320/HONP 3320 course instructor's name, and an abstract of no more than 100 words summarizing your project.
2. An **introduction** containing necessary background or context for your proposal; your primary research questions; a brief explanation of disciplinary focus or foci; and/or a brief description of potential approaches, techniques, and methods you will employ. Also, state the type of Capstone Project that you intend to complete (see the Types of Honors Capstone Projects section below).
3. A sensibly organized **literature review** of sources and materials relevant to your project. Note that it may not be possible to incorporate *all* of the literature required for your project in the proposal. This is often true of Thesis Capstone Projects in humanities disciplines. In such cases, the literature review should examine a substantial sample of relevant literature in detail, while clarifying your project's total scope. This is often accomplished with a brief summary at the end of the literature-review section of what remains in the scope of the project that was not covered in the proposal.
4. A **methodology** that offers detail about your project design. This may include not only how you will conduct research, but also how you will produce (or learn to produce) additional artifacts that are part of your project; or gain necessary training, experience, or funding required for your project.

- o *If additional coursework is required for you to complete your project, you should provide that information in this section.*
 - o *If funding is required for you to complete your project, you should describe your plans to apply for funding in this section.*
 - You should plan to apply for the Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) grants first, if possible, as those application materials will automatically support applications for the Travel Abroad Grant (TAG), Undergraduate Research Grants for Education (URGE), and Experiential Learning Funds (ELF).
5. A **Gantt Chart or other timeline** with specific deadlines and deliverables for the project lifespan (1-3 semesters, through presentation of the final project).
- o Don't forget to include tasks that you may have discussed in other parts of your proposal (i.e., the literature review, methodology, and research compliance sections).
 - o Don't forget to include general tasks and deadlines like updating your mentor-mentee agreement at the beginning of each semester, finding a second reader, and the drafting/revising deadlines in the Capstone course semester.
6. **Research Compliance**, which includes your CITI Training certificates and, if applicable, a draft IRB proposal. IACUC Training can be used in place of CITI Training if you are performing animal research.
7. A complete **bibliography** set forth according to the documentation style appropriate to your field. This is just a list with no narrative or annotations included. *Many, if not all, of the sources listed in the bibliography should be cited in your literature review.*

Expectations of Mentors and Students

During the HONC 3320/HONP 3320 semester, students will identify proposed topics and mentors. Students should prepare lists of readings in consultation with their mentors as soon as possible, so that preliminary research can begin. Reading lists should function as guides for students and mentors; however, as students explore their subjects, they may find the need to make changes and incorporate new material. Students are responsible for their own discoveries and for making choices regarding materials necessary for their research.

Mentoring is generally a two- or three-semester commitment. Honors Capstone Projects may take many different forms (see the Types of Honors Capstone Projects section for more information). Students will not complete the Capstone Project during the HONC 3320/HONP 3320 semester, but they will complete a proposal that includes a timeline for the remaining work (see Grading Criteria above for details about the

proposal components). The mentor's essential role throughout the HONC 3320/HONP 3320 experience is to act as a pedagogue—to “walk with” the student by providing an example of how to ask insightful questions.

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 for students' projects. 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/HONP 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/HONP 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 the workshop, which consists of writing, sharing, reading, and commenting on one another's work.

Course Objectives

- Integrate knowledge to express insight and originality through single-discipline, interdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary methodologies.
- Analyze new problems and situations to arrive at informed opinions and conclusions.

- 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 reflect students' work across the semester in producing their final projects as well 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. *If revisions to students' projects are required, they must resubmit their revised Capstone Projects through the student portal and receive their mentors' and second readers' approval no later than Friday of Exam Week.* Any graduating student submitting the Honors Capstone Project after finals week may need to reapply for a later graduation. Any returning students submitting their projects after finals week may be required to write an exception request for the continuance of their scholarships, complete with a personal statement and two letters of support from faculty.

The length and organization of final Capstone Projects will vary depending on type (see the Types of Honors Capstone Projects section below). Students should expect to use their proposals (revised appropriately) in their final Capstone Projects. For example, students should thoroughly revise verb tenses, remove tasks that were not completed or resources that were not consulted, and remove or revise other prospective aspects of their proposals, like the Gantt Chart or timeline. *Every Capstone Project should contain the basic elements of a Capstone Project (listed below in the Types of Honors Capstone Projects section). If students choose to use an alternative organizational style than the one represented by these basic elements, then content consistent with these basic elements should be easily identifiable.*

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' main tasks are to ensure the general scholarly acceptability of students' projects. They should receive drafts at all the common drafting deadlines for the Honors Capstone semester, just as the mentor should. They should provide feedback aimed at helping students achieve this general level of acceptability. Second readers will be prompted to "accept" final Projects or "return" them for revisions until they are acceptable (see Grading Criteria above).

During the Honors Capstone semester, mentors serve primarily as reviewers and consultants. The mentor and student should revise the Mentor-Mentee Agreement as they have in past semesters, making sure to incorporate the common drafting deadlines for the Honors Capstone semester. The course schedule for Honors Capstone courses will include all common drafting deadlines. Communication between the mentor and student is extremely important during the Capstone semester. If any problems or concerns arise that the mentor and student are unable to resolve, contact the Honors Undergraduate Research Coordinator immediately. Failure to resolve problems could delay the project's completion, which could result in scholarship loss or prevent graduation. Changing mentors or significantly changing the Project requires a meeting with the Honors Undergraduate Research Coordinator (see Appendix E for Common Problems/Solutions and Appendix G for contact information).

All students must hand in polished drafts of their projects, called the "zero" drafts, **at the midterm break** to mentors, second readers, and Capstone instructors. Mentors and second readers are responsible for returning comments to students in a timely manner. Students should incorporate feedback on zero drafts into their "clean" drafts, which are due to mentors, second readers, and Capstone instructors no later than **one month before Study Day**. If revisions are required, revised clean drafts are due to mentors and second readers **no less than two weeks prior to Study Day**, allowing mentors and second readers time to give any additional feedback that may be needed to finalize projects. On or before Study Day, students must electronically submit their final Capstone Projects through the student portal. Specific dates for each of these common drafting deadlines will be included in the Honors Capstone course schedule.

The final Capstone presentation takes place on UCA's official Study Day, which is 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. Students' electronic submissions 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 their projects' 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 type of Capstone Project they are completing.*

Each of the Honors Capstone Project types comprises the same basic elements:

1. Cover Page (including Abstract)
2. Table of Contents
3. Introduction
4. Literature Review
5. Methodology/Extended Argument (*Thesis*) **OR** Design of Project (*Experiential/Creative*)
6. Results/Conclusions (*Thesis*) **OR** Documentation of Project (*Experiential/Creative*)
7. Discussion (*Thesis*) **OR** Reflection and Analysis (*Experiential/Creative*)
8. References

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” or “classic” thesis, and it is overwhelmingly 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

Project generally consists of five parts: an introduction to the topic/work, including its inspiration or source; a review of relevant literature; the design of the project; documentation of the project's production; and a reflection on and analysis of the project (also see the list of basic project elements above).

The literature review for Experiential/Creative Projects should explore the relevant influences and common themes inherent in similar works/creations; define basic concepts and terminology in fields related to the work/creation; and discuss possible pedagogical lenses through which, and tools or techniques by which, the work/creation can be produced. The design of the project should explain the specific methods used in production of the work/creation and why those methods were chosen; it should be supported by the research explicated in the literature review. Documentation of the project's production, and the analysis of and reflection on the project go hand-in-hand. *Students are strongly encouraged to keep a journal throughout the production process to make documenting and assessing the full arc of the project manageable.* The documentation element includes a summative but detailed description of what went into the production process, including research, internships, group meetings (i.e., with performers, participants, collaborators, and/or interviewees), gathering of materials, rehearsals, and so forth. The analysis and reflection element includes an assessment of the final product and reflection about the experience of the project as a whole.

Additional Considerations About Honors and Your Major

Students may also choose to pursue a Departmental Thesis Project or a Blended Capstone Project depending upon their assessments of the benefits of doing so given their particular majors. These options are described below.

Honors in the Major Capstone Project

Students may opt to follow their honors-in-the-major departmental protocols in partial fulfillment of the Honors Capstone Project. Students will carefully investigate options in Oxford Tutorial/Multidisciplinary Research Methods before deciding to undertake a departmental thesis project. That decision should include consulting with the department's chair and faculty members. Note that some departments do not currently have honors-in-the-major protocols for undergraduate thesis writers. See "Honors in the Major" on the [Capstone Support](#) webpage for more information.

Students choosing this option are still required to take and fulfill the requirements of the Oxford Tutorial/Multidisciplinary Research Methods and Honors Capstone courses (including common drafting and submission deadlines), but Honors College requirements will not impinge on the requirements of the students' home departments. Whatever protocols are required for completion of the departmental thesis will automatically be accepted by the Honors College in partial fulfillment of the Honors Capstone Project requirements.

Blended Capstone Projects

If an honors student chooses to do a Departmental Thesis Project in addition to an Honors Capstone Project, the two projects must be different. While the Honors College accepts Capstone Projects that rely on the same body of research as the student's Departmental Thesis Project, the two projects must have different frameworks that place the subject matter in significantly different interpretive contexts. While they may share primary sources and literature reviews, the two projects may not share the same purpose nor borrow from one another word-for-word.

Students planning to use the same body of research for Blended Capstone Projects must make sure to understand departmental regulations concerning dual projects. Best practice is to arrange a meeting at the outset of the project between the interested departmental faculty and the Honors College administration. That discussion can explore questions about whether and how the two projects can meet specifications for both the Honors College and the student's major department.

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 McLearner

University of Central Arkansas
Conway, Arkansas

Fall 2024

Proposal Committee:

Mentor: Victor Frankenstein, Ph.D.
Professor

Instructor: Theophrastus von Hohenheim, Ph.D.
Associate 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 replaced/removed when this sample is incorporated into students' proposals.

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 McLearner

University of Central Arkansas
Conway, Arkansas
Fall 2024

Capstone Project Committee:

Mentor: Victor Frankenstein, Ph.D.
Professor

Reader: Igor Strausman, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

Dean: Patricia Smith, Ed.D.
Associate Professor and 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 sample is incorporated into students' projects.

Appendix C: Sample Capstone Mentor-Mentee Agreement

Norbert O. Schedler Honors College

Capstone Project Mentor-Mentee Agreement

(all red text below represents sample information)

Mentee Name: Eager McLearner

Mentor Name: Dr. Victor Frankenstein

Project Title: Raising the Dead: A Study of Ethics in Science

Current Semester: Fall 2024

Expected Semester of Capstone Completion: Fall 2025

Semester Meeting Schedule: We will meet on the first Monday of every month at 1:00 p.m.

Project description:

We will pursue a study of the possibility of creating a sentient being out of recycled human elements, during which the student will attempt to gain an understanding of and insight into the ethics of such attempts, giving special attention to the responsibilities of the scientist towards the being that she has animated.

Project work goals:

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

Reading and research: The mentee will read works suggested by the mentor and other works that the student may find relevant to the study. These works are identified in the mentee's working bibliography/references list. This semester, specific works include:

- Frankenstein, Victor. *Corpse Reanimation for Dummies*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006
- Strausman, Igor. *The Ethics of Reanimation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Semester goals: Our goal for the semester will be for the mentee to complete the reading and research listed above, prepare an annotated bibliography, and finalize a Proposal. Specific deadlines include:

- The mentee will submit a rough draft of the Proposal to the mentor by Friday of week 12.
- The mentor will provide feedback on the rough draft within two weeks, or by Friday of week 14.
- The mentee will submit the final Proposal in the student portal for the mentor's review by Monday of week 15, the final week of classes.

Mentee Signature: _____

Date: _____

Mentor Signature: _____

Date: _____

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: *Your mentor's 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 mentee's efforts with the goal of advancing the mentee's understanding and helping the project progress.

Reading and research: The student will read works suggested by the mentor and other works that the student may find relevant to the study. These works are identified in the student's working bibliography/references list. This semester, specific works include:

- *source 1,*
- *source 2, ...list any additional works you and your mentor have agreed to discuss.*

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 Signature: _____

Date: _____

Mentor Signature: _____

Date: _____

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 don't 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 student's project, then they should suggest that student find a new mentor. If students fail to come to meetings, it may signal other problems: research malaise, uncertainty about topics, or poor fit with mentors. If this happens, mentors should try to discover the problem or contact the Honors Undergraduate Research Coordinator (see Appendix G for contact information).

Students fail to accomplish a significant amount of reading or to make progress in answering the research question.

This can happen if students fail to narrow the focus for the topic sufficiently for the allowable timeframe or for one of the problems mentioned above. Mentors should evaluate students based on their effort and progress made. Both mentors and students should be frank. Often, acknowledging that all parties believe little has been accomplished can be a relief, leading to a productive renewal of the research. However, if mentors conclude that students have not put forth sufficient effort and have not reached the goals established at the beginning of the term, mentors should feel free to evaluate students accordingly. If the problem is not one of effort or enthusiasm, but it is instead a problem of volume or failure to sufficiently narrow the topic, then students and mentors may agree to continue work on modified projects. Significant revisions to projects require meeting with the Honors Undergraduate Research Coordinator (see Appendix G for contact information).

Students and mentors simply do not work well together.

Sometimes personalities do not mesh. If this happens, students and mentors should discuss the problem openly. If both mentors and students agree that issues cannot be resolved, then students should find new mentors. *Changing mentors requires meeting with the Honors Undergraduate Research Coordinator* (see Appendix G for contact information).

Mentors dominate meetings.

No matter how enthusiastic about the topic, mentors should allow students to lead discussion. It is not a goal of the Honors Capstone Project for students to discover mentors' expertise; instead, the goal is to provide a setting for conversations in which students discuss their own positions with informed and interested listeners. If students feel that mentors are being domineering, students should respectfully discuss this with their mentors. Sometimes students find initiating such conversations difficult, or they may have a flawed perception about what constitutes such a situation. If so, they may request that the Honors Undergraduate Research Coordinator, or other appropriate Honors College administrator, call meetings with students and mentors to attempt resolutions. Keeping clear communication about goals for each meeting and allowing ample time for discussion at meetings will help alleviate or prevent this problem.

Mentors and students develop fundamentally opposing viewpoints that impede progress.

Certainly, mentors should differ with students at times, and part of mentors' jobs are to push students to look at multiple viewpoints. Students and mentors should be open about these differences and use them for discussion. However, if students or mentors feel that their philosophical differences may impede students' progress or mentors' evaluations of projects, then students and mentors should be frank about the situation. Students or mentors may wish to withdraw from the relationship.

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 and/or creative problems in a project of one's own design.

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:

The Capstone Project is stored as a PDF. [Click Here](#) to retrieve.

Your responses will be recorded in real time, however you will not be able to submit until meter has reached 100%.

Assessment completion meter

Recommended Grade: ⌵ ⌶ **Letter grade selection** 0% complete

Integrative scholarship

Independently transfers skills, abilities, theories, and/or methodologies attained in	Synthesizes skills, abilities, theories, and/or methodologies attained in	When prompted, analyzes skills, abilities, theories, and/or	When prompted, identifies and applies in a basic way skills, abilities, theories, and/or
---	---	---	--

Under each criterion, achievement levels show “Mastered” on the left, moving down in level to “Beginning” on the right. Mentors should select an achievement level under each criterion and select a final letter grade above.

Communication/Written/Central Message

Central message is compelling, reinforced, and strongly supported.	Central message is clear and consistent with the supporting material.	Central message is basically understandable but is not reinforced.	Central message can be deduced, but is not explicitly stated.
--	---	--	---

Communication/Written/Organization

Organizational pattern is clear and consistent, polished, and makes the content cohesive.	Organizational pattern is clear and consistent.	Organizational pattern is partially developed.	Organizational pattern is poorly developed and unclear.
---	---	--	---

Communication/Written/Control of Syntax & Mechanics

Demonstrates clear and fluid controls of syntax and mechanics that skillfully communicates meaning to readers and is virtually error-free.	Uses syntax and mechanics that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity. The language has few errors.	Exhibits substantive errors in syntax and mechanics which, at times, impedes the clarity of the work.	Shows a serious pattern of error in syntax and mechanics that interferes with meaning.
--	--	---	--

Communication/Written/Supporting Material/Evidence

Employs timely and relevant material to provide effective support in a way that reflects a thorough understanding of the topic/thesis.	Selects sufficient and relevant supporting materials, but lack in analysis, comparisons, or credible authorities.	Uses some supporting materials with limited or incomplete explanations, examples, and/or descriptions.	Uses insufficient or inappropriate supporting materials.
--	---	--	--

Critical Inquiry/Inquiry & Analysis/Knowledge

Shows both a broad and deep understanding of the concepts/principles and their relevance to important questions in the discipline.	Shows a general grasp of the concepts/principles and how they relate to important questions in the discipline.	Shows some knowledge of the concepts/principles and can begin to relate them to important questions in the discipline.	Shows some knowledge of the concepts/principles and limited ability to relate them to important questions in the discipline.
--	--	--	--

Critical Inquiry/Inquiry & Analysis/Information

Selects information from the most relevant and credible sources, without critical omissions of key sources.	Selects relevant information from a variety of sources, but may lack some appropriate and credible sources.	Selects information from limited and similar sources.	Selects information randomly that lacks relevance and quality; or was given the information by instructor.
---	---	---	--

Critical Inquiry/Inquiry & Analysis/Analysis

Justifies a position and/or draws a logical conclusion using appropriate disciplinary analysis on a significant question or problem.	Presents a position and/or conclusion on a significant question/problem using appropriate disciplinary analysis, but lacks depth and/or draws a weak/illogical conclusion.	Summarizes different perspectives used in the discipline but does not evaluate a position and/or draw a conclusion.	Recognizes there are multiple approaches to academic questions/problems.
--	--	---	--

Communication/Written/Context & Audience

Demonstrates a thorough understanding of the context; uses compelling language appropriate to the audience.	Demonstrates adequate consideration of the context and uses thoughtful language given the audience.	Demonstrates some awareness of the context and uses mundane language given the audience.	Demonstrates minimal attention to the context and uses unclear language given the audience.
---	---	--	---

Honors College Information System

Copyright © 2000-2022 Norbert O. Schedler

Appendix G: Contact Information

Devon Hawkins
Undergraduate Research Coordinator
Norbert O. Schedler Honors College
Schichtl Hall 101C
dhawkins10@uca.edu
501-450-3198

Leah Horton
Associate Dean
Norbert O. Schedler Honors College
Schichtl Hall 101D
lhorton@uca.edu
501-450-5298

Patricia Smith
Dean
Norbert O. Schedler Honors College
Schichtl Hall 101E
psmith@uca.edu
501-450-5295