

THESIS/CAPSTONE/CREATIVE PROJECT GUIDELINES

All students in the University Honors Program must complete the Honors thesis/capstone/creative project—but this requirement can be met many different ways. The Honors Program is open to students finding their own unique way to satisfy this requirement, so please come and speak to the Honors Director about your ideas.

This activity/effort should be the culmination of your academic career in the University Honors Program at UNO. It is your opportunity to bring together the separate strands of your education into a final product that demonstrates your accomplishment.

Study, investigate, and embrace an area that has always interested you: what do you want to explore? How do the theories you have worked with in your major(s) translate into the reality of an experiment? Your first step toward a thesis is thinking about a topic you wish to pursue.

Across the disciplines, there are different expectations for an Honors thesis, some of which are explored below. All efforts undertaken to satisfy this Honors requirement also have commonalities.

There are two principle ways to complete this requirement:

1. Students may enroll in HONR 4980: Thesis (which is what will appear on your transcript). There are prerequisites to getting the permission code for this course.
2. Students may use an existing discipline's course at the 4000 level. You must have consulted with and received the Director's permission **prior** to beginning the course **and** you must have submitted the required materials (see inside) outlining precisely what you are doing to extend the depth and breadth of your learning experience in the course and what will thus constitute your Honors capstone work.



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WHERE TO START

Talk to a faculty member with whom you have worked or wish to work closely or the Honors Director about options. Then draft a two-page proposal in which you outline the central idea of the area you wish to explore; you can present methodology, etc., if relevant. You also should consider deadlines and manageability for completing the project. A thesis can extend one semester or a year.

Your thesis proposal should:

- » Be single spaced
- » Use 12 point font
- » Include sections outlining the central/controlling idea or research question, methods, timeline, projected results
- » Possibly include a preliminary bibliography

Should a project require IRB approval, appropriate adjustments must be made in the timeline. It should also have your chosen course (HONR or other designation) and the faculty member's name and contact information. Your faculty mentor must review and sign a hard copy of this proposal **before** you submit it to the Honors Program office.

Although you will discuss your topic with the University Honors Director, it is your departmental thesis advisor who ultimately grades the thesis/capstone/creative project and signs off on acceptance in the thesis/capstone/creative project document. It is therefore imperative that you are in constant communication with your advisor. Before seeking an advisor, consider ideas

that might be developed into an Honors thesis/capstone/creative project. It is your responsibility to contact faculty members who could serve as advisors. The faculty advisor selected should have expertise in your proposed area of work and should be someone with whom you get along.

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

All thesis/capstone/creative project efforts should engage in original research. Lab experiments, reading and creative opportunities, research and writing options, experiment and data analyses, sculptures, robot creations, service learning programs and their implementations are examples. The hallmark of each academic discipline is its evolution in contemporary scholarship and students in the Honors Program are expected to enter their original voices into their chosen scholarly arena in their theses.

MENTOR

Students will design, implement, and proceed through their chosen effort under the guidance of a faculty mentor. All students need to identify a faculty mentor who is both comfortable and willing to serve as a guide throughout the course of the semester(s). The faculty mentor will award the student a grade for the effort, so it's important to have an open, communicative, and productive working relationship. The Honors Director can also serve as a consultant for students in the Program.

FORMAT

Your thesis/capstone/creative project **must** conform to the following required layout and timing standards:

- » Be grammatically perfect
- » Use 12-point font and be double-spaced
- » Have margins of one inch
- » Use Arabic numerals in upper right corner starting with page two
- » Have Table of Contents following Acceptance Page
- » Be submitted five days prior to commencement
- » Include an Abstract

TIME AND ORGANIZATION

An Honors thesis/capstone/creative project is the equivalent (at least) to an upper-division three credit hour course—and students need to ensure they factor that work expectation into their class load. Some students choose to extend their effort to six credit hours, which is an option available to all. You must be organized with your effort and time and continually be working on your thesis—leaving it all to the end does not represent your best work.

HELP

Faculty mentors donate their time to you. Appreciate your mentors; it takes a lot of their time and energy to help, direct, and support you. You need to be self-motivated and committed and engaged with your project and driving your effort. You should interact with your mentor frequently and be comfortable asking for help. You also have the Honors Director as a resource if you have questions or concerns about your project.

LENGTH

Length does not denote quality necessarily, so students should concern themselves with producing the highest quality final product they can. An Honors thesis/capstone/creative project should be a significant scholarly or creative contribution to the chosen field and should thus exceed most assigned undergraduate course papers.

SUBMISSION

All Honors theses are submitted electronically to Digital Commons. Students must create an account in digital commons at

digitalcommons.unomaha.edu

Log in to your Digital Commons account and follow the submission procedures. The form should connect your work with that of your faculty mentor (the latter will have been designated within the system as your faculty mentor by the Honors Program office).

After you upload your work, your faculty mentor has **one week** to review and respond to your work. If approved, the faculty mentor works through Digital Commons to let both the student and Honors Program know the work is approved.

The student **must** approve the final version as it will be posted in Digital Commons.

PROCEDURES

All Honors theses must be filed electronically at UNO; deadlines are set, announced, and should be met for each step. Any unexpected delays must be communicated clearly ahead of deadlines in order to be accommodated—and such requests should be very rare.

ABSTRACT OF THESIS: LIMIT TO 200 WORDS

The abstract should begin with a definitive statement of the problem, project, or creative activity, delineating the paper's purpose, scope and limit. Describe research methods and design, major findings, the significance of the work, if appropriate, and conclusions. Students whose project involves creative work (original, fine art, music, writing, theatre or film production, dance, etc.) should describe process and production, indicating the forms of documentation on file as thesis materials. Subject words will be the key words by which your thesis may be found. Think of these words (or phrases) as instrumental in leading a potential reader to your thesis. Have your advisor review the abstract before submission.

COLLEGE SPECIFIC NOTES

- » College of Arts and Sciences
- » College of Business Administration
- » College of Information Science & Technology
- » College of Public Administration and Community Service
- » UNL College of Engineering

Students in these colleges may choose to undertake original research under the HONR 4980 course (Honors thesis). They may also choose to extend their disciplinary capstone class, but, if students wish to extend a 4000 level capstone course, they must notify the Honors Director of their intent **the semester before their enrollment**. Also at this time, students must meet with their capstone instructor and ascertain their willingness to extend the course into an Honors capstone project. Students must submit a proposal regarding the status of their capstone effort before the end of the drop/add period in the semester in which they will undertake the work—and preferably by the end of the previous semester.

Students need to familiarize themselves with the expectations of a college discipline's capstone course—and extend those requirements significantly. If a capstone course requires a 25 page research paper, Honors students would extend their learning by increasing (probably doubling) the paper length, number of required sources, etc. Students should strive to produce a publishable piece of writing with expectations far exceeding the parameters of everyday college work. Students may choose to extend their lab experiment beyond those of others in the course and thus make new scientific connections or discoveries. There are many options and they are all manageable—if students plan early. Students should think about subjects in which they are interested and delve in. Let the Honors Director know when you need help/want to discuss possible ideas. Make sure you have something written down when you go to a mentor to ask for input so you can share your insights professionally.

COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION, FINE ARTS, AND MEDIA

Students in this college may choose to undertake original research under the HONR 4980 course. They may also choose to extend their disciplinary capstone classes into this category. If students wish to extend a 4000 level capstone course, they must notify the Honors Director of their intent to do so **the semester before their enrollment**. Also at this time, students must meet with their capstone instructor and ascertain their willingness to extend the course into an Honors capstone project. Students must submit a proposal regarding the status of their capstone effort before the end of the drop/add period in the semester in which they will undertake the work—and preferably by the end of the previous semester.

Students may also choose to undertake a creative effort in this college, whether it be an extension of an art history discussion, or sculpting pieces for a show so as to diversify the artist's range. Creative work is as challenging and complex as more traditional scholarly efforts. Students wishing to undertake creative theses/capstones/projects should follow all the same procedures as scholarly efforts, and students should ensure their creative efforts are commensurate with three credit hours of college work.

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Students in this college may choose to undertake original research under the HONR 4980 course. They may also choose to extend their disciplinary capstone classes into this category. If students wish to extend a 4000 level capstone course, they must notify the Honors Director of their intent to do so **the semester before their enrollment**. Also at this time, students must meet with their capstone instructor and ascertain their willingness to extend the course into an Honors capstone project. Students must submit a proposal regarding the status of their capstone effort before the end of the drop/add period in the semester in which they will undertake the work—and preferably by the end of the previous semester.

Because students in this college are active in the classroom in their final semester, they may choose to develop their thesis directly out of their clinical practice experiences. Students must extend the required practicum work, since they are earning Honors credit for their effort. Students should thus work closely with their co-teachers **and** UNO faculty supervisor to devise and implement a research effort above and beyond the practicum requirements. For example, they may choose to develop and execute lesson plans that draw upon their independent and documented literature review and research or they may choose to review and research reading strategies and then assess their students' engagement with a particularly tailored set of practices. Education students in the field need to engage with and beyond their practicum requirements in order to earn Honors thesis/capstone/creative project credit.

