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 out of the box ideas.

This activity/effort should be the culmination of your academic career in the University Honors Program here at UNO. It is your opportunity to bring together the separate strands of your education into a final product that demonstrates your accomplishment. You choose the topic. Study/investigate/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 actual experiment? Your first step toward a thesis is thinking about a topic you wish to pursue.

Across the disciplines, there are different expectations as to just what constitutes an Honors thesis, some of which are explored below. But all efforts undertaken to satisfy this Honors requirement also have commonalities (some options are only open to certain colleges, for obvious reasons, as you will see if you read all the college information below). 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 pre-requisites to getting the permission code for this course (outlined below).
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 below) 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.

Original Research:

All senior thesis efforts should engage in original research—but that research can take many different forms. There are lab experiments, reading and creative opportunities, research and writing options, experiment and data analyses, sculptures, robot creations, service learning programs and their implementations—and the list could go on and on. But 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:

Another commonality is the expectation that 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. It is up to the student to establish and maintain this relationship throughout the course of the effort being undertaken; the Honors Director can also serve as a consultant for students in the Program.

Time and Organization:

Another commonality is the time a good Honors thesis project will take. It 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 also an option available to all). You need to be organized with your effort and time and nearly always be working on your thesis—leaving it all to the end is the way to ensure your thesis does not represent your best work.

Help:

All students have at least one faculty mentor, who is loaning his/her expertise out of the generosity of his/her heart. Appreciate your mentors; it takes a lot of their time and energy to help and direct you. Please remember that they are there to support—but you need to be self-motivated and committed: you should be engaged with your project and driving your effort. You should interact with your mentor frequently and be comfortable asking for help; you should always be courteous. You also have the Honors Director as a resource if you have questions or concerns about procedures or challenges you face.

Length:

Length does not denote quality necessarily, so students should not concern themselves overly about satisfying a certain length requirement; rather, they should concern themselves with investing in producing the highest quality final product they can. That being said, 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. A length of forty or so pages is probably suitable for most disciplines—or many more pages for some.
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 want to think about deadlines and manageability in terms of completing the project; a thesis can be 3-6 credit hours worth of work, so it can extend one semester or a year. Your thesis proposal should be single spaced, in 12 point font, and should probably include sections outlining the central/controlling idea or research question, methods, timeline, projected results, and possibly 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 (preferred email and phone number). 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 the departmental thesis advisor working with you who ultimately grades the thesis/capstone/creative activity and who signs off on acceptance in the thesis/capstone/creative activity 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 activity. 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.

If you aren’t sure where to start, talk to the Honors Director, who can guide you to resources.

Procedures:

You will find details about proposal expectations; how to get a permission code for the thesis project; and what steps you need to take to meet this Honors Program requirement in this document. 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.
College Specific Notes

- College of Arts and Sciences
- College of Business Administration
- College of Information Science and Technology
- College of Public Administration and Community Service

Students in these colleges may choose to undertake original research under the HONR 4980 course (Honors thesis).

Students 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 to do so the semester before their enrollment. By the end of the semester before their enrollment, students must also meet with their capstone instructor and ascertain her/his 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, for example, 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 toward producing 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. Students may find a marketing campaign for the web extended into print, or they may increase their pool of subjects for their survey and thus increase their response rates and data analyses.

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; find a mentor who is willing to work with you. 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; then you will be ready to 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. They must also, by the end of the semester before their enrollment, meet with their capstone instructor and ascertain her/his 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, mastering a different print-making technique, 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; students should ensure their creative efforts are commensurate with 3 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. They must also, by the end of the semester before their enrollment, meet with their capstone instructor and ascertain her/his 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 at UNO, they may choose to develop their thesis directly out of their clinical practice experiences. Students must, though, 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. They may choose to develop and implement lesson plans that draw upon their independent and documented literature review and research; they may choose (for example) to review and research reading strategies and then assess their students’ engagement with a particularly tailored set of practices. There are many possibilities—but education students in the field need to engage with and beyond their practicum requirements in order to earn Honors thesis/capstone/creative activity credit.
Format:

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

- Must be grammatically perfect
- Must use 12-point font and be double-spaced
- Must have margins of 1 inch
- Must use Arabic numerals in upper right corner starting with page 2
- Must follow format for Title Page (see below)
- Must have Table of Contents following Acceptance Page
- Must be submitted to Honors Office 5 days prior to commencement
- Must include an Abstract

Submission:

All Honors theses are submitted electronically to digital commons. In order to submit, students must first create an account in digital commons (digitalcommons.unomaha.edu). (You will have already submitted a proposal to Honors so will have all the relevant course/faculty mentor information available.) inform

Once you log into your account at Digital Commons, you will need to read and then follow submission procedures and the submission form, including connecting 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.
The abstract should begin with a definitive statement of the problem, project, or creative activity, delineating the paper’s purpose, scope and limit. Concisely, 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. Pay special attention to the "subject words" since these 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 for organization, content, grammar and spelling before submission.