

## WWU HONORS COLLEGE SENIOR PROJECT

### ADVISOR GUIDELINES

#### The Basics

What you do as an advisor:

1. Sign off on the capstone form after the student completes the proposal in Step 1, approving the student's proposal as a workable project for the indicated credit load.
2. Advise the student in their work on the capstone, on a schedule to be determined by you and the student. Honors will assume the student is making adequate progress in their HNRS 490 Senior Capstone work unless we hear otherwise from you (we'll send a check-in email for continuing HNRS 490 students at the end of each quarter).
3. (Not required, but highly encouraged!) Attend the student's final capstone presentation. Presentations are hybrid and may be attended online if you can't come in person.
4. Sign off on the capstone form after the student has submitted their final project, indicating that the project as described on the form is acceptable for publication as student work, and the student has earned their final-quarter HNRS 490 credits.

What Honors takes care of:

1. Honors will answer your questions about capstones. Here's a page where you can start (and contact information for the capstone coordinator if your or your student's question isn't answered there): [Senior Capstone Project | WWU Honors College | Western Washington University](#)
2. Honors will advise students on general capstone requirements. Not sure what to tell the student who has questions about requirements including the presentation and publication? Send them to us.
3. Honors will assist with student outreach, if you need help. Concerned about your student's progress? Let us know.
4. Honors will host the student's final presentation, including scheduling a room and running technology for hybrid presentations.
5. Honors will provide capstone institutional structure, interfacing with other offices to make sure the project is registered and the student credited. All you have to do is work with the student.
6. Honors will consult with students or with you on the CEDAR archive as a capstone publication option: what CEDAR options are available to Honors students and how do students request them?
7. Honors will assist with elements of interdisciplinary capstones that are beyond the advisor's expertise. Many capstones are interdisciplinary and academic advisors may

feel more comfortable advising some angles of the presentation than others. Send them our way! If we don't have an answer, we can help them find someone who does.

For a more detailed picture, please see the guidelines below, which cover the following:

1. PREFACE
2. OVERVIEW
3. GETTING STARTED—HOW STUDENTS FIND AN ADVISOR
4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FACULTY ADVISOR
5. COMPENSATION FOR NTT FACULTY ADVISORS
6. DEFINING THE PROJECT
7. STAYING ON SCHEDULE
8. PUBLIC PRESENTATION
9. PUBLICATION

#### 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 (Kimberly Lynn, [lynnk@wwu.edu](mailto:lynnk@wwu.edu), X4869) or the Capstone Coordinator (Julie Dugger, [duggerj2@wwu.edu](mailto:duggerj2@wwu.edu)) about any problems or questions.

#### 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, students entering WWU prior to Fall 2023 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 different 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 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. **The primary advising 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 will be compensated at a flat rate of \$540 per Honors student capstone advised, paid at the completion of the project.

This advising stipend is calculated based on an assumed 12 hours of advising work at \$45/hour. Advisors are also asked to attend the student's final presentation of their capstone project (preferably in person, unless there are significant extenuating circumstances).

For exceptional cases where anticipated advising work is greater than that, advisors should discuss with the Honors Director whether there are funds for additional advisor time. Any exception to the standard NTT faculty advisor compensation requires Director approval before the start of the project.

Generally, a single NTT faculty member would be expected to serve as the primary capstone advisor of **no more than 4 capstone projects per academic year.**

*(Compensation policy revised 11/18/2024)*

## 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 (again, a credit represents 30 hours of work).

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 may also discuss their progress with Honors, and during their final quarter will receive prompts from Honors for the steps to complete the project, but 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.

## 9. PUBLICATION:

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 approve an alternate arrangement.