



WWU HONORS COLLEGE SENIOR PROJECT ADVISOR GUIDELINES

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1. PREFACE:

These guidelines are intended to assist advisors and prospective advisors to Honors students engaged in Senior Projects. The document parallels another provided to students and the language in both documents is similar. While these documents cover most areas of interest and importance, they won't address every problem an individual student or faculty member may encounter in the process of working with a student to conceive, execute, and complete a senior project. Faculty should feel free to talk or correspond with the Honors Director about any problems or questions (Scott.Linneman@wwu.edu, X3446).

2. OVERVIEW:

The Senior Project must be 2-8 credits. Students are awarded these credits through HNRS 490, which consists of 1-4 credits, repeatable over 1-3 quarters (a credit represents 30 hours of work). Students and advisors should consult to determine the total number of credits for any project. If approved by Honors, a student may use departmental research or capstone credits instead of HNRS 490 for a Senior Project.

The Senior Project serves as the student's "capstone" experience, synthesizing what the student has done in their chosen major (typically) and the Honors College, though sometimes it is undertaken in the student's minor or some other area. Whether in the student's major, minor, or allied field, the finished project should be a clearly focused effort resulting in:

- a tangible product that approaches professional-level original work in the student's major, minor, or an allied area.

- a presentation for a general audience.
- publication on CEDAR (unless an exemption is approved).

Sample legitimate projects include an article-length research paper, a podcast, a staged performance, a painting, an exhibit, a website design and launch, and a molecular model. In the recent past students have done translations of works in a host of languages-- Punjabi, French, Chinese and German—as well as illustrations for a book, a musical album (the student wrote all the music and lyrics, and did all the performances and the technical production), adaptations and installations of computer programs, paintings (by a history major), and preparations of liturgies.

3. GETTING STARTED—FINDING AN ADVISOR:

The first step in the process is the student's: find an advisor who will supervise the project and act as the student's mentor. This often will be a faculty member in the student's major, but—as noted above—there are many exceptions. For example, a student in the College of Business and Economics once worked with a faculty member from the Physics Department who knew a language (Punjabi) the student needed to learn for business purposes. As long as they have a good justification, students are encouraged to pursue unconventional projects, make connections across disciplines, and choose advisors accordingly. Perhaps more important than disciplinary affiliation is that the advisor be someone with whom the student has worked in previous contexts, or that they otherwise establish an understanding of shared expectations.

Honors encourages students to approach their prospective advisors as early as possible, preferably not later than the second quarter of the junior year. Many students begin even earlier, and it is common for students in the natural sciences, for example, to be engaged in Senior Project work as early as the sophomore year, for example in a laboratory research group.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FACULTY ADVISOR:

Faculty members who agree to advise a student should understand that the project will demand their time and commitment. Faculty are expected to provide oversight, guidance, and often structure for a Senior Project. They meet with students, review their work in successive stages, consult on and attend their final presentations, and certify their final project submission.

Honors hopes that the faculty member and student establish a genuine mentoring relationship. The faculty advisor establishes those standards for the Senior Project that the student must meet, and is responsible for following through on their part of the agreement with the student. Again, the primary relationship is between the faculty advisor and the student. The Honors College plays a secondary supporting role.

5. COMPENSATION FOR NTT FACULTY ADVISORS

NTT faculty should log their hours as faculty advisors, and are paid \$35/hour for a maximum of 20 hours/project.

6. DEFINING THE PROJECT:

Ultimately, the Senior Project, the timing of its beginning and completion, the shape of the final product, and the amount of work required are the result of a negotiation between the student and the advisor. As noted above, there are no formulas or models that a student must follow. The project should, however, satisfy the following criteria in the advisor's judgment:

- It must be an appropriate exercise in an academic discipline.
- Projects must include the student's original work.
- The project must be worth the amount of credit received, either in Honors or through the student's major department.

Further, the student and advisor must agree that the project is something the student can reasonably accomplish. It would be unreasonable, for example, to expect a geology major to spend six months at a remote site, or to demand that a theater major spend two quarters in New York with a theater company. (On the other hand, if a student does have the resources to complete remote or distant work and wishes to do so, Honors encourages this. Students have undertaken projects involving field work everywhere from eastern Washington to China to the South Pacific.)

Beyond these requirements, the advisor and the student are free to work out a project that meets their joint standards and needs. In defining the project, the advisor and the student should establish a set of expectations:

- What shape will the final product take?
- What work will be done and on what schedule?
- When may the student expect faculty feedback, in what form, and to what degree?
- Will the project require special resources—equipment, travel funds, collection access, etc.—and if so, how will the student acquire these?

Both the advisor and the student should think about possible difficulties that may arise from a particular project. Honors may be able to assist in overcoming some of the problems that arise—for example modest support for travel or the purchase of specialized equipment—but the student should avoid projects that will present difficulties with remedies beyond the student's immediate control.

That said, part of completing a long-term project is working with unanticipated difficulties. Expectations set by students and advisors are subject to revision by mutual agreement. Above all, Honors encourages students and their advisors to think of these projects broadly, innovatively, and flexibly.

Once the student and advisor have defined and established a schedule for the project, the student will draft a preliminary project description that outlines the process and anticipated final product. The advisor and Honors approve the project through an e-sign form initiated by the student.

The preliminary project description is a prospectus, not a contract. It should represent the best estimate of what the student hopes to accomplish within the given period of time. It is possible, even likely, that the project will change before its completion.

7. STAYING ON SCHEDULE:

The amount and frequency of contact between the student and the advisor will vary, depending on the nature of the project. In the sciences, most students work on year-long or multiyear research undertakings directly with a faculty member, with regular communication between the student and the advisor, perhaps on a daily basis. On other projects, the contact may be less frequent—a suggested *minimum* baseline is 4 meetings per term. **It is the student's responsibility to establish and maintain regular communication with the faculty advisor.** The student should also discuss their progress with Honors, but one check-in during the project period is normally sufficient. The primary relationship is between the student and advisor.

8. PUBLIC PRESENTATION:

All projects must be presented and defended in a public forum at which the faculty advisor participates. The student should expect to answer questions about the formulation of the project, the process of its completion, and its methods and conclusions. Because Honors is interdisciplinary, the presentation should be accessible to a general audience outside the student's discipline. A benefit of the presentation is the opportunity for the student to develop skills for communicating professional content to a non-expert public audience.

The public presentation may draw a large audience, and it is entirely appropriate to invite students, faculty, friends, family members, and people from the local community. Honors especially encourages students to invite their parents, and they attend frequently; their presence always adds to the occasion.

After the presentation, the advisor or the Honors Director may ask for revisions of the project, if appropriate for the discipline. The student must submit a final copy of the Senior Project to the advisor for approval by re-circulating and updating the project e-form with the original student-advisor agreement.

Completed projects are published on CEDAR, Wilson Library's electronic archive, where they are available to the public. If for any reason the Senior Project should not be published (for example the project is under consideration for publication, or contains proprietary material), Honors will arrange to have the project protected from enquiries.

9. QUESTIONS:

If you have questions or would like to talk through the process, please don't hesitate to reach out to Honors at (360) 650-3034 or the Director at (360) 650-3446.